



NTSB

SAFETY ALERT

National Transportation Safety Board

★ Recreational Boating

Learn safe boating and protect your children

Recreational boating deaths: a SERIOUS problem

- Recreational boating is fun, but the water can be unforgiving.
- Over the past 10 years, more than 7,000 boaters have died— about 5,000 of them by drowning.
- Deaths are the result of two major safety failures: lack of a required personal flotation device (life jacket), and uneducated boaters.
- In 2009, three-fourths of all fatal boating accidents resulted from the victims drowning and 84 percent were not reported as wearing life jackets.
- In 2009, only 14 percent of the fatalities occurred on boats where the boat operator had received boating safety instruction.
- Seven out of ten who drowned were in open motorboats less than 21 feet in length.

What can you do to reduce recreational boating accidents and deaths?

- Use a life jacket when aboard a recreational boat and be sure that children always wear life jackets. Life jackets are effective. Boating accident data shows that when mandatory life jacket requirements are adopted, drowning fatalities go down.
- Most parents would not drive anywhere without their kids in seat belts, car seats or booster seats. Parents should not hesitate to protect their children on the water in a life jacket.
- Complete a recreational boating safety course approved by your state.
- Talk or write to your state lawmakers and urge them to support the NTSB's recommendations that states require children to wear life jackets and require all recreational boating operators to complete a boating safety education course.

What should states do to make recreational boating safer?

- Establish a state minimum boating safety program that:
 - Requires children, under age 13, to wear life jackets.
 - Requires all state recreational boating operators to complete a boating safety education course.
- As of November 2010, 48 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enacted laws or regulations requiring children to wear life jackets. Wisconsin and Virginia need mandatory life jacket requirements.
- Thirteen states need to act to adopt mandatory boating education safety requirements for all recreational boaters. They are: Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, South Carolina, Utah, and Wyoming.

Need more information?

- Visit the NTSB Web site: www.nts.gov