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BOATING SAFELY

Things to Know Before You're Out on the Water

It's summer!! And with summer comes all kinds of fun opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, including boating. When the sun is on your face, the wind is in your hair and the spray is keeping you cool, it's easy to leave safety behind.

UL, a global independent safety science company with more than 40 years of technical expertise in personal flotation device testing, offers this safety information if you find yourself with the lucky opportunity to get out on a boat this summer.

5 Things to Know Before You Go

Be prepared:

Have at least one U.S. Coast Guard-approved/UL-Listed personal flotation device (PFD) for each person on board and make sure each life jacket is appropriate for each passenger's height and weight. Life jacket requirements and information can be found at www.uscgboating.org.

No substitutions allowed:

Remember that inflatable swimming aids such as toys, rafts, water wings, ski jackets or belts and other devices can easily puncture and deflate, and are not approved by the U.S. Coast Guard or certified by UL as a life safety device. These items are essentially toys and should not be used as a substitute for a PFD.

Do not overload your boat:

Capsizing and falls overboard are the most common causes of fatal accidents and account for more than half of all boating fatalities. Pay attention to the capacity label on your boat and be careful not to overload small boats with passengers and/or gear.

Take a safety course:

Approximately 90 percent of all reported fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction. If you own or plan on operating a boat, contact the local office of the U.S. Coast Guard to learn more about taking a boating safety course.

Drink responsibly:

Alcohol has been listed as the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents. Sun and dehydration can heighten the effects of alcohol, so be aware and drink responsibly.

Inspect your boat like you do your home: Ensure that the fuel pump is sturdy and contains no cracks. Inspect the bilge pump to ensure all fuel build-up has been cleared and no cracks have developed.