



safe boating hints for

Hunters & Anglers



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF BOATING AND WATERWAYS

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Hunters and Anglers

Many hunters and fishermen invest in small, easy-to-handle boats to get them to “where the big ones are.” All too often, the boat is treated merely as a platform for the sportsman, and consequently a weekend outing can turn into an unnecessary tragedy. A good working knowledge of safety practices for small boats will add to your enjoyment and help ensure you do not become the “big one that got away.”

Little Boats Can Cause Big Problems - Stability

Rowboats, punts, johnboats, dinghies, canoes, and a variety of designs of cartop boats all have one thing in common—their size. As a rule, these small boats are less stable than larger craft. Capsizings and falls overboard are the most common types of fatal boating accidents and are directly related to the lack of stability of small boats. These types of accidents are caused by a number of factors, including:

Overloading or Improper Loading—Small boats are limited in their weight-carrying and horsepower capacity. If the boat is equipped with a capacity plate, follow the manufacturer’s recommendation for maximum weight. Because the addition of a small amount of weight to a boat at or near its capacity is critical, weighing of passengers and all gear may be necessary. Most importantly, ensure that movable gear is properly stowed so that the boat is trim. Too much weight in one area will reduce freeboard and may cause an otherwise safe boat to capsize.

Standing—Another common problem with this type of boat is the loss of stability from people standing to take aim, cast, or land a catch. The old expression, “Sit down! You’re rocking the boat,” especially applies. Many have fallen overboard and never retrieved the game they stood up to shoot or gaff.

Appropriateness of the Craft for the Conditions—Make sure that your vessel’s size and type is appropriate for the variety of weather/water conditions you may encounter. Many fatalities have occurred because the vessel’s design made it ill-equipped to handle choppy or rough water or windy conditions.

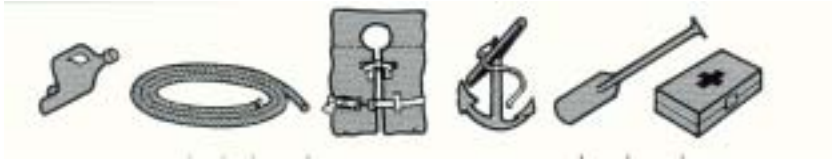
Collisions

Operator inattention and improper lookout are the main reasons for collisions with other boats and objects in the water, such as submerged logs or pilings. Know the rules of the road so you can avoid collisions with other boats. Learn about the local boating area through nautical charts, if available, or by talking to locals knowledgeable about the area. Maintain a proper speed to allow enough time to avoid hazards.

The Rules of the Road prohibit recreational boats from impeding the passage of a vessel that can safely navigate only within a narrow channel or fairway, such as freighters and other large vessels. Stay to the right-hand side of channels, and give the right-of-way

to any large vessel. Because ships require a greater area to maneuver and longer distances to stop, and have limited visibility, small craft should give them a wide berth. Bow and stern waves can be hazardous to small vessels. Because of these factors, it is essential to observe the rules of the road and use common sense.

Equipping Your Boat



Contrary to popular thinking, the most important equipment aboard your boat is not that expensive rod and reel or the new shotgun; it is the safety equipment required by law.

Life Jackets—At least one U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (life jacket) must be aboard per person. A wearable device is recommended since it provides the best protection against the most common cause of death in boating—drowning. Some approved flotation devices double as hunting jackets for warmth and serviceability.

Lights—If operating at night or in reduced visibility, motorboats must display running lights. Manually propelled boats, at a minimum, must display a white light in time to avoid a collision.

Fire Extinguishers—Outboard motorboats of less than 26 ft. in length and of open construction are not required to carry fire extinguishers. Use extra care when fueling.

For additional information on required equipment, refer to the “ABCs of the California Boating Law”, available from the Department of Boating and Waterways.

In addition to the equipment required by law, the following equipment is recommended: bailing device, anchors and at least 200 feet of line, first-aid kit, paddle, and spare spark plugs and other parts. Distress flares are recommended for boating in large, open areas. Carrying extra fuel is also a good idea. To avoid running out of gas, plan to use one-third of the gas to go out, one-third for the return trip, and one-third to keep in reserve.

Float Tubes—A float tube is typically a nylon-encased rubber inner tube/tubes, or a hard plastic tube, with a built-in seat through which the operator’s legs dangle in the water below. Some have small gear storage spaces. A non-motorized float tube is propelled by the use of swim fins, while a motorized one is propelled by an electric or

hand-pump motor, often with the additional aid of swim fins to steer and help propel. Motorized float tubes are required to carry proper life jackets; non-motorized float tubes are not.



For Added Safety

Stow all gear in the boat while it is beached. If loading from a dock or pier, step into the boat and lift gear aboard. Never carry heavy loads aboard with you.

Alcohol

Alcohol is a contributing factor to many boating accidents, injuries, and fatalities. Studies indicate that the hazardous side effects of alcohol are more pronounced when combined with wind, boat noise, vibration, wave action, sun, and glare, which can have a tremendous adverse influence on judgment and response time in boating.



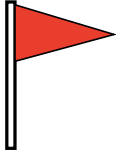
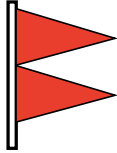
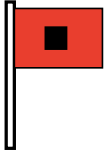
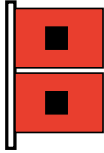




If Your Boat Capsizes

One out of every three boating fatalities in California is fishing related. Typically, most of those victims were boating during the “off” season, October - April. Of all fishing-related deaths reported in 2002, 78% resulted from vessel capsizings and falls overboard. None of these victims wore life jackets and the cause of death of 83% of the victims was drowning.



Sudden immersion in cold water can cause problems ranging from hyperventilation to heart attack that can cause helplessness and drowning. A life jacket will keep you afloat till help arrives. Warm, layered clothing offers some protection from hypothermia, the life-threatening loss of body heat caused by cold-water exposure. If you find yourself in the water, do not panic. Locate other passengers and offer assistance. Most likely, the

boat will be floating. An unconscious person should be lashed to the boat, if the boat is not in danger of sinking. Get in or on the boat to keep those areas of the body which lose heat most rapidly (the chest and head) out of the water. Unless you can safely reach shore, which is usually more distant than it appears, **STAY WITH THE BOAT UNTIL HELP ARRIVES.**

STORM ADVISORIES				
Daytime Signals				
Night Signals				
	Small Craft Winds up to 38 mph	Gale Winds 39 to 54 mph	Storm Winds 55 to 73 mph	Hurricane Winds 74 mph and up

Weather

It is unsafe for any cartop or small fishing boat to be out in any but the best weather conditions. Weather information is always available in newspaper, radio, and television forecasts. Carry a portable radio on board. Be sure to watch for increasing afternoon winds and rain squalls. If you are caught in a sudden squall, sit as low as possible and head your boat into the wind and waves. Shift weight aft to raise the bow high enough to ride over the waves. Proceed at slow speed to the nearest shelter.

File A "Float Plan" With A Friend

Although more and more boaters carry cellular telephones in case of emergency, do not rely on a cell phone alone, in the event of service area or other outages. Filing a float plan will greatly aid rescue agencies in locating and assisting you. Write down your vessel's name or CF number, the length, type and color of boat, power, cruising range,

and speed. Include the number of passengers and their names and phone numbers. Most importantly, write down your destination, time of departure, time of expected return, and the phone number of the nearest rescue or enforcement agency. Give the float plan to a reliable person who will notify authorities if necessary. REMEMBER TO CANCEL YOUR FLOAT PLAN UPON YOUR RETURN.

BOATING SAFETY CLASSES explaining required and recommended equipment for small boats and offering training in good seamanship are conducted throughout California by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons and certain chapters of the American Red Cross. For information on Coast Guard Auxiliary and Power Squadron classes, call (800) SEA-SKIL (732-7545) or (800) 368-5647. Hands-on boating safety courses are also offered at aquatic centers managed by colleges, cities and counties, and other non-profit organizations throughout the state. For a list of organizations affiliated with the Department, see our Website. The Department of Boating and Waterways offers a free home study course entitled *California Boating Safety Course*. For more information, e-mail us at pubinfo@dbw.ca.gov, or phone (916) 263-1331 or tollfree (888) 326-2822, or write: Department of Boating and Waterways, 2000 Evergreen Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, California 95815-3888. Visit our Website at www.dbw.ca.gov.