

Executive Summary

The California Department of Boating and Waterways (Cal Boating) administers many programs to provide for boating safety on the state's waterways. The 2007 California Boating Safety Report summarizes activities performed in three key safety program areas:

- Boating accident analysis
- Law enforcement
- Safety education

This report also highlights Cal Boating's current program enhancements and future safety initiatives designed to reduce accidents and make California's waterways safer.

Through the boating accident program, Cal Boating provides useful accident information to boaters, law enforcement agencies and educators. This information is communicated to the general public through the incorporation of relevant safety measures based on accident analysis into Cal Boating's safety education programs and law enforcement training programs.

Exhibit ES-1, on page 2 provides a summary of key boating accident statistics for 2007.

Cal Boating provides supplemental funding to counties for law enforcement activities and promotes uniform enforcement of boating laws through its law enforcement training program. In the 2006/07 fiscal year, the financial aid program allocated \$10.6 million to 36 counties and two cities for enforcement personnel and operating costs. In turn, the counties provided crucial boating law enforcement, as well as safety training for law enforcement officers and the public. **Exhibit ES-2** provides a summary of law enforcement activities supported by Cal Boating's financial aid program. In 2007, the law enforcement training program included eight courses on various boating safety topics, in which department staff trained 471 marine enforcement officers.



On-going partnerships with educational institutions, aquatic centers, and non-profit organizations provided crucial safety information to students and the general public. Additionally, Cal Boating sponsored a statewide radio and outdoor media campaign to promote life jacket use, environmental stewardship and boating safety course participation. **Exhibit ES-3** provides a summary of Cal Boating's safety education outreach programs.

Exhibit ES-1

2007 California Boating Accident Summary Statistics

Overall Boating Accident Highlights

- In 2007, a total of 804 boating accidents were reported to Cal Boating, involving 482 injuries, 55 fatalities and \$10,643,800 in property damage.
- About 41% of all vessels and 75% of personal watercraft (PWC) involved in accidents were operated by someone other than the registered owner. These findings demonstrate the need to emphasize boating education for all vessel operators, not only vessel owners.
- Accidents occurred mostly during the summer months (May through September), on weekends, and during the hours between 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. The largest number of accidents (45%) occurred on lakes, followed by ocean/bay waters (34%).
- 21% of boating accidents, 24% of all injuries, and 15% of all fatalities occurred during the summer holiday periods of Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day.
- 34% of reported accidents resulted from collisions with other vessels.
- Operator inattention (44%) was the most common cause of boating accidents, followed by operator inexperience (33%) and excessive speed (32%). (Many accidents had more than one cause.)
- Open motorboats were involved in 49% of all accidents. PWC were involved in 25%.
- 65% of vessels involved in all accidents were less than 26 feet in length. 72% of vessels involved in fatal boating accidents were also less than 26 feet in length.
- Of operators whose ages were known, those in the 31-40 age group were involved in more accidents than other age groups.
- Accidents involving water skiing activities accounted for 13% of all accidents and fatalities. Although water skiing accidents overall have been decreasing since 2003, fatalities rose from two in 2006 to seven in 2007. (In this report, the term “water skiing” refers to all activities involving a vessel towing a person on a towline.)

PWC Accident Statistics

- PWC were involved in 25% of all accidents, 36% of all injuries, 16% of all fatalities and 3% of all property damage.
- Although PWC accidents involving radical maneuvers (such as wake jumping, donuts and spraying other vessels) have decreased 22% since 1998 when a law went into effect banning these activities, in 2007, they were at their highest level since that time. Accidents involving radical maneuvers have increased 50% since 2006.
- 75% of PWC involved in accidents were operated by someone other than the registered owner (57% were borrowed and 18% were rented).
- 57% of PWC-related accidents and 44% of PWC-related fatalities resulted from collisions with other vessels.
- The most common cause of PWC-related accidents involved operator inexperience (62%), excessive speed (58%) and operator inattention (51%). (Many accidents had more than one cause.)
- 33% of PWC operators were aged 11-20 and were involved in more accidents than any other age group, followed by the 21-30 age group (28%).

Youth Accident Statistics

(Youth is under 18 years of age)

- Since January 1998, when the minimum age for solo operation of a vessel over 15 HP was raised from 12 to 16 years of age, the number of accidents involving youth operators has decreased 52%, from 120 in 1997 to 58 in 2007.
- During the 2007 boating season, a total of 69 youth operators were involved in 7% of all accidents, 10% of all injuries and 7% of all fatalities.
- Operator inexperience was a factor in 67% of accidents involving youth operators and was the most common cause of accidents involving them. Operator inexperience was a factor in only 33% of accidents involving operators of all ages.
- 30 operators involved in accidents (43%) were under the age of 16. Four of those operators were under the age of 12.

- Of the 30 operators under 16 years of age, 80% did not have an adult on board. This percentage has increased from 63% in 2006.
- Collisions with other vessels accounted for 72% of accidents involving youth operators.
- 81% of youth operators involved in accidents were operating PWC.

Fatal Accident Statistics

- Of the 55 fatalities in 2007, 45% occurred between October and April. 53% of all fatalities occurred on Saturday or Sunday.
- The most common causes of fatalities were operator inattention (44%), overloading/improper loading (29%), operator inexperience (25%) and excessive speed (18%). (Many accidents had more than one cause.)
- In fact, fatalities involving overloading/improper loading rose from two in 2006 to 16 in 2007—the largest number that the department has on record.
- The number of victims who died in accidents involving towing sports increased from two in 2006 to seven in 2007 which is the largest number of fatalities on record since 1979. Most accidents involved operator error rather than the fault of the towed individual.

- 45% of all boating fatalities were found to be alcohol-related, where testing could be conducted.
- 71% of all victims drowned. Of that group, 87% were not wearing a life jacket.
- 35% of all fatalities in 2007 were fishing-related. 53% of all fishing-related fatalities involved alcohol.
- Of all fishing-related fatalities, 95% were the result of vessels capsizing or victims falling overboard. 89% of the victims drowned and none were wearing a life jacket.
- 50% of the vessels involved in fatal accidents were open motorboats, followed by PWC (21%), and paddle craft (14%).
- The majority (72%) of vessels involved in fatal accidents were less than 26 feet in length.
- Vessels capsizing (35%) and falls overboard (25%) were the most common types of fatal accidents.
- Operators in the 31-40 age group were involved in more fatal boating accidents than any other age group.
- 55% of fatalities occurred on lakes, 16% occurred on oceans/bays, 5% on the Colorado River, 16% on other rivers throughout the state and 7% on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region.

Exhibit ES-2

Services Supported by the 2006/07 Financial Aid Program

Regulation Enforcement	
Verbal Warnings	44,553
Citations	4,316
Physical Arrests	426
Boater Assistance	
Persons Assisted	20,417
Vessels Assisted	4,944
Accident Investigations	299
Search and Rescue Operations	
Searches and Recoveries	739
Education/Safety	
Vessel Inspections	31,534
Organized Boating Event Supervision	233

Exhibit ES-3

2007 California Boating Safety Education Programs

Educational Outreach to School Age Children

Program	Students Impacted
AquaSMART, Elementary Education	66,000
AquaSMART, LIVE!	48,000
AquaSMART Boating, High School Education	13,000
Poster Contest (14th Annual)	2,319

General Educational Outreach

Home Study Course

30,000 courses distributed

Boat Shows

In 2007, Cal Boating attended over 15 events and reached over 20,000 boaters with educational materials.

Aquatic Center Grants

Grants were given to 33 organizations for scholarships, instructor training and for the purchase of training boats, equipment and related safety supplies. Approximately 80,000 individuals were trained.

Tri-State Boating Safety Fair

In partnership with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Cal Boating sponsored the fourth-annual Tri-State Boating Safety Fair on May 5, 2007.



Publications

In 2007, Cal Boating distributed 1.2 million copies of boating safety literature to the public. Cal Boating's Public Information Unit publishes and distributes more than 50 different boating safety publications.

Spanish Language Outreach

Cal Boating continues to provide the Spanish-speaking community with educational boating and safety literature.

Multimedia Boating Safety Awareness Campaign

Cal Boating continued its successful "Responsibility" campaign: *If It's Your Boat, It's Your Responsibility*. Boating accident victim testimonials increased to drive home the safety message. The campaign's outdoor component consisted of permanently posted wall graphics and mobile billboards that visited marinas up and down the state on popular holiday weekends. The campaign also partnered with three television stations in Northern and Southern California for special-event promotions and life jacket giveaways.

Cal Boating Safety Team

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the safety team's "Responsibility" bannered pontoon boat made appearances at more than 28 marinas and launch ramps in 2007. Over 3,000 boating safety quizzes were taken during the promotional period.

Get Hooked on H2O

Cal Boating continued its campaign promoting water as the boater's choice of beverages by partnering with AM1470 Radio Disney, CBS Radio, and Togo's. The campaign reminds collective clients/audiences in Northern California to drink water, not alcohol, while boating and wear life jackets.

Kid Casters

Additionally, Cal Boating and AM 1470 Radio Disney sponsored "Kid Casters," a casting call for children 14 and under to audition to produce boating safety messages for the airwaves.

Life Jacket Loan Program

Cal Boating continues the Life Jacket Loan Program, partnering with fire stations and other voluntary venues to offer free short-term life jacket use for the public. Loan locations have gradually increased over the years to extend beyond the Greater Sacramento area, and the location list is posted on Cal Boating's Web site.

T-Shirt Program

Cal Boating continues partnering with marine law enforcement units, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadrons to distribute t-shirts aimed at rewarding and increasing the use of life jackets by children under the age of 12.

National Safe Boating Week Events

During National Safe Boating Week, the week before Memorial Day weekend, Cal Boating sponsored the following events:

- Life jacket trade-ins—Cal Boating partnered with Radio Disney, CBS Radio, and 13 Sam's Club stores statewide to host trade-ins. Life jackets were offered free to the first 50 persons at each store who brought in children's life jackets that were outgrown or were deteriorated and unusable.
- Release of boating accident statistics
- News releases featuring boating safety tips
- Interviews with the media
- Events at aquatic centers
- In 2007, the department sponsored seven separate National Safe Boating Week events through its Aquatic Center Grant Program. Aquatic centers throughout California facilitated safety programs and free open houses which included safety demonstrations, on-the-water safety instruction, distribution of safety literature, life jacket give-aways and interviews with the media.

50th Anniversary

The year 2007 marked our 50th anniversary as a department. In honor of this historic mark the department was invited to participate in the 2007 California State Fair and exhibit our history as a state department



in a museum like showcase. Elements surrounding our departmental history, as well as boating and aquatic safety were on display for the public to view during a 16 day run of the fair.

Wear It California!

For the very first time, a pilot program dubbed "Wear It California!" was introduced in 2007 designed to utilize targeted marketing efforts to increase the life jacket wear rate among recreational boaters in the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta. A 2006 study indicated a six percent life jacket wear rate on the Delta. The program, which was co-produced by the U.S. Coast Guard, National Safe Boating Council, Boat U.S. and Cal Boating, began in May and lasted through Labor Day. By the close of the summer, life jacket wear had more than doubled from six to thirteen percent according to a study released soon after the campaign closed in September.

Other Programs

Safe Kids Coalition

Cal Boating participates in the Greater Sacramento Safe Kids Coalition under the Drowning Prevention subcommittee. As a river city that also has a number of lakes and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in close proximity, Sacramento has a need to protect its children from drowning when boating or recreating near the water. Cal Boating provides educational materials to the community and expertise on open water activities and incidents.

California Clean Boating Network

Cal Boating continues to participate in the California Clean Boating Network (CCBN). This network consists of a collaboration of government, environmental, business, boating and academic organizations working to increase and improve clean boating education efforts in California. Through the exchange of information and consideration of new trends in clean boating practices, CCBN members increase their ability to educate the boating public about clean boating practices.

Boating Clean and Green Program

The Boating Clean and Green Campaign is a statewide boater education and technical assistance program conducted by the California Department of Boating and Waterways and the California Coastal Commission that educates boaters about environmentally and safe sound boating while assisting marinas and local governments in identifying the need for and installing pollution prevention services for boaters.

Through partnerships with marine businesses, boating associations, environmental and non-profit

groups, state and local governments, including the Keep the Delta Clean Program and Dockwalker program, the Campaign has been successful in promoting safe environmental boating practices.

Abandoned Watercraft Abatement Program

Cal Boating administers a program for the removal of abandoned watercraft and substantial navigational hazards from California's waterways. The Abandoned Watercraft Abatement Fund (AWAF) program grants funds to local public agencies for the removal, storage and disposal of these navigational hazards. In the 2006/07 fiscal year, a total of \$450,000 was allocated to nine public agencies for the removal and disposal of abandoned vessels and other substantial hazards to navigation.

New programs developed in 2007 focus on improving public outreach and expanding law enforcement training. Enhancements to existing programs reflect changing accident statistics and key safety concerns. **Exhibit ES-4** presents a summary of 2007 program enhancements and initiatives.

Exhibit ES-4

2007 California Boating Safety Program Enhancements & New Laws Program Enhancements

Media Outreach

Television Boating Safety Promotion

In March 2007, Cal Boating partnered with the San Diego area XETV, Fox 6 News in the Morning to heighten awareness of boating and water safety in the San Diego area with a Spring Break Safety Promotion. The newscast promoted proper life jacket fitting, hands-on boating safety classes, water rescues and encouraged viewers to stop by for free life jackets. In addition to this, the television station produced and aired 30 "Boating Safety Announcements" that ran during the morning newscast throughout the week to drive viewers to Fox6.com to take the Cal Boating online safety quiz and be eligible for an angler prize provided by Anglers Marine. "Safety Totes" were available for "purchase" (bonus point redemption, no cash value) online through the "Couch Potato" viewer loyalty program. All 450 totes were redeemed by "Couch Potato" members.

Additional successful television "Safety Promotion" partnerships with news anchor personalities recording PSAs were carried out with Redding TV station KRCC for Memorial Day weekend and then with Sacramento TV station KMAX for the 4th of July holiday.

Internet

All media outreach directly prompted viewers and listeners to learn more about boating safety and education on the department's Web sites, www.dbw.ca.gov, www.BoatSmarter.com and BoatResponsibly.com.

These sites garnered 89,808 visits, with 65,165 being unique visits throughout the year. Radio and televisions also added a Cal Boating presence with banners, logos and links from their websites to the department's Web site. In addition, the stations included 2,369 streaming units of the safety messages over the boating season.

New Laws

As of January 1, 2008, the following laws are now in effect:

AB 118 establishes the Air Quality Improvement Program to fund air quality improvement projects, and the Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Program to provide grants and loans for projects that develop innovative technologies that transform the state's fuel and vehicle types to help attain climate change policies, including vessel-related technologies. AB 118 transfers money from existing funds and increase fees related to motor vehicle registration, special equipment identification plates, smog abatement and original vessel registration only (from \$10 to \$20 for vessels purchased in even-numbered years and \$20 to \$40 for vessels purchased in odd-numbered years, as applicable) to fund these new programs. The bill also requires the Energy Commission to create an advisory committee, specifically including participation by recreational boaters and many other interested parties, to help plan for the Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Program.

AB 695—Requires retail sellers of new vessels with spark-ignition engines, on and after July 1, 2008, to certify that the vessel engine has a permanent label indicating that the engine meets or exceeds 2008 California emissions standards. AB 695 also requires the application form for vessel numbering to have a line or check-off box for the purpose of indicating the retail seller's certification. This provision would apply to vessels with spark-ignition engines under 373 kw (500 hp) manufactured after January 1, 2008, and all vessels with spark-ignition engines manufactured after January 1, 2009. In effect, this bill prohibits a person from purchasing an undocumented vessel outside of California for use in this state with the intent of avoiding the California emissions standards established by the California Air Resources board. This bill requires the applicant (buyer) to submit proof to the Department of Motor Vehicles that a new vessel with a spark-ignition engine meets or exceeds 2008 California emissions standards, if the retail seller does not provide this certification.

AB 951—Prohibits a person in a non-motorized vessel on the portion of the Lower American River from the Hazel Avenue bridge to the Watt Avenue bridge from possessing an alcoholic beverage when the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors



prohibits the consumption or possession of an open container along the land portions of the river during summer holiday periods. AB 951 requires Sacramento County to post notices along the applicable river section describing that a violation is punishable by an infraction.

AB 1683—Prohibits a person from possessing, importing, shipping, transporting, or placing in any state waterway, dreissenid (a.k.a. quagga) mussels, and authorizes the Department of Fish and Game and other agencies, as specified, to inspect and order the cleaning, impounding, or quarantine as necessary, of any conveyance potentially carrying dreissenid mussels, including at water delivery and storage facilities under specified circumstances. The bill also 1) authorizes the Department of Fish and Game, with the concurrence of the Secretary of the Resources Agency, to close or restrict access to waterways as necessary to prevent the spread of dreissenid mussels, and 2) provides that any entity in the state discovering dreissenid mussels must report the finding immediately.

For more information about the quagga mussel call 866-440-9530 or go to www.dfg.ca.gov/quaggamussel.

