

# Boat Safety Week Is May 22: Here's What You Need To Know

Whether you are new to nautical exploration or have been boating for years, it is crucial to know how to stay safe on a boat. Boat Safety Week is just around the corner, and we will share some helpful tips to keep you safe at sea.

Summer is almost here, and you will soon be spending your weekends at the marina. There is nothing better than taking the family out for a lazy weekend adventure in the water.

While boating can be enjoyable and relaxing, it can also be hazardous if safety is not at the forefront of the experience. This article will discuss some of the most crucial boating safety measures to ensure a safe experience for the whole family.

## Drinking And Driving Is A Never

Just like you would never drink and get behind the wheel of a car, you should never operate your vehicle under the influence of alcohol. While the open waters may seem like a great place to kick back and drink a beer or two, the same rules of the road apply to the water.

In most states operating a boat under the influence is treated the same as operating a vehicle. In most states, the legal Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is 0.08, which is the same limit when driving a car.

The federal government even has laws against Boating Under the Influence (BUI). The United States law does not discriminate against the type of boat used in these incidents. Whether you are operating a boat with a motor or without, the US Coast Guard will charge you with a BUI, and you will face strict penalties.

## Lifejackets Are Required, Always

There are ZERO excuses for not having lifejackets on your boat. Lifejackets, also known as Personal Floatation Devices (PFD), are required on every ship. In fact, not having life jackets is illegal in all 50 states, as they are life-saving devices.

There are different types and sizes of life jackets, so it is essential that you know which are best for each person on your trip. There are five levels of life jackets and throwable floatation devices. Be sure to do your research before going to your favorite fishing, boating, or sporting goods store.

While it varies from state to state, the average fine for not having a life jacket is about \$200 per offense. In stricter states, the penalty can be as high as \$1,000 and can include jail time if the violation involves a child without PFD.

## Make Sure You Meet US Coast Guard Requirements

The laws vary between the states and even differ from county to county in some cases. The US Coast Guard has minimum requirements to enjoy boating safely and legally.

These requirements include:

- **Vessel Documentation:** Your boat needs to have proper documentation and registration, just like your car. If you have just purchased a boat, it is essential to know that your boat needs a name and a hailing port. These must be printed per US Coast Guard standards. Your vessel identification number needs to be displayed on the side and rear of the boat. In addition to the federal requirements, all 50 states require a state validation sticker after the vessel number.
- **Visual Distress Signals (VDS):** This is not a requirement of all boats, only boats in open water. Many US Coast Guard-approved VDS' typically fall into two categories, pyrotechnic and non-pyrotechnic. We suggest having at least three different types of VDS on your boat at all times. This backup measure will help ensure rescue in the event of a failure.
- **Navigation Lights:** This is another requirement of all motorized boats regardless of the owner's intent. Even if you plan to never use your boat in the dark, you must have navigation lights on your boat. Accidents happen, and things do not always go according to plan. A day at the sea could quickly turn to a night at sea. Operating a boat at night without navigation lights is dangerous and illegal. It is the responsibility of the boat operator to make sure they have proper navigation lights.

## When In Doubt, Get An Inspection

The US Coast Guard is located all over the US at major and local marinas. The US Coast Guard can be your lifesaver in time of a naval emergency. Regardless of your experience level, routine inspections should be completed for the safety of you and your passengers.

The US Coast Guard Auxiliary offers a [free boat inspection service](#). We suggest doing this regularly as it will significantly speed up the process of being boarded by the US Coast Guard, a random safety practice.

## Boat Safely

Boat season is here, and so is Boat Safety Week. If you are in San Diego, California, come by and check out Boater U, a program designed by boaters to help educate new and novice

boaters alike. We offer powerboat training, available in both online courses and in-person training.

If you are in Southern California and interested in learning more about boating, be sure to check out the team at Boater U. They have the skills and expertise to make you safer and more confident on the water and open seas.