

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2010

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GET CAUGHT WEARING YOUR LIFEJACKET

Edmonton, AB – The Lifesaving Society would like to see you get caught wearing your lifejacket and buy yourself some time if you end up in the water. Most of the people who die from boating incidents drowned within a few feet of safety. Of those who drowned, many had a lifejacket or PFD close at hand, but were not wearing it when they died (100% of the people from the Northwest Territories and 42% of the Albertans).

“Most fatal incidents happen when the boat capsizes or a boater falls overboard. They happen suddenly, without warning and with no time to put on a lifejacket,” states Barbara Kusyanto, CAO of the Lifesaving Society in Alberta and Northwest Territories. “Your lifejacket is the best “life insurance” policy, but it won’t work if you don’t wear it.”

The Lifesaving Society would like to remind boaters that anyone driving a boat must have their boating license or Pleasure Craft Operator’s Card (PCO Card). As of September 2009, Transport Canada now requires all boaters operating a powered recreational vessel to show proof of competency with a PCO card. Individuals can write the test at any of Lifesaving Society BOAT Test Centre, to find out where, go to www.lifesaving.org.

On May 20th be a strong role by joining the Canadian Safe Boating Council in their bid to set a world record for the number of people who “inflated their inflatable lifejackets” in one day. To learn more go to www.readysetinflate.com.

Practice these Lifesaving Society Boat Safety Tips every time you’re in a boat.

1. **Lifejackets - Choose It- Use It! Cold Water Kills! Always wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device!** Don't just have it in the boat, pick one and wear it. The vast majority of Canadian boating victims were not wearing a lifejacket or PFD when they drowned. You can compare trying to don a lifejacket or PFD in an emergency to trying to put on your seatbelt in the middle of a car crash.
2. **Boat Sober - It's the Water Smart Choice!** Booze/Drugs and boating don't mix. In Alberta, research shows that alcohol or drug consumption is often involved in fatal incidents.
3. **Get carded!** Get ready for the PCO card test by taking a Lifesaving Society Boat Operator Accredited Training (BOAT) course or study at home, using the Lifesaving Society BOAT Study Guide. Take the test at one of our BOAT Test Centres.
4. **Know before you go! Check the forecast and create a simple safety checklist.** Avoid potential danger by taking a few minutes to make a simple checklist - What's the weather forecast? Any local hazards? What's the condition of the waterways? Where is it shallow? Are there any rapids? Have your maps or charts? Have your lifejackets or PFDs? First aid kit, tools and spare parts? Enough fuel? Safety equipment all working? Told someone where you're going and when to expect you back?

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5. **Wear the right gear!** Wear your lifejacket or PFD, of course, as well as good sunglasses, sunscreen and appropriate clothing. Paddles, whistles and flares are the right gear, too.
6. **Drive your powerboat or PWC responsibly!** Look before you act, stay low, drive at moderate speeds, be aware of changing weather conditions, and drive with extreme caution and proper lights after dark.
7. **Never stand up in your small powerboat, canoe or other similar watercraft.** Numerous drownings occur when people stand up and move around their boat.
8. **Get trained-take some Lifesaving Society courses.** Be prepared in the event of a crash-whether your boat capsizes or you need to rescue someone else. Become aware of the dangers of cold water.
9. **Don't overload.** Avoid capsizing by following the load restrictions of your craft. This includes not only the number of passengers, but also the weight of your gear.
10. **Follow the rules of the road.** Be courteous of others using the waterways and obey all boating rules. Be watchful of swimmers and other boaters, and always have a spotter for water-skiers and tube riders.

The Lifesaving Society, Canada's lifeguarding experts, is a national charity working to prevent drowning and water-related injury. We save lives and prevent injury through our training programs, Water Smart® public education, water incident research, aquatic safety management, and lifesaving sport. For more information about the Lifesaving Society visit our website at www.lifesaving.org.

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For additional information or to arrange for an interview, please contact:

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The Alberta & Northwest Territories Lifesaving Society provides PMTs for print media and PSAs for radio broadcasts. To receive this information, contact the Lifesaving Society at 780-415-1755 or email experts@lifesaving.org. For further information on drowning prevention, visit us online www.lifesaving.org