

Are you in the Zone?

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When we normally talk about being in the *Zone*, we're talking a good place. But being in the *Zone* as far as the 2006 Boating Statistics published by the United States Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety is not the place you or your loved ones want to be.

It's time for a pop quiz.

As it relates to boating, check off yes or no to the following questions.

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you wear your PFD while boating? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you pay attention to your surroundings? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is your boat more than 20' long? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you drive your boat at reasonable speeds? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you always boat without consuming alcoholic beverages? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you operate your boat in a safe manner (never jump wakes for example)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you take a safe boating course? |

If you checked no to any of these questions your in the *Zone* – the *Zone* which includes 66% of all fatal boating accident victims!

The more “no’s” you have checked, the more you are in the *Zone*. The farther into the *Zone*, and the better your chances will be of having a fatal boating accident.

"Overall, two-thirds of all fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those who drowned, ninety (90) percent of the victims were not wearing their life jacket. Eight out of every ten boaters who drowned were using boats less than 20 feet in length." this according the USCG 2006 Boating Statistic's COMDTPUB P16754.20 report.

(http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/Boating_Statistics_2006.pdf)

Ninety percent - that is a significant figure; think about it, 90% of the fatalities didn't wear a PFD. And with the wide selection available to boaters today of different PFD's in all price categories and all types, there are just no more excuses.

A word about these Statistics

The Coast Guard excludes more statistics from their Recreational Boating stats than include, if you were to look at the details.

What is meant by this? Well if property damage was under \$2,000, it wasn't included in the stats. Injury didn't require medical treatment beyond first aid – yup, not included.

Deaths due to natural causes or when a swimmer is not on the boat, deaths or injuries on commercial vessels also weren't included in the stats. If the fatalities not included were, we're talking another 51 people.

Keep your eye on the ball

We've heard this sports analogy almost as many times as being in the "zone". It tells us to focus. And, whether you're driving a car, trying to hit a home run both figuratively or philosophically, you need to keep your mind on what you are doing.

The 2006 Statistics report found "Operator inattention, carelessness/reckless operation, excessive speed, and no proper lookout are the primary contributing factors in all reported accidents."

Don't drink and drive

All the arguments to hear about drinking and driving on land not only apply to boating, but in spades! The effects of sun, heat, water, motion separately and combined makes the consumption of alcohol and piloting a boat two activities you **NEVER** want to combine!

"Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; accounting for nearly twenty (20) percent of all reported fatalities.", again from the 2006 Statistics.

Educate yourself!

Each year, the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, along with a wide assortment of partners gives safe boating education courses all over the United States. Courses can be taken on-line, on CD, in the classroom and even on boats.

The 2006 Boating Statistics weren't much different than previous years; "Consistent with previous years, 70% of reported fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction."

Boating is a fun sport, but it can be dangerous. Boats have engines and/or moving parts. They are subject to tremendous stresses, from the wind, and the water, which have the ability to break both machine and man.

TYPE OF BOATING INSTRUCTION	FATALITIES
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary	14
U.S. Power Squadron	
American Red Cross	
Informal.....	18
State	27
Other.....	43
None	253
Total Fatalities -- Known Operator Instruction	355
Total Fatalities -- Unknown Operator Instruction.....	355
Total Fatalities -- Known & Unknown Operator Instruction	710

Source: 2006 Boating Statistics COMDTPUB P16754.20

The above chart shows that those boaters who took a US Coast Guard Auxiliary or partner course were the least likely to die in a boating accident. Those who chose no boater education whatsoever had a 71% chance of dying because of an accident.

Why would you not want to find out the best way to enjoy this great sport in safety? Courses are given during the week, on weekends during the day and nighttime. In fact, in today's environment there is no reason why someone can not find and/or take a boating safety course.

Looking for that holiday gift?

Why not give your loved one a gift of safety? Buy them a safe boating course class. Purchase a book on weather or navigation. How bout a book on seamanship?

Each of these suggestions can fit any pocketbook, and fit into anyone's busy schedule. If you find time to boat, why not find time to educate yourself?

Think about this statistic while holiday shopping: Since 2000, the average fatality rate has been between 5.3 and 5.8 people per 100,000 registered boats. The preceding decade was between 5.8 and 8.3 per 100,000. While there has been a drop, it has been the combination of education and changes in federal, state and local requirements, together that have brought about the change.

Regardless, if one does not know what the rules, laws and best practices are; one can not take the steps necessary to stay safe. Safe Boater Education is the key to reducing accidents and deaths on the water, and we in the Coast Guard can never be remiss in reminding all boaters to take, re-take and increase the amount of boater education that you have.

For more information on boating safety, contact the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary at www.cgaux.info.