

# BOATING AND ALCOHOL



## Boat Safe, Boat Sober

To promote safe and sober boating in Oregon's waters, the State Marine Board encourages you to read this brochure carefully and share what you learn from it with your passengers and fellow boaters.

## Boating, Alcohol and the Law

Most boat operators recognize that boat operation and alcohol consumption can be a deadly mix. What some may not realize, however, is that operating a boat while under the influence of alcohol is a crime in Oregon. The legal consequences for those convicted of breaking this law are severe. In Oregon, a boat operator with a blood alcohol content of 0.08 or more is considered to be under the influence. Any boater convicted of boating under the influence will be subject to the following penalties:

- *finest of up to \$5,000 and/or up to a year in jail;*
- *must complete a boating safety education class;*
- *loss of boat operation privileges for one year;*
- *have boat registrations suspended for up to three years.*

**The law also applies to non-motorized craft such as rafts, kayaks, and canoes.**

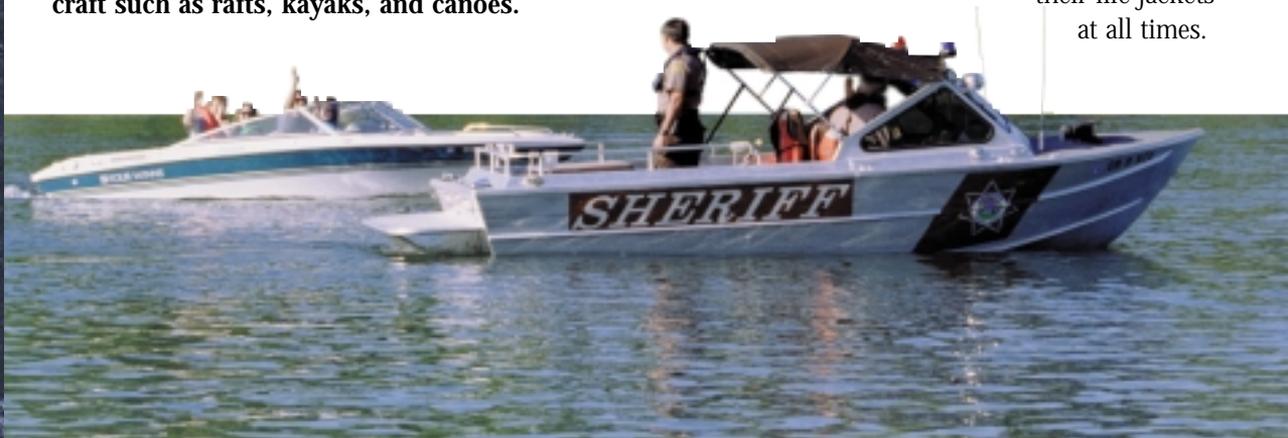
Boating under the influence laws are enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard, the Oregon State Police, and county sheriffs. Officers are equipped with devices that can determine blood alcohol content on the spot.

As a responsible boat operator or passenger, you can improve the safety and quality of recreational boating in Oregon by reporting boating under the influence. If you suspect that a boater is operating under the influence, contact the appropriate law enforcement agency. Helpful information includes a description and location of the boat and operator in question, as well as the boat's registration number (located on each side of the forward half of the boat).

## Passengers at Risk

It is illegal to operate a boat under the influence of alcohol. While passengers may consume alcohol legally, doing so does put them at risk. If you are the skipper, don't allow your passengers to jeopardize their own safety and the safety of yourself and others. If there is alcohol on board your vessel, closely monitor and strictly limit its consumption. Encourage your passengers to drink non-alcoholic beverages. Insist that your passengers, regardless of what they are drinking, wear

their life jackets  
at all times.



# Alcohol Impairs

It is estimated that 50-60% of boating fatalities are alcohol-related. Alcohol impairs your coordination, balance, vision, judgement and reaction time. Since alcohol is absorbed directly into the bloodstream through the walls of the digestive system, these crucial functions are affected with the first sip of *any* alcoholic beverage.

## Coordination

When you drink, your ability to coordinate arm and leg movements decreases. An intoxicated boater who falls overboard will have great difficulty trying to swim or put on a life jacket.

## Balance

Balance is one of the first things you lose when you consume alcohol. Boats – especially smaller boats – tend to pitch and roll with the movement of water. Even a sober person can have great difficulty maintaining balance under these conditions. A person who consumes alcohol runs a much higher risk of losing their balance and falling overboard. Most people who die in boating accidents either fall out of their boat or capsize and end up in the water.

## Vision

This sense provides us with 90% of the information we use while operating a boat, so altering the brain's ability to process visual information can dramatically affect your ability to boat safely. Alcohol impairs vision by causing a loss of focus and peripheral, or "side," vision.

It also impairs depth perception and the ability to differentiate between colors such as red and green – the colors used for running lights on small boats.

## Judgement

Alcohol reduces your ability to make good decisions. A person who thinks clearly when sober may take bold and dangerous risks when under the influence of alcohol. Additionally, a boater under the influence loses the ability to make critical decisions in urgent situations.



*Boater performing a sobriety test*

## Reaction Time

Alcohol also slows your ability to react quickly to unexpected events and greatly increases the risk of collision – the most common of boating accidents. Remember: It is difficult enough to correctly judge the speed and distance of boats, skiers, swimmers and other objects *when sober!*

## Alcohol Affects You More on the Water

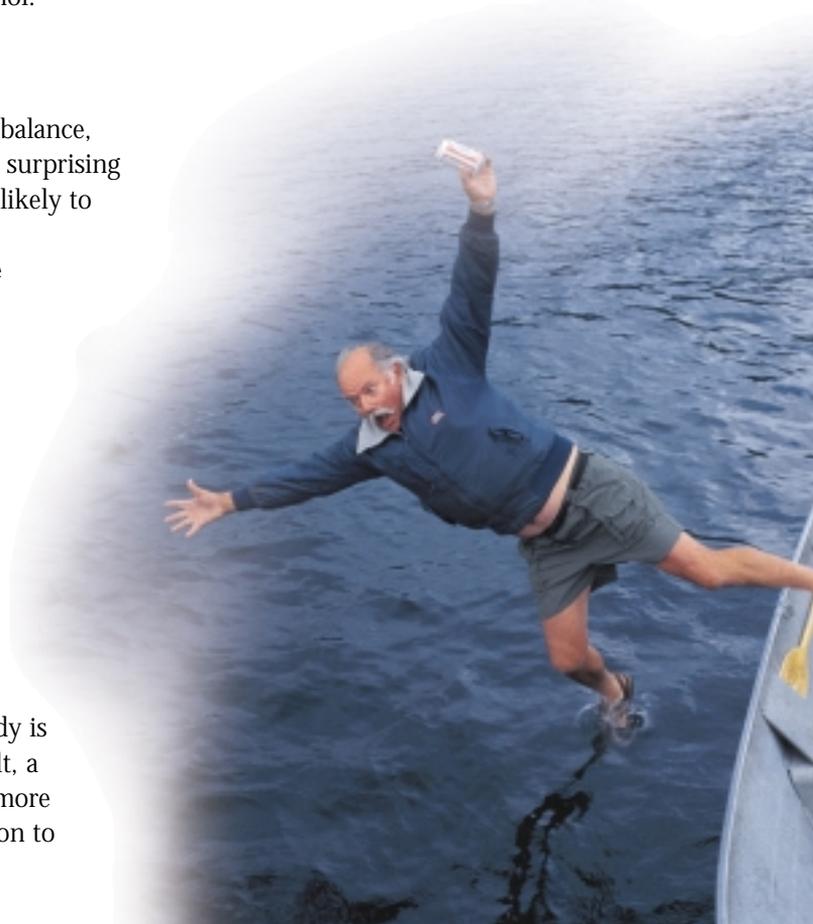
Studies have shown that boaters exposed for a period of hours to wind, glare, noise, vibration, and the motion of the boat on the water tend to develop a condition known as “boater’s hypnosis.” The body’s response to this fatigue produces symptoms that are similar to the effects of alcohol, and the consumption of alcohol intensifies boater’s hypnosis. Likewise, the effects of alcohol are more pronounced on the water. If you are a passenger, keep this in mind before you decide to have a drink. If you are the skipper, the *best* alternative is the *safest* alternative: *zero* consumption of alcohol.

## Falling Overboard

Because alcohol affects a person’s balance, coordination and judgement, it is not surprising that intoxicated individuals are more likely to fall overboard. Once in the water, an intoxicated person is faced with some sobering realities.

- A person under the influence of alcohol, who becomes suddenly immersed in water as a result of a fall, can become confused and may swim down rather than up. Even advanced swimmers are susceptible to this phenomenon.
- Alcohol makes it harder to control the gasping response that occurs when the face or upper body is immersed in cold water. As a result, a sudden plunge into cold water is more likely to cause an intoxicated person to inhale water into the lungs.

- Hypothermia: Cold water rapidly reduces the body’s ability to maintain the internal warm body temperatures necessary for survival. Exposure to cold water and loss of body heat reduces core temperature, leading to a life-threatening condition known as hypothermia. Alcohol, contrary to popular belief, does not warm the body. In fact, alcohol in the bloodstream increases heat loss by increasing the flow of blood near the skin’s surface. Consequently, a person immersed in cold water runs a much higher risk of suffering from hypothermia when alcohol is present in the bloodstream.



# Alcohol Facts

- Coffee, exercise, or fresh air will *not* sober you up; time is the only effective remedy for the effects of alcohol (approximate metabolic rate is one drink per hour);
- Alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant;
- One 12 oz. bottle of beer contains the same amount of alcohol as one 6 oz. glass of wine or one shot of 80 proof liquor;
- Alcohol consumed on an empty stomach is absorbed more rapidly into the bloodstream.

*The following table shows the correlation between body weight, alcohol consumption, and percentage of estimated blood alcohol concentration.*

# of Drinks      Body Weight (in pounds)  
 100   120   140   160   180   200   220   240

<b>1</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.02</b>	<b>.02</b>	<b>.02</b>	<b>.02</b>	<b>.02</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.03</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>.07</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>.05</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.12</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>.07</b>	<b>.06</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.12</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.08</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>.23</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.10</b>	<b>.09</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.12</b>	<b>.11</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>.30</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.17</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.13</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>.34</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>.24</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.17</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.14</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>.38</b>	<b>.31</b>	<b>.27</b>	<b>.23</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.17</b>	<b>.16</b>

- Be careful      
 ■ Operation impaired  
■ Do not operate

## For More Information Contact:

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