

BOATING SAFETY

YOU ARE THE KEY TO WATER SAFETY

Considering the large number of participants in Minnesota, water-based recreation is a relatively safe pastime. Still, an average of 20 persons die in boating accidents each year in the state. In addition, many more people are injured and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of property damage results from boating mishaps.

Your water fun depends on you, your equipment and other people who, like yourself, enjoy spending leisure time on, in or near the river.

Let's look at your responsibilities:

1. A knowledge of rules and regulations for watercraft use.
2. A knowledge of safety equipment required by law to be on board your watercraft.
3. A knowledge of the operation of your boat.
4. Knowledge of boating hazards unique to large rivers.
5. Responsibility for the actions of all persons on board the watercraft.
6. Acceptance of the fact that everyone has the right - and privilege - to use the river in a proper manner.

FLOAT PLAN

Leave a float plan with someone who will miss you if you do not return on time. A float plan should include the following information: (*See sample float plan on pages 111 - 112.*)

1. A description of your car and where you will park it.
2. Where you intend to boat.
3. A description of your boat including the registration number.
4. Communication equipment on board and cell phone number or radio call sign if you have one.
5. The names of all persons on board.
6. Safety equipment on board.
7. Estimated time of arrival back home.

8. The latest return time home.
9. Your alternate plans in the event of an emergency or bad weather.
10. The phone number of the county sheriff for the area in which you will be boating.
11. Don't forget to cancel your float plan when you return home.

BOATING ACCIDENTS

Many boating accidents can be avoided if you follow these safe boating practices:

1. Wear your life jacket.
2. Avoid alcohol when boating.
3. Be especially careful around cold water. Hypothermia kills.
4. Turn your navigation lights on at sunset.
5. Carry a fire extinguisher aboard at all times.
6. Be aware of changing weather conditions.
7. Keep a constant lookout for other boats and navigational hazards.

Remember:

- ★ Most boating accidents occur during the day and in clear weather.
- ★ The majority of boat operators involved in accidents have considerable experience in using their craft, but have never taken a formal boating safety course.

Reporting Accidents

Federal and state rules require that any accident, collision, or other casualty involving a motorboat or other vessel, must be reported if it resulted in:

1. a fatality, or
2. personal injury involving loss of consciousness, requiring medical treatment, or resulting in incapacitation for 24 hours or more, or
3. property damage of \$2,000 or more.

In Minnesota, all accidents must be reported to the county sheriff's office where the accident occurred. The addresses and telephone numbers for each county sheriff's office are on pages 107-108 of this publication. In an emergency - call "911."