



# News Release

**For Immediate Release**  
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## Division of Boating and Waterways Urges You to Boat Responsibly this Labor Day Weekend

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – With the peak boating season coming to an end this Labor Day weekend, the Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) reminds boaters to take extra precaution to prevent a fun family outing from turning tragic. Taking a boating safety course, wearing life jackets and avoiding alcohol while boating can minimize the chances of being involved in an accident. Recreational boating statistics repeatedly show the holiday weekends of Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day to have the most accidents and account for 15 percent of accidents each year. This year’s high water levels at reservoirs, rivers and lakes could increase the risks for accidents.

The number of recreational boating fatalities in California currently stands at 43 this year. This time last year, that number was 37. In 2016, [California Boating Accident Statistics](#) show 588 recreational vessels were involved in reported accidents and 50 boaters died. Unfortunately, 83 percent of the victims who drowned were NOT wearing life jackets. And 40 percent of fatalities involved alcohol. In addition, a lack of boater education is a leading factor in boating accidents and fatalities.

“With over a million motorized and non-motorized recreational boaters on California’s waterways, holiday weekends can be crowded and dangerous,” says DBW Deputy Director Lynn Sadler. “We encourage boaters to take a few hours online with an interactive [boating safety course](#) before going on the water. Taking a course now may not only prevent a deadly accident, it also qualifies the boat operator for the newly required [California Boater Card](#) beginning in January. Lastly, please remember to wear a properly-fitted life jacket.”

Nationwide, California is one of the last states to require a basic boater education. On Sept. 18, 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. signed into law Senate Bill 941, which prohibits the operation of motorized vessels in California without a valid boater card developed and issued by DBW. The new mandatory boating safety education law will go into effect January 1, 2018.



What does this mean to recreational boaters? If they operate a motorized recreational vessel on California's waterways, they will be required to pass an approved boating safety exam and carry a California Boater Card. The card remains valid for a boat operator's lifetime, so they only have to pass an exam once to comply with the law.

It is important for boaters to know that the new law will be phased in by age. The first group required to take the exam are recreational boaters 20 years of age and younger. Each year after January 2018, a new age group will be added to those who are required to possess a valid card. Courses may be classroom, home study or online and must be certified by the National Association of Boating Law Administrators and DBW.

For detailed information on the new boating education requirement, please visit [www.CaliforniaBoaterCard.com](http://www.CaliforniaBoaterCard.com). For boating and water safety information or laws, please visit [www.BoatCalifornia.com](http://www.BoatCalifornia.com).

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#### **About DBW**

[DBW](#) enhances public access to California's waterways and promotes on-the-water safety to California's more than four million motorized and non-motorized boaters through programs funded by vessel registration fees, boating fuel tax dollars and boating facility construction loan payments. For more information, visit [www.dbw.parks.ca.gov](http://www.dbw.parks.ca.gov).



#### **California State Parks Mission**

*To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation.*

