

BOATER SAFETY TIPS
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Summer and boating season are upon us. If you purchased a boat in the off season, please familiarize yourself with boating safety, before hitting the water. Last season my husband and I went to Lake Monroe and were surprised at the number of boaters who were not following basic boating rules, which are designed for the safety of all who are on the water.

According to the United States Coast Guard in 2004 there were 4,904 boating accidents reported which resulted in 676 fatalities, 3,363 injuries and \$35,038,306.00 in property damage. With summer and warm weather upon us the number of persons who will be out boating will be increasing in numbers. Hopefully, after reading these safety tips, everyone will have a safe boating experience.

- #1-All boaters should become certified in boating safety. This may be done online at www.boat-ed.com/in or in a classroom by calling 317-232-4010 or logging on to www.dnr.in.gov. Approximately 70% of all fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction.**
- #2-Approximately 70% of all fatalities were a result of drowning. 90% of those who drowned were not wearing a lifejacket. 431 lives could have been saved with the use of a personal floatation device/PFD.**
- #3-The most reported type of accident is collision with another boat. However, 57% of all boating fatalities occurred due to capsizing and falling overboard. Boat owners should not overload their boats, and should follow the capacity label. Do not allow persons to sit in any area not designed for seating. If someone falls overboard throw them a PFD, turn the vessel around and slowly pull alongside the victim, approach them downwind or into the current, whichever is stronger, stop the engine, pull the victim on board over the stern. If you fall from the boat and someone cannot get to you immediately swimming to shore should be your last resort. Try floating on your back to conserve energy.**
- #4-Careless, reckless operation, operator inattention, operator inexperience and excess speed are the leading causes of boating accidents. When navigating your boat make sure you are going with the flow of traffic. The flow of traffic is primarily that of a speedway. You should primarily be making left turns. It is extremely dangerous when you are out boating and some boaters are not following the rules of navigation, and are going against the flow of traffic. You should also know your environment to prevent running aground. Just because you are away from the shore, does not mean you cannot run aground. Also, do not assume that all hazards will be marked by a buoy.**
- #5-Never operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Approximately one-third of all fatalities involved alcohol. A boat operator is likely to become impaired more quickly drink for drink. Passengers are also at a higher risk for injury and death, if they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.**
- #6-Keep a fire extinguisher on board, and install a carbon monoxide detector.**
- #7-Read your owner's manual thoroughly.**

Information for this article was obtained from the United States Coast Guard at www.uscgboating.org and the Indiana DNR at www.boat-ed.com.