

THE *East Hampton • Southampton • Riverhead • Southold • Shelter Island*
INDEPENDENT

Vincent Pica
Chief of Staff, First District, Southern Region (D1SR)
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

[Coast Guard Aux NEWS](#) ▶

April 20, 2011

**Coast Guard
Auxiliary News**



By Vincent Pica
Chief of Staff, First District Southern Region, USCG Aux
US Coast Guard Licensed Master

Sponsorship of this column is available. All fees raised will be
donated by The Independent to Division 18 of
The USCG Auxiliary for use in boating safety.
For information call Jim Mackin @ 631.324.2500

Bringing It Home Safely – National Safe Boating Week 2011

National Safe Boating Week runs from May 21st to May 27th this year. US Coast Guard Forces nation-wide and especially here "Out East" have a lot of plans to take and make safety a daily, year-long event. This column is about that.

National Safe Boating Week – Why?

By 1958, boating "by the millions" rather than "by millionaires" was in full swing. What Coast Guard statistics showed was that the democratization of boating was coming at a cost – and it wasn't the 29-cents per gallon for the gasoline. It was accidents and fatalities. The US Congress passed the Federal Boating Act and the National Safe Boating Week was born upon President Eisenhower's signature. It was initially run as a committee – US Coast Guard as chairman, with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Power Squadron and the Red Cross as its informal members. It still took some time for the focused attention of the Coast Guard on boater safety to work its way through long habits and aged traditions. It wasn't until 1973, when 1,754 people died in

boating accidents, that the trend started to reverse. Why? Why else – money, people and untiring focus!

Safety First – The Big Picture

Safety isn't something you put on like an over-coat. Safety, to be truly effective, needs to be part of your daily habit and part of that is education – day-in, day-out. US Coast Guard Auxiliary Division-18 is all about that. Division 18 is comprised of 4 flotillas and it is at the flotilla level where the work gets done. Division-18 supports three Coast Guard stations "Out East" – SFO Moriches, Station Shinnecock and Station Montauk.

Boat Smart. Boat Safe. Wear it.

The most recent Coast Guard recreational boating statistics (2009), point up that there is still a critical need for boater education. The figures show that 2,656 recreational vessels were involved in boating accidents nationwide, resulting in 1,655 injuries and 326 deaths. The vessel operators involved in these accidents had never taken a boating safety class.

In 2011, the Wear It! campaign will continue, reminding boaters from coast to coast to put on their life jacket when on the water. The campaign is sponsored by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the National Safe Boating Council and many other boating organizations. Looking ahead to the 2011 campaign, note that the National Safe Boating Council will offer its free materials starting March 1 on its www.safeboatingcampaign.com website. There is nothing stopping marina owners, dive shop proprietors, camp counselors and concerned parents from getting and using those materials!

The simple use of life jackets when engaging in any boating or paddle boat activity saves lives. Obeying and knowing the Navigation Rules or the nautical "Rules of the Road" through safe boating classes and not drinking alcohol or taking drugs while operating a boat, will save the lives of the boaters and those sharing the water with you. Wearing a life jacket can reduce the number of boaters who lose their lives by drowning each year by approximately 80%! It is a simple task that has the potential to reduce terrible loss in lives. The goal of National Safe Boating Week is to emphasize the year-round effort to promote safe boating. All who enjoy the waters of our beautiful state are urged to practice safe boating habits. Remember: "Boat Smart. Boat Safe. Wear it."

Kayak Races and Trawler Fests

At \$5/gallon for fuel, we can expect the explosion in the use of paddle sports to continue and the Coast Guard's Operation Paddle Smart is key to curtailing the injuries and even deaths that these pastimes are piling up statistically.

Life Jacket Statistics

World War II brought us the inflatable life jacket, as worn by sailors, pilots and Submariners. The fabric, which looked like rubber, dried out easily. Talcum powder was used to keep the fabric pliable. Later on, military technology was applied to making consumer life jackets. These

have developed through the years to the various styles we see today. But any life jacket, inflatable or otherwise, must be worn to work. Here are the stats: 16 people go in the water with life-jackets on and 15 come out. 16 people go in the water without life jackets on – and one comes out... (see The Independent, "Life Jackets Save Lives – Maybe Yours!", 2/11/09 and The Independent, "Do I Really Need to Wear a Life Jacket?", 1/3/07)

Don't Be A Statistic

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...”