



## Winter Storm Boating Safety Fact Sheet

### California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways

While California generally experiences mild winters, when storm clouds roll in, many waterways become dangerous for boating enthusiasts. Boat owners and marina operators are advised to be storm ready throughout winter and spring.

This page contains information and links to weather resources, effects on California's waterways and safety precautions to follow. California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways staff monitors winter weather and posts pertinent safety information on BoatCalifornia social media as it becomes available.

### **What Boaters Should Know About Winter Storm Boating Safety**

#### **Keep informed about the latest weather, water and tidal conditions.**

Develop a list of weather resources, sign up for alerts and use them prior to going out on the water. In addition to local weather forecasts, critical meteorological information is available to boaters and marina operators. Some websites to follow include:

[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov) National Weather Service – Active Alerts, Forecasts, Conditions

[www.wrh.noaa.gov](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov) National Weather Service Western Region – Detailed Hazards

[www.navcen.uscg.gov](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov) United State Coast Guard – Local Notice to Mariners

<https://cdec.water.ca.gov/river/rivcond.html> California Data Exchange – River Conditions

Detailed information can also be obtained by tuning to local radio stations or the [National Weather Radio](#) Broadcasts on frequencies of 162.400, 162.425, 162.450, 162.475, 162.500, 162.525, and 162.550 MHz in areas where available or by consulting local news sources.

#### **Check your boat's required safety equipment.**

California boating laws require recreational boats to carry safety equipment such as flares to visually signal distress, a whistle, bell or horn to sound distress calls, and serviceable life jackets on board. After a busy summer boating season, make sure your required safety equipment is ready and in working order.

During the winter it is especially important to have good anchoring equipment and bailing devices, and to know how to use them. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or the U.S. Power Squadrons offer complimentary vessel safety checks. For a full list of required equipment and for general safety information check the [ABCs of California Boating](#).



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#### **Avoid going on the water during strong weather.**

High tides, storm surges, poor visibility, moving sandbars and debris contribute to dangerous conditions during winter. Conditions on the water change rapidly. Boaters who must be on the water this winter should carry a registered Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) for marine use and know how to use it. More Information: [www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov](http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov).

#### **Always file a float plan with friends or family.**

Searching for an overdue boat has a much greater chance of being successful if the U.S. Coast Guard or other rescue agencies have certain facts. For your own safety and before boating, file a [float plan](#) with a reliable person who will notify authorities if necessary. At a minimum a float plan should include the location to which you will be heading your approximate time of return. It is also recommended that you regularly check in with those who are aware of your plan, especially if your plan changes.

#### **Have an emergency and accident plan in place for your boat and home.**

In addition to filing a float plan, boaters must know what they will do in case of a boating emergency. Emergency and accident procedures for recreational boaters can be viewed in the [ABCs of California Boating](#). Read this important information and perform an accident drill with your crew. Create and carry a contact list of emergency resources such as local first responders.

Make sure you also have a home [emergency plan](#) in place for you, your family and your workplace. Create a list of your county and city resources and contact information, including your local:

- Fire department
- Public health department
- Public works dispatch center
- Electric/gas utility provider

Most importantly, keep **safety** in mind and **never risk human life for the sake of protecting property!**

#### **Check that your emergency supply kit is up-to-date.**



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[Emergency supply kits](#) for both home and boat should be checked, and older supplies including food, water, batteries, maps and contact data should be replaced with fresh supplies.

**If your boat is moored or docked throughout the winter season, check before and after a storm that dock lines are properly secured.**

Know how your boat should be docked and/or moored to avoid storm damage. Take a boating safety class or review [how to secure your boat](#).

Please share this information and your knowledge with other boaters. More boating safety information can be found online at:

- [www.storms.ca.gov](http://www.storms.ca.gov)
- [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)
- [www.BoatCalifornia.com](http://www.BoatCalifornia.com)

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