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KITSAP COUNTY SHERIFF

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Waterborne fun requires safety and education

Port Orchard, Wash. -- As warm weather has now arrived more people are engaged in recreational boating. Recent events in Kitsap County should cause us all to reflect and focus on the importance of boating safety and to wear a personal floatation device when engaged in any waterborne activity.

Personal Flotation Device (PFD):

- All vessels, including canoes and kayaks, must have at least one U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved type I, II, or III life jacket / PFD for each person onboard.
- One type IV (throwable) USCG approved PFD must be on board vessels 16 feet or longer, in addition to the requirement above. Canoes and kayaks are exempt from this requirement.
- Children 12 years old and younger must wear a USCG approved PFD at all times when underway in a vessel less than 19 feet in length, unless in a fully enclosed area.
- Each person on board a personal watercraft and anyone being towed behind a vessel must wear a type I, II, or III USCG approved PFD. Inflatable PFDs are not recommended for these activities.
- A type V PFD may be substituted for any other type if it is specifically approved by the USCG for the activity at hand and is being worn.

- All PFDs must be:
 - **U. S. Coast Guard approved**, which means clearly marked with the USCG approval number.
 - **In good and serviceable condition.**
 - **Readily accessible**, which means you can quickly don a PFD in an emergency.
 - **Of the proper size for the intended wearer**; sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.

Boating Education Requirement:

Beginning Jan. 1, 2008 any boat operator, ages 12 to 20 years-old, will be required to carry a boater education card when operating a motorboat of 15 horsepower or greater on Washington’s waterways.

The card requirement applies to boaters born on or after Jan. 1, 1955, and will be phased in through 2014. Boaters born before Jan. 1, 1955 are exempt from this law.

To meet the new education requirements, boaters can take a course in a classroom, online, or they can take the exam at home by purchasing the Adventures in Washington home-study course. Cards cost \$10 and are good for life.

Boaters are encouraged to take a class as soon as possible, and not wait until they are contacted by law enforcement officers to think about obtaining this required training. Currently, the Kitsap County Sheriff’s Office has two instructors trained to provide the course instruction to meet state requirements. There will be at a nominal fee to cover course materials. An announcement will be made when classes become available.

The following is the phase-in schedule for this new requirement:

Year (Jan. 1)	Age group
2008	12 to 20 years old
2009	25 years and younger
2010	30 years and younger
2011	35 years and younger
2012	40 years and younger
2013	50 years and younger
2014	59 years and younger
After 2014	Card is required for any boater born on or after Jan. 1, 1955

For information about the mandatory Boating Safety Education Program, visit online at www.parks.wa.gov/boating or call (360) 902-8844.

For information regarding the Kitsap County Sheriff's Marine Services Unit, contact Sgt. Jim McDonough at (360) 337-7002 or e-mail at jmcdonou@co.kitsap.wa.us .

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