

## [Coast Guard Urges Safe Boating on Labor Day Weekend](#)

### Promo

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The U.S. Coast Guard anticipates an increased number of recreational boaters throughout Puget Sound, the Columbia River and along the coasts of Oregon and Washington during Labor Day weekend, and is urging boaters to take proper safety precautions. To promote a safe and enjoyable weekend for members of the boating community, [U.S. Coast Guard](#), [Coast Guard Auxiliary](#) and local marine law enforcement boatcrews will be on patrol conducting safety checks on the water; focusing on boaters who are operating their vessel in an unsafe manner or appear to be operating their vessels while intoxicated. Boaters, personal watercraft operators, paddlers and surfers need to be aware of their surroundings, and are reminded to continuously monitor weather forecasts. Weather conditions can change instantaneously throughout Puget Sound and the lower Columbia River region, where rapidly forming fog, strong currents, wind and tide changes can create hazardous conditions for boaters.

Here are three steps every boater can take to reduce the risk of accidents and/or prevent serious injuries and ensure a safe and enjoyable weekend: [Wear a Life jacket](#) Boaters should always wear a lifejacket. The number one cause of boating fatalities is drowning, most often by sudden, unexpected entry into the water. Wearing a lifejacket increases the chances of surviving a boating accident. The law states you must have a life jacket, or personal floatation device, for every person on board. The Coast Guard recommends boaters wear lifejackets at all times. It is much more difficult to locate, access and don a life jacket after an accident occurs. [Boat Sober](#) Never boat under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Alcohol and drugs affect judgment, vision, balance and coordination. Alcohol, combined with boat motion, vibration, engine noise, sun, wind and spray accelerates an operator's impairment. Intoxicated boaters can face both federal and state charges with penalties of up to one year in prison and fines up to \$100,000. The legal definition of intoxication in Oregon and Washington is blood alcohol content of .08. Don't be fooled into thinking that lesser amounts of alcohol consumption are OK, or that passengers aren't at risk if they drink. The latest study on boating and alcohol indicates that the risk of a fatality rises significantly at amounts as low as .02 BAC. Dress for the water, not the weather: Water temperatures throughout the Pacific Northwest remain in the 50s during this time of year. The risk of hypothermia increases with lower water temperatures, and survivability time in the water decreases. Wet suits and other personal protective equipment assist the body as an insulator, limiting exposure to dangerous water temperatures. Generally speaking, recreational boaters should make a concerted effort to keep out of the way of large commercial vessels, including ferries, tug and tow configurations, and freighters. Due to powerful currents these vessels must maintain a moderate speed, and it can often take more than a mile to stop. Making way for larger vessels promotes the safety of all mariners. Additional steps all boaters can take: File a float plan and leave it with someone at home. A float plan says where you are going and when you plan on returning, which helps emergency responders locate distressed

mariners. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information on float plans. Have a marine band radio and visual distress signals. All of these devices will greatly assist you if you are in distress. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information on visual distress signals. Have a registered 406MHz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon. [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about registering your EPIRB. The Coast Guard and local marine agencies ask boaters to help be their eyes and ears on the water. Boaters who see suspicious activity should immediately call 911, Coast Guard District 13 Command Center at (206) 217-7001, Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound at (206) 217-6001, Coast Guard Sector Columbia River (503) 861-6211 or the Coast Guard's National Response Center at 1-877-24WATCH (1-877-249-2824).