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National Safe Boating Week, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As a people whose land is blessed with a bounty of rivers, lakes, and streams, Americans have always prized the relaxation and pleasure of the open water. "You feel mighty free and easy," Twain's Huck Finn said, "and comfortable on a raft." This quality of the American spirit has made recreational boating one of the most steadily popular and rapidly growing leisure-time activities in the United States.

Each year, however, our Nation's waterways become more crowded with new and faster watercraft as well as an increasing number of traditional vessels. Despite this fact, boating remains one of the least regulated transportation activities. It is essential, therefore, that all operators be familiar with the rules and courtesies of safe boating. National Safe Boating Week reminds all Americans who use the Nation's waterways to educate themselves about and to respect the dangers of the marine environment and to learn how to operate watercraft in a safe and prudent manner.

Boating has its very own "rules of the road." An operator needs to know a great deal before going out on the water. For this reason, the theme of this year's National Safe Boating Week is "Know Before You Go." Those who operate small boats for fishing, hunting, and other sporting activities should have detailed knowledge of the boats they are using, their handling characteristics, how to safely load them, how to prevent them from capsizing, and how to operate and maintain their equipment. In case of an emergency, all boat operators and riders should know how to use their craft's safety devices and be certain they will work as intended; for example, life jackets should be checked, tested, and properly fitted. In addition, boaters need to be watchful for potentially dangerous situations. They must have a thorough knowledge of the waters they are using, the particular hazards they may encounter, and the prospects for environmental conditions such as tides, currents, temperature, and weather that may be dangerous. To avoid collisions and keep traffic moving, all boaters should know the Navigation Rules and the courtesies of safe boating. Most of all, boaters should know their own limitations so that they do not involve themselves and others in situations beyond their skill or physical endurance.

One especially dangerous problem for boaters is the use of alcohol or drugs. Wise boaters will avoid the use of alcohol and drugs while operating a vessel. That wisdom is backed by the law: Operation of a vessel while intoxicated is a major impediment to safety and is now a Federal offense punishable by hefty civil and criminal penalties.

Boating safety is the responsibility of all who use America's waterways. Let National Safe Boating Week be the start of a major campaign to educate boaters to "know before they go."

To promote boating safety, the Congress enacted the Joint Resolution of June 4, 1958 (36 U.S.C. 161), as amended, authorizing and requesting the President to proclaim annually the week commencing on the first Sunday in June as "National Safe Boating Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning June 5, 1988, as National Safe Boating Week. I invite the Governors of the States, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia, to provide for the observance of this week.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan