

NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK - MAY 22 - 28th

By Joan Watt, Past Commander and Chairman, Vessel Safety Check Program, Ocean City Power Squadron

Recreational boating has grown and as summer approaches many are preparing to enjoy being on the water. Are you ready and prepared to enjoy a safe boating season?

“National Safe Boating Week,” May 22-28, 2021, is the start of a year round effort to promote safe boating. Every year the President of the United States proclaims the 7 day period prior to Memorial Day weekend as National Safe Boating Week and Ocean City Mayor Richard Meehan also issues a Proclamation to emphasize the importance of safe boating practices.

Ocean City Power Squadron (OCPS) is committed to making recreational boating safer and reducing the number of injuries and deaths caused by boating accidents. Members are teaching courses, inspecting vessels, gathering data on water depths, changes in navigational aids and identifying on the water visible landmarks to help NOAA update nautical charts of the local area.

How can you, as a Boater, make sure you do are doing your part to ensure the safety of yourself and those who go boating with you? The following are minimum guidelines for safe boating:



Wear a properly fitted life jacket. Wearing a life jacket can reduce by 86% the number of boaters who lose their lives each year by drowning.

Have your vessel checked for safety. Does your vessel (sail boat, power boat, PWC, kayak, rowboat, etc.) comply with federal, state and local laws, particularly regarding carrying safety equipment? A Vessel Safety Check (VSC) includes:

- Display of registration numbers
- Valid state registration
- Personal Flotation Devices (PFD), US Coast Guard approved
- Visual Distress Signals (Flares) with proper dates
- Fire Extinguisher preferably mounted
- Safe Fuel System (Includes proper ventilation for fuel tank and I/O or Inboard Engines)
- Backfire Flame Control for all I/O or Inboard Engines
- Sound Producing Device (Horn/Bell)
- Navigation Lights (Anchor and Running Lights)
- Pollution Placard (Vessels 26 feet and longer)
- MARPOL Trash Placard (Vessels 26 feet and longer)
- Marine Sanitation Devices (All Vessels with installed heads - MSD's)
- Navigation Rules (All Vessels 39.4 feet or longer)
- State and/or Local Requirements
- Overall Vessel Condition
- Safe Electrical System (Including battery terminals covered in a battery box or with rubber caps)

Ocean City Power Squadron and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary have certified examiners to perform a free Vessel Safety Check (VSC) of your boat. There is no penalty should your vessel fail an exam and you will be told how to correct any deficiencies for a re-exam. Those vessels meeting Federal, State and Local safety regulations are awarded a decal which is placed on their boat. Schedule your Vessel Safety Check with OCPS as soon as possible.



Never boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Get proper training in the safe operation of your boat. Check weather reports. Know the “rules of the road.”

OCPS offers safe boating education classes and seminars to members and the public. Classes include engine maintenance, electrical systems, GPS, piloting, navigation, cruise planning, skipper saver, weather, anchoring, and other advanced classes. Knowing how to operate and maintain your boat, read charts, understand the weather and follow the “rules of the road” will help prevent boating accidents.



Emphasizing boating safety is important because on the average 619 people die each year in the U.S. in boat-related accidents of 4,168. The State of Maryland has a high number of boating accidents. Of the top 10 States with recreational boating accidents Maryland ranked 7th highest. Knowledge and skill improve judgment and reduce boating accidents caused by human error. Overall careless and reckless operation, operator inattention, operator inexperience, and excessive speed are the leading contributing factors of all reported accidents. Approximately 80% of all reported fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received safety instruction.

Are you going to be a boater who has a safe and wonderful boating season this year, or are you going to be one of the boating accident statistics or fatalities?

It's up to you. Make a commitment during National Safe Boating Week and throughout the entire year to do everything you can to help make boating safer and you can then be prepared to enjoy a safe boating season. "Boating is Fun, but Safe Boating is More Fun"

Check out the Ocean City Power Squadron website is at www.ocusps.org for classes, vessel safety checks and links on hurricane preparedness information for boaters.



BOATING IS FUN . . . WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW!