

Mason County Enforcement Prepares For Operation Dry Water

Local News

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Shelton, WA – Recreational boating fatalities last year jumped to their highest levels since 1998 and boating under the influence (BUI) was the leading contributing factor, according to the U.S. Coast Guard’s report, 2011 Recreational Boating Statistics. The report comes just weeks before the Mason County Sheriff’s Office participates in the national Operation Dry Water 2012 campaign. This nationwide campaign focuses on enforcement of BUI laws and educating all boaters to the risks of operating a boat under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Officers will be out in force June 22, 23 and 24 looking for boat operators whose blood alcohol content (BAC) exceeds the state limit of .08. Impaired boaters may expect penalties that include fines and jail time. We intend to arrest intoxicated boaters and to educate as many boaters as possible about the dangers of boating under the influence - Chief Deputy Dean Byrd According to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), boating under the influence of alcohol and drugs continues to be a major problem in the United States. Boat operators or even passengers with a blood alcohol concentration above the legal limit run a significantly increased risk of being involved in a fatal boating accident.

According to the Coast Guard’s report, alcohol was a contributing factor 19 percent of boating fatalities in the U.S. last year. Between 2007 and 2011, the Washington State Parks Boating Safety Programs reports at least 30 people were killed in boating accidents where alcohol was a contributing factor.“When impaired by alcohol, boating accidents are more probable and more deadly for both passengers and boat operators, many of whom capsize their vessel or simply fall overboard ,” says Byrd. Operation Dry Water (ODW) was launched in 2009 by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard. The campaign puts thousands of local, state and federal marine law enforcement officers on the water nationwide prior to the July 4th holiday to give BUI enforcement high visibility during the peak boating season. Byrd went on to say "There will be arrests this weekend, and some boaters will face the consequences of boating under the influence. Boating is a safe and enjoyable pastime when people stay alert and follow the rules. We want boaters to understand the added risks associated with BUI and to avoid drinking and boating.” Operation Dry Water 2012 is a joint program. The Mason County Sheriff’s Office partners with Washington Department of Wildlife, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Boating Programs, and local law enforcement officers from around the state. For more information on the campaign, visit www.operationdrywater.org. For more information on boating in Washington, visit www.boat.wa.gov.