

# Accident-Free Boating



If you enjoy sailing, motor boating, rowing, canoeing, or kayaking, “safety first” can make boating accident-free. Keep in mind the following:

- Learn how to navigate and maintain your watercraft. The whole family should take a boating safety class.
- Be sure your boat is equipped with safety and rescue gear. By law, you must have a personal flotation device (life jacket) for each person on board. And it's a good idea for passengers of all ages, swimmers and nonswimmers alike, to wear them. Many adults who can swim are knocked unconscious, then fall overboard and drown because they're not wearing a flotation device.
- Don't overload your boat. Know the passenger limit and stick to it.
- Know your limits. Exposure to bright sunlight, heat, boat motion, vibration from a motor, and noise can leave you stressed and fatigued. After 4 hours on the water, your reaction time is considerably slower than when you started out. So allow plenty of time for maneuvers, keep your distance from other crafts, and head for shore before you get tired.

- Pay attention to the weather. Head back to shore—or don't go out—if a storm threatens.
- Don't drink and navigate. Drinking alcohol while boating reduces reaction time, dulls vision, and impairs judgment. As with autos, half of all boating accidents are alcohol-related. If you must drink, wait until the boat is docked.
- Tell someone on shore where you're headed and when you expect to return. If you're delayed due to a storm or breakdown, they can send someone to rescue you.
- If you're towing a water-skier, the law requires that someone in the boat observes the person in tow.
- If your boat capsizes, stay with it. Don't try to swim to shore. You may overestimate your swimming skills.