

Section 1:

Introduction

California's rivers, lakes and coastal areas offer boating enthusiasts a wide variety of recreational opportunities, including:

- 1,356,780 surface acres of water
- 30 popular whitewater rivers with approximately 2,600 miles of waterways
- 3,427 miles of coastline and tidal shoreline

Boating popularity grew steadily over the last decade, as reflected by the increase in the number of registered vessels. As of December 31, 2007, California had 964,881 registered vessels.

Cal Boating's mission is to provide safe and convenient public access to California waterways and to provide leadership in promoting the public's right to safe and enjoyable boating. To accomplish this, Cal Boating administers statewide boating accident, law enforcement, and safety education programs. The *California Boating Safety Report* highlights important statistics and describes current program activities to enhance boating safety.

A. Boating Accident Program

Cal Boating's boating accident program disseminates accident information to boaters, law enforcement agencies, educational organizations and the media. The program is mandated by Part 173 of Title 33 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. Annual accident information collected by Cal Boating is forwarded to the U.S. Coast Guard in Washington D.C. and is made a part of the Coast Guard's annual publication, *Boating Statistics*.

California accident statistics are compiled under state law, Section 656 of the Harbors and Navigation Code, which requires a boater who is involved in an accident to file a written report with Cal Boating when:

- A person dies, disappears, or is injured requiring medical attention beyond first aid; or
- Damage to a vessel or other property exceeds \$500, or there is complete loss of a vessel.



Department staff review reported accidents, determine the cause(s), and identify preventative measures and specific safety-related problems. Safety education and public information program staff incorporate these safety problems and related solutions into updated course materials, promotional activities and brochures. Law enforcement staff also communicate these safety problems during department-sponsored training sessions for law enforcement officers.

B. Boating Law Enforcement Programs

The primary objective of Cal Boating's law enforcement program is to assist law enforcement agencies that provide waterborne law enforcement services. These local agencies enhance boating safety through the enforcement of safety laws and regulations. To this end, the department unit offers training to law enforcement officers to ensure uniform enforcement of boating laws, and provides financial support to counties for law enforcement programs and activities.

During FY 2006/07, law enforcement officers from agencies participating in the financial aid program provided nearly 50,000 operators with boating safety education through enforcement activities. Their verbal warnings and written citations were instrumental in helping to prevent accidents and improve boating safety.

C. Boating Safety Education Programs

Cal Boating provides accessible boating safety education through partnerships with educational institutions and non-profit organizations. These entities, in turn, provide crucial aquatic and boating safety education to students and the general public. Both teachers and students praise the boating safety course materials developed by Cal Boating for their exceptional content and ease of use.

Additionally, Cal Boating's Public Information Unit provides safety information to millions of boaters through a Web site (www.dbw.ca.gov), publication distribution, public service announcements (PSAs)

and press releases. Cal Boating has more than 50 different boating safety publications covering many topics, such as boating and alcohol use and proper PWC handling. Basic boating information, including laws and regulations, rules of the road and safe operation practices, is provided to each person registering a vessel through the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Other safety messages are disseminated through Cal Boating's boating safety awareness multimedia campaign. These methods allow the department to reach boaters who may not otherwise come into contact with other forms of boating safety information provided at safety fairs, boat shows or in pamphlets.

