

## **Key Messages Short Articles – Safe Boating Awareness Week**

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## WEAR IT! – CASE 1

“It happened so quickly. One minute you’re having the time of your life, the next minute you’re fighting for it.”



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That was Dave Kimpinski’s comment after nearly drowning in a boating accident. Dave and his young son, Curtis, were pulling Dave’s niece Amanda on an inflatable tube with their small outboard-powered boat.

They hit a large wake from another boat and Dave leaned across to prevent his son Curtis from falling in but instead went overboard himself.

Dave wasn’t a swimmer, and he wasn’t wearing a lifejacket. The boat started to make lazy circles while Curtis cried out for his dad.

Amanda saw her uncle struggling to stay afloat and left the tube and began to swim after him.

Fortunately, Amanda was prepared for the water and was wearing a lifejacket. She reached her uncle and Dave grabbed on to her.

Curtis, meanwhile, pulled the safety lanyard on the motor just like he’d seen his dad do and the boat stopped moving.

Amanda’s lifejacket kept both of them afloat and they were able to get back to their boat and climb aboard.

Dave was lucky! He was lucky that his little boy managed to stop their boat, but he was even luckier that Amanda was wearing a lifejacket and was able to help him.

Because of his near tragedy, Dave Kimpinski will tell you he is a much wiser, safer boater today.

None of us can predict when a potential disaster might strike. Dave Kimpinski knows that firsthand. A fun day of tubing nearly turned deadly because he decided not to wear a lifejacket.

For years, the Canadian Safe Boating Council has been urging boaters to take the necessary precautions and always wear a lifejacket on the water. It’s not good enough simply to have them in the boat. They only work when you wear them!

## WEAR IT! – CASE 2

Reg Buxton and his family decided one summer to take a different kind of family vacation.

They chartered a trawler-styled boat to explore British Columbia's Inside Channel. The waters of the Inside Channel are extremely deep and extremely cold, even in summer.



Reg and his wife had the good sense to equip each of their three kids with lifejackets and make them wear them all the time.

Things were going smoothly; everyone was having fun. The kids were down below playing while Reg and his wife were at the helm enjoying the afternoon scenery.

Sometime later, two of the Buxton children joined their mom and dad on deck.

Suddenly, Reg noticed their youngest, David, was not with them. In a panic, they searched the boat for little David, to no avail. He was gone.

Reg called the Coast Guard who told him to circle back and retrace his route while they scrambled for help.

Reg and his family eventually came upon David at the same time another boat did.

"We could see something red bobbing in the water," Reg said later.

Young David Buxton was saved by his lifejacket. It not only kept him floating in the frigid Pacific waters, but its bright colour alerted rescuers and helped in spotting him.

One can only ask what would have happened if David hadn't been wearing a brightly coloured lifejacket?

For years, the Canadian Safe Boating Council has been urging boaters to take the necessary precautions and always wear a lifejacket while on the water.

Often, boaters will proudly tell boating safety officials that they always have their lifejackets on board their boats, just like the law demands.

The CSBC applauds this but reminds those boaters that a lifejacket isn't intended to save the life of the boat. It's meant to save the life of the human being on the boat!

So, if you fall in the water without your lifejacket on your body, that fine sense of pride in having lifejackets on board won't help keep you afloat.

The CSBC urges you that when you go boating this season, don't just carry your lifejacket aboard your boat, Wear It!



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## IF YOU DRINK, DON'T BOAT

When the Canadian Safe Boating Council speaks to Canadian boaters each year about the dangers of drinking and boating, there is no gentle way to do it.

The motto on the road is "If you drink, don't drive". It's the same on the water. And so are the laws.

First and foremost, a boat is a vessel in the same way a car is a vehicle under the Highway Traffic Acts in all provinces and territories in this country. If you are convicted in Canada of driving a vehicle under the influence, you lose your license. In many parts of Canada, the same thing applies if you are under the influence in a boat. And you might lose your car driver's license too.

Canadian studies show that, in nearly 40% of boating deaths, alcohol was detected or suspected and 23% of victims were above the legal limit.

The effects of sunshine and a boat's rocking motion increase the effects of alcohol, and, for a boater, a simple ride can turn into a dangerous dunking. A big wave, a quick change in the boat's direction, or a 'tippy canoe' can result in someone in the water.

Psychologists know that human nature has a way of rationalizing. "It can't possibly happen to me" is often the thought. Whether that means "I'll never be caught" or "I'll never be killed" doesn't matter.

Neither of those things will happen if boaters ``Don't Cruise With Booze``. Afterward, you can have a few drinks on the shore and then stay put.

It's that simple - If you drink, don't drive.

## TAKE A BOATING SKILLS COURSE



As of September 2009, every operator of a motorized vessel must have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC). The federal government instituted this requirement as a means to instill in boaters a basic knowledge of safe boating practices.

However, keep in mind that the PCOC is just a legal minimum and currently isn't a requirement for operators of non-motorized craft such as smaller sailboats, canoes, kayaks, paddleboats, sailboards, etc.

There is a wealth of courses available for every type of boat and activity. These include sailboat racing, various levels of cruising, canoeing, kayaking, marine radio operation, chart reading, and many more. They are offered by institutions like the Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons, the Canadian Yachting Association, and various canoe and kayak clubs. The increased knowledge that these courses provide not only increases the safety factor; they also ramp up the fun factor! Taking a course is also a way to chase away those off-season blues.

The Canadian Safe Boating Council urges you to peruse the course offerings of the above organizations in your area to see exactly what they have to offer. It might just add a new level of excitement to your on-water adventures.



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## BE PREPARED

It's a beautiful day; the sun is shining, and you've just launched your boat for the start of another season on the water. And the thoughts of that tough winter just past are quickly forgotten. Everyone's on board, and excited about the day ahead, so off you go.

The day unfolds as you had hoped it would until a problem leaves you dead in the water.

It could be that you've run out of gas, or you've had a mechanical breakdown of some kind. What to do? Likely what you did not do is check your boat thoroughly before heading out. And unfortunately, you are not alone.

Scott Miller, a Maritime Search and Rescue Coordinator with the Canadian Coast Guard says: "75 to 80% of calls for help to the Coast Guard are non-distress calls; the most common ones deal with boats that have broken down, run aground or have just run out of gas which is far and away the most common call to the Coast Guard."

Mechanical failures can strike any boater, at any time. That's just part of boating. And it's not necessarily an indication that the boater has simply failed to properly look after the boat. Stuff happens!

But many calls for help are predictable and preventable. Have a proper checklist for your boat and follow it before you head out every time. (Pre-departure checklists are also available on the internet.) Make sure that your boat is mechanically sound and that you have enough gas for your intended voyage with some in reserve. And file a float plan or itinerary to help Search and Rescue find you in the event of a real emergency. (These, too, are available on the internet.)

A few simple steps will save you the embarrassment of making an unnecessary call for help and diverting search and rescue resources from areas where their expertise may really be needed!

Review your checklist BEFORE your leave – Be Prepared.



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## CHILLING FACTS OF COLD WATER – SAMPLE 1

Hypothermia. Say it aloud and it's even an unpleasant sounding word.

But it has a simple meaning. It's when the core temperature of your body drops too abnormally low. If it continues for too long, your heart can stop.

Many Canadian boaters are aware of hypothermia, but most are not aware that it is the 'final stage' your body reaches after being in cold water. Many people die during the first few minutes of immersion in cold water well before they become hypothermic, they simply drown due to the immediate, involuntary, and often deadly effects of cold water. If you accidentally tumble into cold water, the initial cold shock will trigger a gasp response and, if you are underwater, you can inhale up to a liter of water. If you are on the surface, your heart rate can skyrocket; your breathing will be uncontrolled and increase as much 600 to 1000 percent. You can expect panic to set in as well. For most, this initial shock will last about a minute and then the breathing will slowly come back under control.

Depending on the water temperature, over the next ten minutes or so you will experience Cold Incapacitation. As your body struggles to preserve its core temperature your limbs will become numb and your ability to self-rescue or even simply continue to swim will become impaired. In cold water without a lifejacket, you will eventually become so incapacitated that you can no longer stay afloat.

If you are wearing a lifejacket and have not been able to rescue yourself, you can expect to be conscious for about an hour and it will still be some time before you succumb to hypothermia. This is true even in the coldest water and will give rescuers plenty of additional time to find and rescue you.

The Canadian Safe Boating Council urges you to take a couple simple preventative measures to avoid becoming hypothermic and/or drowning in cold water. Wear your lifejacket. It guarantees that you will float, especially in those first critical minutes when just trying to catch your breath and figure out how to rescue yourself. Also consider wearing thermal protective clothing that will slow the onset of hypothermia should you fall into cold water.



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## CHILLING FACTS OF COLD WATER –SAMPLE 2

We used to think that hypothermia was something that we all needed to know about cold water immersion. However, research has shown that few people who fall into cold water actually reach a hypothermic state. They die long before.

What you need to know is a simple series of numbers... 1 – 10 – 1. It is the second most important thing to remember to survive an accidental fall into cold water. If you fall into cold water:

- 1 You have 1 minute to get your breathing under control. The initial cold shock will have you gasping for air, breathing uncontrollably and probably panicking. Keeping afloat and breathing will be very difficult but concentrate on just getting your breathing under control and you can expect gasping to pass in about 1 minute
- 10 During the first 10 minutes you will experience Cold Incapacitation as your body shunts blood to its core in an attempt to preserve core temperature. This causes a loss of muscle coordination in your limbs and quickly makes it impossible for you to self-rescue or even stay afloat.
- 1 After Cold Incapacitation, hypothermia will finally start to set in, but you can expect that will take about 1 hour to become unconscious and still longer before you succumb to hypothermia.

Remember those numbers! 1 – 10 – 1; the second most important thing to know and understand if you accidentally fall into cold water. And you already know the first! Wear your lifejacket before you accidentally end up in cold water or you will likely drown before the count even starts.