

U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Tips

Safety tips when swimming in open water:

The Coast Guard recommends always practicing water safety; wearing a life jacket when swimming and being aware of currents and potential rip tides in your area.

Only swim in designated areas, and follow the instructions of local authorities.

Never swim alone.

If caught in a rip current, remain calm and don't fight the current. Instead, swim parallel to the shore and swim towards the shore only after out of the current.

Seek help if someone is caught in a rip current. Throw them something that floats or give them instructions on how to escape. Remember, many people drown while attempting to rescue someone else from a rip current.

Safety tips for boaters before leaving the dock:

Wear a life jacket. The U.S. Coast Guard estimates that life jackets could have saved the lives of more than 80 percent of boating fatality victims.

Carry a VHF-FM marine radio. Cell phones often lose signal and run out of batteries after a day on the water. They are helpful, but not reliable for emergencies.

Register your EPIRB. Response time is the key to survival. The sooner help arrives, the better the chances for survival. Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) provide the fastest and most accurate way the Coast Guard has of locating and rescuing persons in distress.

Have a Vessel Safety Check. It's a great way of learning about problems that might put boaters in violation of state or federal laws, or create danger for boaters and passengers on the water. Best of all, it's free

Take a boating safety course. Boaters can learn the basics about their vessels and the "rules of the road" in America's Boating Course, a new electronic boating course

produced through a partnership between the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons. For more information, visit www.americasboatingcourse.com

Never boat under the influence (BUI). Intoxicated boaters can face both federal and state charges with penalties of up to one year in prison and up to \$100,000 in fines.

File a float plan. There are too many facts that need to be accurately remembered and conveyed in an emergency situation. Without a float plan boaters are counting on someone else, a friend, neighbor, or family member to remember detailed information that rescue personnel need in order to find you. For more information, visit www.floatplancentral.org

Boating safety information and the current boating safety statistic report is available on the U.S. Coast Guard boating safety web site at: www.uscgboating.org.