

Boating Under the Influence of Intoxicants (BUII) Fact Sheet

- The U.S. Coast Guard reports that alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents where the primary cause was known; it was listed as the leading factor in 16% of the deaths, nationwide in 2022.
- Impaired 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. Other substances that impair operation can also lead to a BUII arrest –including marijuana, inhalants, and prescription medications.
- Falling overboard, missteps at the dock and falling when boarding a boat result in the most injuries, since mental judgment and balance are the first regions of the brain impaired.
- When people consume alcohol, their judgment faculty 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 impairment rank as the top primary contributing factors in all accidents. This includes motorized and nonmotorized boaters.



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 also affects vision and coordination. Environmental factors that come with boating — such as wind, sun, noise, wave action and boat motion — 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.
- Extremities will cramp faster, making self-rescue incredibly difficult.

Drinking and Boating: The Legal Consequences

- A drug or alcohol-impaired boat operator who is arrested for Boating Under the Influence of Intoxicants (BUII – which includes inhalants, marijuana, prescription drugs, alcohol) faces the following:
 - Fines of up to \$6,250 and up to one year in jail
 - Loss of boat operation privileges, Boater Education Card suspension for 1-3 years
 - Boat registration suspended for up to three years
 - Some judges in local jurisdictions will require re-taking a boating safety education course

Boat Safe. Boat Sober.