

Dept. of Natural Resources: Boat sober, wear your life jacket this holiday weekend

Posted on Thursday, Jun 30, 2022

>> **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.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds boaters to keep safety top of mind before casting off this Fourth of July holiday weekend, one of the busiest times of year for Wisconsin waterways.

The public will see more DNR conservation wardens and local law enforcement on high alert for anyone under the influence as part of the annual national [Operation Dry Water](#) Campaign July 2-4.

Alcohol Use Is A Leading Factor In Boating Deaths

[Alcohol use is a leading factor in recreational boating fatalities](#), and nearly 80% of fatal boating incidents involve drowning. Since Operation Dry Water started in 2009, law enforcement officers across the nation have removed more than 4,700 impaired operators from our nation's waterways, preventing dangerous and potentially devastating consequences.

“Alcohol use continues to be a leading known contributing factor in recreational boater deaths and a leading contributor in boating crashes,” said Lt. Darren Kuhn, DNR Boating Law Administrator. “This mission of Operation Dry Water is to keep all of Wisconsin's waters safe for everyone year-round. This also means avoiding alcohol or other drug use prior to and while boating.”

A boat operator or passenger with a blood alcohol concentration above the legal limit runs a significantly increased risk of being involved in a boating crash. When impaired by alcohol, boating crashes are more likely and deadlier for both

passengers and boat operators, many of whom operate in an unsafe manner, capsize their vessel, run aground, collide with navigation aids or other boats or simply fall overboard.

In 2021, law enforcement officers across the nation removed 638 impaired operators from our nation's waterways during the Operation Dry Water weekend. [So far in Wisconsin, there have been six boating fatalities](#) – two of the six remain under investigation for alcohol or other drugs as a factor.

The DNR recommends all boaters leave the alcohol off the boat, operate safe and sober and [take a boating safety education course](#) before getting on the water and everyone on board should always wear a life jacket while near or on the water.

“We want all boaters to enjoy their time on the water in a way that allows everyone to return home safely,” said Kuhn.

Impaired Operators Will Be Removed

Outreach partners and volunteers will be out on the water and at marinas during Operation Dry Water, working collaboratively with law enforcement to educate boaters about safe boating practices. Law enforcement also will be detecting and removing impaired operators from the water. No matter where you are boating, it is illegal to operate a boat under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

[Operation Dry Water](#) is a national annual awareness and enforcement campaign to educate boaters about the dangers of boating under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. The DNR joins local law enforcement agencies, along with the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators for this three-day campaign.

Boaters can learn more about boating under the influence by visiting operationdrywater.org. Operation Dry Water is coordinated nationally by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard.