

Section IV

Boating Safety Education Programs



The Safety Education Unit has two primary objectives to support the Department's mission:

- To provide accessible boating safety education for youths and adults
- To educate and protect youth operators by developing and distributing boating and aquatic safety material to California schools.

The Department relies on partnerships with several organizations (educational institutions, aquatic centers, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadrons) to provide boating safety education. The Department provides educational institutions with free course materials on boating and aquatic safety information. Aquatic centers that offer on-the-water safety education are eligible for Department grants and scholarships. Last year, these partnerships provided 691,000 individuals with boating safety education.

A. Educational Outreach to School-Age Children

AquaSMART

The Department developed the *AquaSMART* curriculum to educate school-age children about water safety. The course is a three-part series for K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 grades. Course materials cover a variety of topics involving boating and aquatic safety. Nearly 500,000 elementary school students benefited from the *AquaSMART* education programs in 2000.

The Department also disseminates the *AquaSMART Boating* program for high school students that incorporates key safety concerns identified by accident statistics. Four types of boating are addressed: personal watercraft, powerboating, sailing, and paddling. The course is available to schools, aquatic centers and youth organizations. In 2000, a total of 35,000 high school students were educated using the *AquaSMART Boating* program.





Poster Contest

Nearly 6,000 students participated in the Department's eighth annual poster contest, *Safe and Wise Water Ways*, in 2000. Students in the K-8 grade levels are invited to submit original artwork depicting aquatic and boating safety themes. One winner from each grade level is selected and featured on the Department's annual calendar poster. Corporate sponsors contribute to the success of this program by providing awards for the winners. A Department representative visits each winning school to present the sponsors' awards and give a presentation on aquatic safety with an emphasis on life jackets. Participating students become water wise and help others stay safe by sharing their safety lessons through the medium of art. Their artwork is also used in displays and in other programs in the Education Unit.

Interactive Tools

The Department lends two interactive robotic boats, SeaMore and Sea Lily, to boating safety organizations and marine law enforcement agencies. The remote-controlled robots communicate boating safety information to children at safety fairs and boating events.



B. Educational Outreach to the General Public

Aquatic Center Grant Program

The Department provides grant monies to aquatic centers throughout the state to enhance their programs. Grants can be used either for scholarships or for the purchase of equipment to be used in boating and education classes. This grant program allows the Department to increase the number of boaters who receive hands-on boating safety training.

Aquatic centers, operated by universities, cities, counties, and nonprofit organizations, provide on-the-water boating safety education in kayaking, canoeing, water skiing, power boating, sailing, windsurfing, and personal watercraft operation. These programs target university students, the general public, persons with disabilities, and disadvantaged youths.



During the 1999/00 fiscal year, the Department allocated \$615,000 in grants to 28 aquatic centers, which then provided nearly 120,000 individuals with hands-on aquatic and boating education.

Home Study Course

The Department provides a 94-page booklet to the public called the *California Boating: A Course for Safe Boating*. This course is designed for home study, allowing readers to progress at their own pace. This comprehensive course covers State and

federal boating law, rules of the road, boat handling, required and recommended equipment, navigational aids, and other topics. The course contains an optional exam to be completed and forwarded to the Department for grading. Those who pass the course are awarded with certificates that are recognized by many insurance companies for boat insurance discounts. In 2000, a total of 35,000 home study education course materials were distributed to the general public.

National Safe Boating Week

Each year, the President and the Governor proclaim the week before Memorial Day as National Safe Boating Week. The Department organizes a number of boating safety events during this week designed not only to promote safe boating, but also to promote the fun of boating. Activities featured during this week include:

- Boating fairs featuring contests to win life jackets
- Safety promotional product giveaways
- Boating demonstrations
- Highlights of annual boating accident statistics



- News releases featuring boating safety tips
- Interviews with the media
- Life jacket trade-ins



Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Outdoor Media Campaign

The education unit also publicizes safety messages through an outdoor media campaign. The Department uses permanent and mobile billboards on key waterways to promote boating safety throughout the boating season and during holiday weekends. Taking the message directly to boaters, colorful oversized “all-weather” posters adorn launch ramps, fuel docks, and marina and park entrances, reminding boaters to wear a life jacket and take a boating safety course. In conjunction with the California Coastal Commission’s Adopt-a-Beach Program, the Department also placed safety messages on refuse barrels located on docks and in picnic areas.

Radio Message Campaign

In conjunction with the Department’s outdoor media campaign, the Department developed a statewide radio campaign, which contains a myriad of safety tips and highlights the following:

- The importance of wearing life jackets
- The dangers of mixing alcohol and boating
- River safety

- The dangers of horseplay on PWC
- Overall “know before you go” boating message that combines general boating safety preparedness with a message reminding boaters to be environmentally responsible.

The campaign runs year round in Southern California and from May-October statewide, targeting California’s top ten boating accident areas. Over thirty radio stations across the State air safety messages reminding boaters to “Boat Smart from the Start.”

Televised Message Campaign

In 2000, the Department distributed 2 television PSAs—one on maintaining a proper lookout and the other on the importance of wearing life jackets.

C. Public Information Education Through Pamphlets

In 2000, the Department distributed 1.2 million copies of boating safety literature to the public. The Department’s public information unit publishes and distributes more than 50 different boating safety publications. The publications cover a variety of topics emphasizing boating safety on California waterways.

Materials focus on subjects such as key safety issues for individual waterways, required equipment, and operational laws. The unit mails these publications directly to individuals and provides various organizations with

materials for distribution. Department representatives also attend numerous safety fairs and boat shows, distributing literature and answering questions. Currently, the Department of Motor Vehicles mails safety brochures with each new vessel registration and each renewal.

D. Abandoned Watercraft Removal Program

As part of its commitment to provide clean, safe and enjoyable recreational boating in California, the Department administers a program for removal of abandoned watercraft and substantial navigational hazards from California navigable waterways. Specifically, grant funds can be used by public agencies for the removal, storage and/or disposal of these navigational hazards. In 2000, the Department granted 9 public agencies a total of \$341,685 to remove 75 abandoned vessels and 15 other substantial hazards to navigation.



Section V

2000 Program Enhancements, Initiatives, and New Laws



New Laws

Children

As of January 1, 2001, California law now requires children under the age of 12 to wear a life jacket when aboard an underway vessel 26 feet in length or less.

Exceptions to this law include the operation of a sailboat that does not exceed 30 feet in length or a dinghy used directly between a moored boat and the shore, or between two moored boats.

Personal Watercraft and Water Skiers

As of January 1, 2001, every person on board a personal watercraft and any person on water skis, an aquaplane or similar device must wear a Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, III or V life jacket.

Exceptions to this law include a person aboard a personal watercraft or being towed behind a vessel, if that person is a performer in a professional exhibition, or preparing to participate in an official regatta, marine parade, tournament or exhibition. In lieu of wearing a Type I, II, III or V Coast Guard-approved life jacket, any person engaged in slalom skiing on a marked course, or any person engaged in barefoot, jump or trick water skiing may elect to wear a wetsuit designed for the activity and labeled by the manufacturer as a water ski wetsuit. A Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, III, or V life jacket must be carried in the tow vessel for each skier electing to wear a wetsuit.



All Vessels

As of January 1, 2001, any person convicted of one moving violation while operating a vessel shall be ordered by the court to complete and pass a boating safety course approved by the Department of Boating and Waterways. Proof of completion and passage of the course must be submitted to the court within seven months of the time of the conviction.

Life Jacket Use

- The Department continues the Life Jacket Partner Program and the T-Shirt Program aimed at increasing the use of life jackets by children.
- The Department continues the Dairy Queen and Carl's Jr. program. Children wearing a life jacket are rewarded with these coupons given by marine law enforcement officials on the water.
- The Department continues a radio campaign promoting the use of life jackets. This safety message is being heard on radio stations throughout California and targets boaters in high accident areas.
- The Department continues its outdoor media campaign, placing billboards in areas where accidents are most prevalent. The billboards remind boaters about the importance of wearing a life jacket while boating.
- The Department produced a new 30-second public safety announcement



for television that stresses the importance of wearing a life jacket.

- The Department is encouraging the use of life jackets at safety fairs and boat shows throughout the State, through the annual *Safe and Wise Water Ways* poster contest for children, and at National Safe Boating Week events.

Personal Watercraft

- The Department continues development of a new PWC Practical Handling Course. This course focuses on PWC operation and safe boat handling. The curriculum is designed for operators of all ages and will be available to the general public. It is designed to be incorporated into existing safety programs offered by organizations such as the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons, marine law enforcement agencies, and aquatic centers. This course should be available in Summer 2001.
- The Department continues to place a 60-second radio message highlighting the dangers of "horseplay" while operating a PWC, which airs on radio stations throughout California.
- The Department produced a 30-second PSA on the subject of personal watercraft safety for distribution to television stations statewide this summer.



Youth Operator Safety

- This year, the *AquaSMART Boating* program for high school students continued to be distributed to schools throughout California. This course incorporates key safety concerns identified by accident statistics. Four types of boating are addressed: personal watercraft, powerboating, sailing, and paddling. The course is available to schools, aquatic centers, and youth organizations.
- The curriculum for youth programs includes information on the dangers of alcohol and drug use, especially when boating. Zero tolerance is emphasized for all persons engaged in aquatic recreation.
- The Department will continue to publicize the law requiring operators to be at least 16 years of age to operate most vessels alone.

Alcohol

- The Department's radio campaign continues to promote the dangers of drinking alcohol while boating. This safety message is airing on radio stations throughout California and targets boaters in areas with the highest accident rates.

- The Department produced a 30-second PSA on the dangers of mixing alcohol and boating which has been distributed to television stations statewide.
- The Department continues to notify law enforcement agencies statewide about alcohol-related fatalities and encourage them to strengthen their educational and enforcement efforts in this area. The Department reinforces this message at all of its law enforcement training classes.

Improved Internet Access

- The AquaSMART Internet education pages (dbw.ca.gov/aquasmart) were developed to supplement the Department's AquaSMART curriculum series. The design is bright and content addresses boating safety in a fun manner, as the webpage is targeted primarily at children exposed to the AquaSMART curriculum series. The secondary audience includes teachers, parents, and other boaters. A link to the Department's homepage is provided for persons seeking more detailed boating safety information.



Other Safety Enhancements

- The Department produced a short video on general boating safety laws, which was completed in March, 2001.
- The Department produced a public safety announcement for television, highlighting the importance of keeping a proper lookout while boating, which will be distributed to television stations statewide this summer.
- The Department is producing a brochure promoting the importance of taking hands-on boating courses to improve safety on the water. The brochure will identify aquatic centers throughout the State where a variety of boating courses are provided. The brochure will be finished in Fall 2001.
- The Department maintains its radio message promoting safe boating during whitewater activities which airs on radio stations throughout the State. To further enhance river safety, the Department offers an assortment of river guides. The Department continues to warn boaters about hazardous water conditions on California's rivers, especially during spring and early summer when water levels are high from snow pack run-off.



- The Department continues its "know before you go" radio message that combines general boating safety preparedness with a message reminding boaters to be environmentally responsible.
- The Department continues work on a new water skiing safety video. The updated version will include not only traditional water skiing activities, but also wake boarding, knee boarding, inner tubing, and air chair activities. This project should be completed in Spring 2002.
- The Department has increased outreach efforts to anglers by placing articles and messages in fishing publications throughout the state.
- The Law Enforcement unit continues to conduct the Accident Reconstruction Course on the water, providing staged accidents for reconstruction by students. Many law enforcement officers believe this course helps them reconstruct accidents more accurately.

