



SEMPER SAFE

“Watercraft Safety”



It is hot and it is humid! The weather is perfect for recreational activities involving water. If you own a boat, are thinking of buying a boat or thinking about renting one from the local MCCA Marina you should know the basics of watercraft safety. Hundreds of Americans drown each year, and many people die in boating accidents. Almost 90 percent of the people who drown in boating accidents did not wear an approved flotation device.

The operator of the watercraft is responsible for the safety of all passengers. Anyone younger than 26 operating a vessel powered by 10 horsepower or greater motor on public waterways must have successfully completed an approved boating safety education course or otherwise be in compliance, as of May 1, 2010. All vessel operators must be able to prove compliance upon request of a law enforcement officer.

The key to safe operation is to know your watercraft, how it works, and the regulations that apply to its ownership and operation before you get on it. Reckless operation, lack of proper safety equipment, and exceeding the capacity are the most frequently cited violations for watercraft operators. Coast Guard boating statistics show on average that 80% of all reported fatalities occur on watercraft where the operator had not received watercraft safety instruction. Use the following tips to help make your next trip on the water a safe and enjoyable one.

- Take a boating and safety education course even if you're not required.
- Maintain a safe speed at all times
- Know the weather conditions and act accordingly.
- Maintain a clear, unobstructed view forward at all times.
- Know your watercraft position and where you are going.
- Ensure your watercraft is free of fire hazards and have clean bilges.
- Know and obey federal and state regulations and waterway markers.
- Know and practice the rules of the road (navigation rules) on the water.
- Use the buddy system when on the water or let someone know where you're going.
- Make sure your watercraft is in top operating condition and there are no tripping hazards.
- Required safety equipment on board should be maintained in good condition and know how to properly use these devices, especially personal flotation and throwable life saving devices.
- Have a complete knowledge of the operation and handling characteristics of your watercraft.
- As little as four hours exposure to sun, wind, glare, vibration, and other motion on the water produces “boater’s hypnosis,” a kind of fatigue that slows reaction time almost as much as if a person were inebriated. Take frequent breaks to help prevent this type of fatigue.
- DO NOT operate a watercraft impaired!!! In many states boating under the influence carries with it the same penalties as if you were operating a vehicle on a roadway.

As Marines, Sailors and Civil Servants we live by our core values. So think before you jeopardize the safety of yourself, your fellow Marines, Sailors, civilian employees or family members, and remember SEMPER SAFE!