

## **As Weather Warms, Waters Remain Dangerously Cold**

### **Local News**

Posted by: David Haviland

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - As a rash of boating accidents and fatalities hits the Northwest, Washington State Parks, the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Weather Service urge boaters to be very cautious on the water this weekend and always wear lifejackets. Washington will see its third warm spring weekend in a row. According to Ted Buehner of the National Weather Service, temperatures across the east side of the state will be their warmest this season &ndash; in the 70s to lower 80s. On the west side, temperatures will be in the 60s and could even reach 70 in some places. Though temperatures will be unseasonably warm, waters will remain cold. Most river and creek temperatures across the state are in the mid 30s to mid 40s &ndash; temperatures that can easily cause hypothermia, according to Katherine Rowden, a hydrologist for the National Weather Service. According to Washington State Parks accident data, there have been five non-motorized boating fatalities since March 17, 2012, which is more than in any other year since 2002. This rash of small craft accidents continues with at least two more accidents involving three people this past weekend. One accident occurred on the Chehalis River, where a man is still missing following an annual rafting event near Pe Ell. The other accident occurred off Blake Island and involved a canoe that capsized with two individuals; it's unclear if any of them were wearing life jackets.

“Both men in the canoe survived the accident, but they were within minutes of dying from hypothermia,” said Sergeant Jim Porter of the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office. Sudden immersion in cold water makes it difficult, if not impossible, for boaters to keep their heads above water and stay afloat. Boating fatality statistics have shown that wearing a lifejacket gives boaters the best chance of survival in the event of an accident, especially in cold water. Small craft like kayaks, canoes and rafts are the most vulnerable to capsizing, but all boaters should be prepared and follow these guidelines: Start enjoying boating the right way, with a course to develop skills and safe operation. Paddle sports instruction is offered by local clubs, outfitters and many park and recreation departments. Always wear a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Washington state requires all children 12 years of age and younger to wear a personal flotation device when boating. Scout the condition of the lake, river or waters before getting underway. Be a competent swimmer. Be constantly alert for unexpected hazards. Never use alcohol or drugs when boating or floating in a river. They dull important survival reflexes and impair decision-making skills. Children should never boat or float a river without the close supervision of an adult. Know and practice river rescue and self-rescue techniques. Going in the water is always a possibility. Be prepared. The National Weather Service offers online weather and river information useful for trip planning at the following sites for the state of Washington: - [www.weather.gov/Seattle](http://www.weather.gov/Seattle)- [www.weather.gov/Spokane](http://www.weather.gov/Spokane)- [www.weather.gov/Portland](http://www.weather.gov/Portland)- [www.weather.gov/Pendleton](http://www.weather.gov/Pendleton) For more information on water safety and drowning prevention, visit the following websites: [www.boatered.org](http://www.boatered.org) For a brochure on hypothermia and boating: [www.parks.wa.gov/publications/](http://www.parks.wa.gov/publications/)&nbsp; [www.boat.wa.gov](http://www.boat.wa.gov)