

NEWS

Oregon State Marine Board
Boat Oregon



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Marine Board Urges Boaters: Be Safe, Practice Physical Distancing

As boaters gear up to hit the water, they need to keep in mind tips for being safe on cold water as well as their responsibility for staying close to home and practicing physical distancing under Governor Brown’s “Stay Home, Save Lives” executive order.

“For many of us, we have a natural urge to get outside this time of year -the water calls to us,” said Larry Warren, Director for the Marine Board. “We aim to consistently remind people about ways they can stay safe while they’re on the water and in light of COVID-19, we also ask this year that you take additional steps to protect yourself, your family, and the people around you. Use your good judgment and if you venture out to go boating, be fluid and adaptable to rapidly changing situations.”



Cold-water safety

The waterways this time of year are dangerously cold. Falls into the water can quickly turn tragic. Water temperatures are hovering in the 50-degree range and falling overboard will trigger cold-water shock. Numbness will set in quickly, and swimming or calling for help will be difficult. A gasp reflex will happen uncontrollably and draw water into your lungs. Even strong swimmers may drown within minutes.

“The best way to prevent that from happening is to wear a life jacket – actually wear it, not just have it in the boat,” said Ashley Massey, Public Information Officer for the Marine Board. “Make it a habit like putting on your seatbelt. The reality is there isn’t time to put one on in an emergency.”

The cold-water is another reason to boat with others. This year, people should head out only with members of their immediate household and let others on shore know where they’re going and when they plan to return. A [printable float plan](#) is perfect for documenting all that rescue personnel would need in case of an emergency. Help first responders and marine law enforcement by **playing it safe** and wearing your life jacket, having the appropriate safety equipment, and communication tools/devices.

Boating during COVID-19

When hitting the water, know the Marine Board's [recreational boating guidelines](#) and practice the following to protect yourselves and others:

- Explore waterways close to home. Leave from your home to the boat and back so that you don't have unnecessary contact with others.
- Be self-sufficient. Carry needed supplies with you to minimize non-essential stops.
- Take time in advance to see if a boat ramp is open. Some city and county facilities are allowing boats to launch. Visit the Marine Board's [interactive Boat Oregon Map](#) to find contact information to a facility near you. Keep in mind that even though a ramp may be open to launching, the restrooms may not be. Many pumpout/dump stations are operational where facilities are open.
- Follow the Governor's order on physical distancing. Space out (6-feet or more) and take turns launching and retrieving. Be patient.
- Maintain a safe distance at a fuel dock or loading up at a marina. After touching a marine gate, fuel pump or other objects frequently touched by others, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Families living in the same household can continue to boat as a family.
- The CDC is now recommending that everyone wear a **face-covering** in public. Protect yourself and your family *before and after your time on the water* by wearing a face covering.
- Expect some facilities to have reduced launch lanes or alternate-space parking closures following social distancing orders to prevent crowding. If a facility has a lot of patrons and if physical distancing can't be maintained, try again another day.
- Paddlers out on the water: it's good to stick together, but unless you're all under the same household, maintain a minimum of 6-feet physical distance from others.
- Marine law enforcement officers are actively patrolling looking for compliance with existing laws. Follow all statewide and local area rules for equipment, operation, and proximity. Officers are educating the public about physical distancing measures but have the authority to write citations under the Governor's order.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Need to title, register or renew your motorboat registration? Need a Waterway Access Permit or Boating Safety Education Card? Visit our [BoatOregon Store](#) online. [Education courses](#) are also available online.

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*The Marine Board is directly funded by boaters in the form of registration, title, and permit fees, as well as through marine fuel taxes. **No lottery, general fund tax dollars or local facility parking fees** support the agency or its programs. Boater-paid fees support the boating public through boating safety services (on-the-water law enforcement, training, and equipment), boating safety education, grants for the construction and maintenance of boating access facilities, and environmental protection programs. For more information about the Marine Board and its programs, visit www.boatoregon.com.*