



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Conservation Police urge sober boating during Fourth of July weekend

SPRINGFIELD – During the Fourth of July holiday weekend and throughout the busy summer boating season, Illinois Conservation Police remind boat operators and passengers to stay sober and wear life jackets while on the water.

As part of a nationally coordinated effort to educate boaters about the dangers of boating while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Conservation Police are participating in the annual Operation Dry Water campaign. Illinois Conservation Police will be out in force during the holiday, making safety checks on watercrafts throughout the state. The mission of Operation Dry Water is to reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related incidents and fatalities on the water.

“As much fun as it is to be with friends on the water, remember it only takes a second to change your life forever.” **said Illinois Conservation Police Lt. Curt Lewis, the state's boating law administrator.** “Save the alcohol for the shore, if at all possible, but if you do have alcohol on the boat, designate a sober operator.”

In addition to boating sober Lewis stressed that wearing a life jacket is the most important action boaters and paddlers can take to ensure their safety and that of others on board.

Illinois law requires that personal floatation devices (PFDs), such as, life jackets or life vests, to be available for each person aboard a boat or other watercraft. Illinois law also requires everyone to wear a PFD while operating a personal watercraft or jet ski.

[Under state law](#), no person may operate any watercraft unless an appropriately sized, wearable, and U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD is worn by each person under the age of 13 on the deck of a watercraft or in an open watercraft at all times. However, this requirement shall not apply to persons who are enclosed in a cabin or below the top deck on a watercraft, on an anchored watercraft that is a platform for swimming or diving, or aboard a charter "passenger for hire" watercraft with a licensed captain.

IDNR offers free boating safety courses that provide a review of boating laws and regulations, as well as instruction on the safe and attentive operation of watercraft. The department encourages boaters of all ages to take a safety course. Anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 1998, must pass a course and have a valid Boating Safety Certificate to operate a motorboat (with over 10 horsepower). State law also requires boating safety education for people ages 12 to 17 to operate a motorboat.

Free safety courses are taught by volunteer instructors and are available throughout Illinois. Find a schedule of courses [online](#). For a fee, online boating safety courses are also available.

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