

Recreational Boating Safety

Partner Resources - March



March is a great time to remind boaters to prepare for the boating season by providing information on how to enroll in a boating knowledge or skills-based education course. Here are some talking points that might help you crafting messages for your audience:

- The U.S Coast Guard statistics indicate that of the accidents where the level of operator education was known, 70% of boating fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had never received boating education instruction. *
- 2023, 23 recreational boating fatalities occurred in Washington State. Only 4 operators had a record of receiving boating education instruction. Paddlers accounted for 15 of the 23 fatalities. **
- Boater Education is about more than avoiding accidents. Educated boaters are more knowledgeable and are more prepared to enjoy their time on the water.

Boater Education Card

- The Washington State Mandatory Boating Safety Education law currently requires boaters ages 12 years or older to earn their Washington Boater Education Card before operating a motorized vessel of 15 horsepower or greater.
- When required by law, the minimum fine for not carrying a valid Boater Education Card in Washington state is \$99.
- To qualify for a Washington State Boater Education Card, boaters must complete a state-approved course which meets the national boating education standards.
- Where to Find a Course: Many course options are available online, but some are offered in-person across the state. Resources for finding instructor-led courses are available on the Boating Program website: <https://parks.wa.gov/about/rules-and-safety/boater-education-safety/boater-education-courses>

Education for Paddlers

- While not required, the Washington State Parks Boating Program recommends safety courses for paddlers – especially beginners.
- Before heading out on a kayak, canoe, or stand-up paddleboard, it's important to know how to keep yourself and others safe. You are responsible for knowing the laws that apply to you as a paddler and carrying the required equipment.
- Where to Find a Course: The National Association of Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) offers a free, online paddle safety course: <https://www.boat-ed.com/paddlesports/>

Source: *According to U.S. Coast Guard Recreational Boating Statistics 2019

**According to Washington State Parks Boating Program Data

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Example Social Media Posts:

- Ready for boating season? Sign up for a boating safety class now to earn your boater education card! Learn more at www.boatered.org.
- Spring into boating season and take a boating safety education course now! Learn more at www.boatered.org.
- An educated boater is a safer boater. Get your boater education card today! A variety of courses are available, one for everyone's schedule. Learn more at www.boatered.org.
- Do you know where your boater education card is? If you need a replacement, be sure to order in time for warm weather! Visit www.boatered.org to learn more.
- Don't wait for boating season to start. Take a boater education course now! Learn more at www.boatered.org.

For Paddlers:

- What floats your boat? For us, it's knowing everyone is safe out on the water. Improve your safety skills by taking a paddle course.
- New to paddling Washington's waterways? Then it's time to take a safety course! Learn more at www.boatered.org.

Photos & Graphics

We've provided a few photos for your use along with this email, but there are many resources online for images to use with credit.

U.S. Coast Guard photo library: <https://uscg-boating.org/multimedia/gallery>

Boat Beat photo library: <https://boatbeat.org/photo-library/>

National Safe Boating Council <https://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/resources/photo-library/>

Tips for Success on Social Media:

- Use photos and visuals! Research shows that posts including interesting visual assets earn more engagement.
- Post messages repeatedly during the month to reinforce the message and reach a wider audience.
- To supplement posts, consider sharing or retweeting content from others in the boating safety community.

Through repeated exposure to safety messaging, we can promote boating safety practices with the intention of reducing fatal boating accidents in the state. We'll provide a monthly toolkit that will support you in sharing key boating safety messages during the boating season. For questions or additional support please contact Ashley.Seydel@parks.wa.gov