

Dept. of Natural Resources: Wearing a life jacket saves lives

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MADISON, Wis. – It's peak boating season, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds boaters that [wearing a life jacket could save your life.](#)

To date, 16 people have died in boating incidents so far this year in Wisconsin. Operator inexperience, inattention, recklessness and speeding are the four leading causes of tragic watercraft crashes, and the leading cause of death is drowning.

The majority of people who drown in boating accidents know how to swim but become incapacitated in the water such as being injured or unconscious, exhausted or weighed down by clothing.

“Wearing a life jacket is the easiest thing you can do to make sure that your next boating trip won't be your last,” said Lt. Darren Kuhn, DNR Boating Law Administrator. “Make sure you and all other passengers are wearing it with the buckles fastened before you cast off.”

The department does not track all drownings – only those fatalities linked to the use of a recreational activity item, such as a boat, kayak or canoe. [Boating incident reports to date for 2021 and previous years are available online here.](#)

Statistics show boaters who wear life jackets and take boater safety courses are most likely to stay safe on Wisconsin waters. Always follow the basic safety tips below and enjoy Wisconsin's great lakes and rivers with family and friends.

WATER SAFETY TIPS

- [Sign up now to take an online boater education course.](#)

- Always wear a properly fitted life jacket that has a snug fit and is fastened when you're on or near the water.
- Enjoy the waters sober and know your limits. Alcohol blurs a person's judgment, reaction time and abilities.
- River shorelines and sandbars pose unseen dangers. Higher, fast-moving water can tax an individual's boating, paddling and swimming skills.

Be ready for the unexpected and always wear your life jacket. [More boating safety tips are available on the DNR website.](#)