

NEWS

Oregon State Marine Board
Oregon's Recreational Boating Agency



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Facts about Drinking and Boating

Alcohol and Water: A Dangerous Combination

- The U.S. Coast Guard reports that alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; it was listed as the leading factor in 16% of the deaths, nationwide.
- Intoxicated passengers are just as likely to suffer injury or death as intoxicated boat operators because most boating fatalities occur from falling overboard.
- In Oregon, a boater is considered legally “under the influence” if the boater’s blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is 0.08 percent or higher. Marine officers can still arrest boaters for observed impairment below 0.08 percent.
- Falling overboard, missteps at the dock and falling when boarding a boat result in the most injuries, since judgment and balance are the first signs of impairment.
- When people consume alcohol, their judgment is the first thing impaired, and they often take risks that they normally would not, such as reckless operation, and other behavior that can lead to accidents and injuries.
- Operator inattention, operator inexperience, excessive speed, improper lookout and alcohol rank as the top primary contributing factors in accidents.



The Amplified Effects of Drinking While Boating

- One alcoholic beverage on the water has the same perceived effect as having three on land, according to recent studies by the U.S. Coast Guard’s Office of Boating Safety.
- Alcohol consumption affects balance, vision, coordination and judgment. Environmental factors that come with boating — such as wind, sun, noise and motion — can magnify impairment.
- An automatic gasping response often occurs when a person’s face or upper body is suddenly immersed in cold water. This is an involuntary response, and an intoxicated person is more likely to inhale water into his or her lungs when submerged into cold water.

Drinking and Boating: The Legal Consequences

- A drug or alcohol-impaired boat operator who is arrested for Boating Under the Influence of Intoxicants (BUII) faces the following:
 - Fines of up to \$6,250 and up to one year in jail
 - Loss of boat operation privileges for a certain period of time
 - Boat registration suspended for up to three years

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For more information about boating safety, contact Ashley Massey,
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