

OUR MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE



We think long and hard about them. We worry about them. We nurture them and plan our lives around them. Then why don't we protect them?

We're talking about our children, our society, or for that matter any society's most precious resource. We're also talking about boating. We're talking about safety and we're talking about logic, and laws, and most importantly, just plain old common sense!

In 2006, the United States Coast Guard reported that twenty-nine (29) children age 12 and under lost their lives while boating (out of the 710 fatalities reported.) That same year, sixty-two (62) youngsters, aged 13 - 19 died in boating accidents. For the under age 12 deaths, over 50% died from drowning and in the 13 - 19 year old age bracket, 75% died from drowning. Statistics are sometimes very dry and misleading, but these numbers are alarming, and that's putting it mildly.

We all boat in what is probably one of the most congested waterways in America. Each and every day that I am out on my own personal boat, I see a number of dangerous situations as it relates to our children. I see kids without life jackets or Personal Flotation Devices (PFD's). I see kids sitting on the bow of boats underway. I see parents disregarding safety and laws, by boating and drinking. Each and every incident is an accident just waiting to happen! And it doesn't have to be!

What can you do as a boater? Three very simple approaches can save many lives. As a parent or skipper of a boat, make sure that every child under 13 wears a PFD while on board your vessel. Poor swimmers of any age should wear a PFD, and in fact, the National Safe Boating Council would like every boater, regardless of age to wear a PFD.

The second approach is to suggest that all boaters, from children 8 years old and up, take a boating education course. The Coast Guard Auxiliary has a wide range of courses for a wide range of ages and boaters. Education is a primary way of informing the public of dangerous practices. An educated boater is hopefully a safer boater.

The last approach is to report to your local law enforcement authorities when you witness a vessel, with young children, who are not wearing PFD's. Also, when you notice youngsters (or for that matter oldersters) sitting with their feet over the bow. Sometimes a ticket is a sobering experience, which may just save a life.

So please take the time to make your children wear their PFD's. Take the extra step to ensure their safety and their lives. Don't ignore safety. And especially don't ignore the safety of our most precious resource.

For more information about boating safety or PFD's, please visit our local flotilla website at <http://a0130804.uscgaux.info>.

See you on the water.