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For the Boaters You Love…

One last post for Valentine's Day! This one is the most important one; it's all about safety at sea.

Photo Courtesy of The U.S. Coast Guard.

With Valentine's Day in hand, it is time for all those who stand a watch and wait for the return of those that went to sea to think about being the "safety officer" before they go! And, skipper, how about the love you have for those that go to sea with you – kids, grandkids and mates – and creating the safest environment aboard that is feasible or possible?

From the Heart to the Head
There is no doubt that even the most grizzled seafarer can benefit from a boating safety class. Regulations do change over time and techniques get refined and advanced. The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Division-18 covers all of "Out East", from William Floyd out to the ends of both forks. Want to find out what, where and when the latest boating safety classes are – email me below and I'll look it up for you or go right to the web and find out - http://www.div18cg.us/#CLASSES.

From Stem to Stern
There is no greater "for free" service available than the free vessel safety check. And, this is not a regulatory event like getting your car inspected. If the boat doesn't meet all the Federal standards, nothing bad happens (like not being able to drive your car since the inspection sticker was scrapped off.) Most likely, the USCGAux examiner will give you their cell phone number and ask you to call them when you've addressed the deficiency – most likely an expired flare package. And both exams are free! Want to schedule one? Email me below and I'll look it up for you or go right to the web and find out – http://www.safetyseal.net/.

Nothing Lighter – or More Valuable
The statistics on life jackets are sobering for those that don't use them. For every 16 boaters that go into the water that don't have life jackets on, only 1 comes out. Conversely, if they had a life jacket on, 15 come out. What population do you want your Valentine to be in? And, if they are the inflatable time, they hardly know that they have them on! And don't forget that the USCGAux is sponsoring a "Kids Don't Float" program. We leave life jackets at various cooperating marinas and you can borrow them for the day – on the honor system solely – for your favorite price – Free! (Editor's note: also see the BoatU.S. life jacket loaner program.)

The Silent Killer – Carbon Monoxide
If your boat has any enclosed spaces, they need a Carbon Monoxide Detector (see *AtlanticMarineAcademy*, Silent and Odorless – A Killer!) For $29 at any major retailer like Home Depot, etc., you have the wake-up call that otherwise wouldn't come.

The Wireless "Kill Switch"
Every boat comes with a lanyard that is tied to the helmsman's belt or life jacket and also back to the ignition switch. If the helmsman falls over boat, the lanyard goes with him and the engine stops, along with the boat. This gives the boater the chance to climb back aboard. But no one uses the lanyard because the helmsman is lashed to the helm. They can't even walk a couple of feet across the deck to fetch a landing net for one of his fellow boaters. But now there are "wireless lanyards" on the market! The helmsman can walk all over the boat – just don't leave it! Now, that is a major safety uptick! Check on the internet or with any major chandlery.(Editor's note: See www.Autotether.com)

Other great gift ideas to help keep boaters safe include:

• Emergency signaling kits -- flares, signal mirror, whistle, etc.
• Up-to-date navigational charts and/or a handheld GPS unit
• Navigation tools and calculators
• Hand-held VHF marine radio with extra batteries

Show your love – for the crew and the skipper.

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at DSO-HR and we will help you "get in this thing…"