



Boating Advisory



Department of
Boating and Waterways **NEWS**

California Boating Law Enforcement Officers Gear Up for 2012 Operation Dry Water

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – This weekend, boating law enforcement officers across the nation will be out in force looking for drunken recreational boat operators. This stepped-up enforcement, known as Operation Dry Water (ODW), is part of a national effort to raise awareness on the dangers of operating a recreational boat under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. A boat operator or even passengers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above the legal limit run a significantly increased risk of being involved in a fatal boating accident.

“The concept of designating a driver in a car is not enough on recreational boats,” stated Department of Boating and Waterways Acting Director Lucia Becerra. “Drunken boat passengers can easily fall overboard, swim near the propeller or cause overloading problems by leaning over the side or standing up in small vessels, causing vessels to capsize. Everyone who drinks alcohol on board a boat is at risk.”

Alcohol can impair a boater’s judgment, balance, vision and reaction time. It can increase fatigue and susceptibility to the effect of cold-water immersion. Sun, wind, noise, vibration and motion – “stressors” common to the boating environment – intensify the side effects of alcohol, drugs, and some prescription medications.

In 2011, 512 boating accidents, 313 injuries and 54 fatalities were reported to the California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW). Results from boating reports where alcohol testing was conducted indicate alcohol as a contributing factor in 29 percent of the boating fatalities.

In California, it is against the law to operate a boat or water ski with a BAC of 0.08 percent or more. A person with a BAC less than 0.08 percent may also be arrested if conditions are deemed to be unsafe. If convicted, a person may be sentenced to jail for up to six months and assessed fines of up to \$1,000. Two convictions within seven years could add a jail term of up to one year. Boaters caught operating under the influence may also find their voyage terminated and their vessel impounded.

ODW, a multi-agency education and enforcement initiative launched by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators in 2009 in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, puts thousands of local, state and federal marine law enforcement officers on the water nationwide prior to the Fourth of July holiday to give boating under the influence enforcement high visibility during the peak boating season.