

Dept. of Natural Resources: Waterfowl hunters encouraged to wear lifejackets

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is reminding all waterfowl hunters to wear a lifejacket while out on the water this season.

Wisconsin has had 22 boating accident deaths so far this year, according to DNR records. Twenty of those deaths were drowning-related, and 18 of those people were not wearing life jackets.

Hunters are no exception to boating accidents and drowning deaths, and as fall takes hold, they are urged to be aware that conditions can change rapidly with high winds, unfavorable weather and temperatures.

“It is crucial that waterfowl hunters – whether in a boat or in the water in waders – wear a life jacket,” DNR conservation warden Jon King said. “Wet, heavy hunting clothes serve as a weight that can pull a person underwater quickly.”

To prevent boating accidents, waterfowl hunters and other hunters alike should follow these safety tips while afloat and afield.

- Be aware that water temperatures are rapidly cooling and if you fall overboard, hypothermia can set in rapidly. Wearing a lifejacket can keep you on the surface and you can use your energy to keep warm rather than using it to stay on the surface.
- Remember to protect your canine companion on the water – they need their lifejackets, too.

- Never overload the boat. If hunting on a large river or lake, use a boat that is big enough to handle rough water.
- Balance your boat evenly and keep weight low for stability.
- Be on the lookout for elements outside of your control, such as changing weather, wind or a slightly submerged stump, rock, sandbar or floating debris.
- If you are in a boat or canoe with a hunting partner, establish and communicate a safe zone of fire; do not stand to shoot if your partner is shooting from a seated position.
- Always carry a cellphone so communication can happen in case of an emergency.

Whether hunting on land or by water, firearm safety is always essential. Recall the four basic rules of firearm safety [here](#).

To learn more about safe hunting and boating practices or enroll in a hunter education course, click [here](#).