

DNR: Boat Responsibly; Wear A Lifejacket

Posted on Thursday, May 6, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: DNR Office of Communications
DNRPress@wisconsin.gov

MADISON, Wis. – Longer days and warmer temps mean more boats are on the water, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds boaters that [wearing a life jacket could save your life.](#)

Three people have died in boating incidents so far this year, in addition to 22 people who died in 2020.

“Operator inexperience, inattention, recklessness and speeding are the four leading causes of tragic watercraft crashes, and the leading cause of death is drowning,” said Darren Kuhn, DNR Boating Law Administrator. “Life jackets don’t do any good if they are sitting next to you. Things can go wrong at any moment.”

The DNR reminds the public that safety is an important part of water fun. Most drowning victims on Wisconsin waterbodies were not wearing life jackets. Wisconsin rivers and lakes can be relaxing and family-friendly places to spend a summer day when you put safety first and respect for the water.

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. 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 a 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. Life jackets will keep you on top of the water if you walk off an unexpected drop-off, or a wave or current overpowers you or you fall out of a boat.
- 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.
- Keep an eye on the weather and let someone know where you are going.

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