13 boating safety tips.



The sun's shining, the water's calling … boating season is officially here. But before you launch your boat, it's important to refresh your memory on boating safety tips. From watching the weather to keeping life jackets in tow, these tips will make for a safer and more enjoyable day on the water.

Ready to hit the water? Be prepared with these 13 boating safety tips:

1. **Be smart on the water.** Just like you would in a car or on a motorcycle, use common sense on the water. Stay alert, don't boat while drowsy, keep distance between other boaters, drive at a safe speed, and ensure passengers stay safely seated throughout the ride.

2. **Pay close attention to the weather forecast.** Being weather wise is one of the most important skills for safe boating. Before you leave the dock, check local weather conditions to make sure it's safe to be on the water. Then, keep an eye on the skies, winds, and temperature. If you notice sudden changes, head back to shore immediately.

3. **Share your float plan.** Give at least one person your travel itinerary – including where you're going and how long you'll be gone in case of emergency.

4. **Carry a life jacket for everyone on board.** All passengers should have easy access to a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. While regulations vary by state, it's required in every state to have a life jacket for each person on board. In addition, life jackets should be fitted to each individual (child-size jackets should be on board for kids).

5. **Have a throwable flotation device immediately available.** Whether it's a floating seat cushion or a floating ring, always have something readily available to throw to someone who has fallen into the water.

6. **Test your horn.** To communicate with other boats and to send danger signals, make sure your boat's horn can be heard.

7. **Designate an assistant skipper or first mate.** More than one person on board should be familiar with how to operate the boat in case they need to step in and get everyone safely back to shore.

8. **Keep your navigation lights on from sunset to sunrise.** If you're traveling at night, it's important to ensure all other boats will be able to see you.

9. **Don't overload your boat.** Carry only the amount of passengers and/or cargo your boat can safely handle.

10. **Keep emergency supplies on board.** Stay safe by having charts, flares, fire extinguishers, an emergency blanket, and a first-aid kit on the boat at all times.

11. **Listen for the carbon monoxide alarm.** If there's a buildup of toxic fumes from the engine, a carbon monoxide alarm will sound so you can take action.

12. **Shut off the engine when you approach swimmers.** To reduce the risk of propeller injuries, turn off the boat's engine and keep swimmers in view – always on the operator's side of the boat.

13. **Address the way you dress.** Wear shoes with slip-proof soles to help prevent injury, consider waterproof clothing, and wear sunglasses and sunscreen for a safer ride.

In addition to these 13 boating safety tips, our spring checklist can help you get your boat out of storage and safely into the water.

Looking for added protection? Talk to one of our local, independent agents about watercraft insurance today.