

NEWS

Oregon State Marine Board

Boat Oregon!



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Operation Dry Water –It’s all about Impairment

The Marine Board and law enforcement from 32 counties and the Oregon State Police will be participating in Operation Dry Water, during the weekend of June 24-26, as part of a nationally coordinated effort to reduce the number of accidents and fatalities related to boating under the influence of intoxicants (BUII).



Already this year, serious impairment-related boating accidents and fatalities have occurred on Oregon waterways. Many are still under investigation. This year and last, there were instances where marijuana contributed to accidents and fatalities. “Because there is clear evidence from Washington State that recreational marijuana increases fatal car crashes, we can only assume that some people will take their impairment to the water,” says Randy Henry, Boating Safety Manager for the Marine Board. “To help marine officers prepare, we are training them to recognize drug impairment along with alcohol impairment and arrest those operators – including those with paddles,” Henry adds.

Boating under the influence of intoxicants means prescription drugs, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, or any other substance that impairs a person’s ability to make sound judgments and

have the ability to safely operate a boat. The effects of drugs and alcohol are also amplified on the water with the combination of sun, glare, wind, waves and other motion.

Impaired boaters can expect to be arrested or face serious penalties. In Oregon, the consequences of being convicted of BUII include the possibility of jail time, \$6,250 in fines and loss of boating privileges. Marine officers can arrest boaters on the observed impairment, which can occur under the .08% blood alcohol concentration and can legally obtain blood, breath or urine if a boater fails field sobriety testing. The Marine Board urges boaters to boat safe, and boat sober –by refraining from using any type of intoxicant.

“Overall, recreational boating is very safe if boaters wear their life jackets, boat sober, and keep a sharp lookout by watching where they are going and what’s going on around them. Accidents and fatalities would be extremely rare. So far this year, the pattern for bad accidents includes impairment, distracted operation and no life jacket,” Henry warns. Henry goes on to say, “The public is our ally in safe boating. If you see an impaired operator or someone who is operating in a way that threatens others’ safety, call 911 and report it. The vast majority of marine officer contacts are educational in nature, but if someone is impaired by alcohol, marijuana or any other drug, they will be arrested and will face the consequences. That’s how we can all save lives.”

For more information about Operation Dry Water, visit www.operationdrywater.org or the Marine Board’s Boating Safety Program at www.boatoregon.com.

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