



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 15, 2017

MEDIA CONTACTS

Matthew Hamner, Chief of Police
Bainbridge Island Police Department
mhamner@bainbridgewa.gov

THE BAINBRIDGE ISLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT WANTS PADDLESORT ENTHUSIASTS TO STAY SAFE THESE FINAL WEEKS OF SUMMER

Bainbridge Island, Wash., (August, 2017). The Bainbridge Island Police Department and the state's Boating Program is urging paddlesport enthusiasts to be sure they understand boating laws and risks before they head out on the water.

According to a [2015 report](#) from The Outdoor Foundation, paddlesports use increased 14 percent between 2010 and 2014. Unfortunately, the number of fatalities also has increased with the rise in popularity of canoes, kayaks, standup paddleboards (SUP) and other small craft. Last year's state Recreational Boating Accident Report data shows 88 percent of boating fatalities happened in boats less than 18 feet long, and almost half of those were in kayaks or canoes.

"Paddlesports are a terrific way to enjoy active outdoor recreation, but it's important that you and your family are prepared so that an idyllic day on the water doesn't become a tragic day," Chief Matthew Hamner said.

We recommend the following to ensure paddlers are properly prepared for a safe outing on the water.

Wear a life jacket

State law requires all vessels, including canoes, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards, to have at least one properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket for each person on board. The Boating Program encourages paddlers to not only bring a life jacket but to wear it every time they go out. Paddlecraft are more prone to capsizing than larger vessels. Paddlers should be prepared to fall in the water at any time. Getting back into a kayak or canoe from the water can be exhausting or even impossible due to injuries. By wearing a life jacket, paddlers increase their chances of survival and have an easier time getting back into their boat. Fortunately, [life jackets](#) are much more sophisticated and comfortable and tailored to specific water activities.

Take communication devices

Paddlers should carry two forms of communication that will work when wet, such as a sound-producing device like a whistle, waterproof cell phone or marine radio. Having these forms of communication will greatly increase their chances of being located in the event of an emergency. Day and night visible flares, a signal mirror and a whistle or air horn can also aid emergency responders in their search efforts. Boaters are also encouraged to purchase, register and carry a personal locator beacon (PLB) which will instantly

notify responders of their location when activated during a distress situation. It is recommended that boaters research the many options and choose appropriately for the type of boating activity.

Get educated

Paddlers should consider taking a course before heading out. These courses offer valuable paddle safety skills that could potentially save lives in an emergency. Paddlecraft are considered vessels, and paddlers should understand the legal [“rules of the road”](#) on shared waterways. Classes are taught by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadron, through local clubs and outfitters, city and county parks and recreation departments and for [free online](#).

File a float plan

Filing a float plan can be as simple as writing down a plan for a voyage and leaving it with a friend or family member. Information should include the route planned, where the boat embarked from, where it will return to and estimated return time. The Coast Guard has a mobile app for filing an electronic float plan, which can be downloaded from the Apple app store or Google Play.

In addition to these recommendations, paddlers are encouraged to include a waterproof sticker or label on their paddlecraft that includes the owner’s name, phone number, address and an emergency contact.

If someone witnesses a paddlecraft-related accident, they should call 911 right away and report the nature of distress, number of persons or vessels involved, provide a GPS location or detailed description of the location, and remain on scene to relay pertinent information or updates as they occur.

###