

# 101 CRITICAL DAYS OF SUMMER 2014

Risk management has a role in everything we do, both on and off duty. It continues to be the job of the safety professionals to provide guidance to all Airmen about the dangers of the season. Airmen use sound risk management every day on duty and, while the main focus of the Critical Days of Summer campaign is off duty activities, Airmen must use the same risk management techniques in all circumstances.

*Chapter 12*  
*August 8, 2014*



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## Chapter 12: On the Waterfront

### Topic: Boating/Personal Water Craft

What better way to enjoy a hot summer day than being in or around the water. Swimming was discussed in Chapter 9 and here we will discuss other popular water activities. Boating, jet skiing, tubing, water skiing, etc., just to name a few, may be in your plans.

According to the Executive Summary of the U.S. Coast Guard 2012 Report:

- In 2012, the Coast Guard counted 4515 accidents that involved 651 deaths, 3000 injuries and approximately \$38 million dollars of damage to property as a result of recreational boating accidents.
  - The fatality rate was 5.4 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels. This rate represents a 12.9% decrease from last year's fatality rate of 6.2 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels.
  - Compared to 2011, the number of accidents decreased 1.6%, the number of deaths decreased 14.1% and the number of injuries decreased 2.6%.
- Almost seventy-one (71) percent of all fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those, almost eighty-five (85) percent were not reported as wearing a life jacket.
- Almost fourteen percent (14) of deaths occurred on boats where the operator had received boating safety instruction. Only nine (9) percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received boating safety instruction from a NASBLA approved course provider.
- Seven out of every ten boaters who drowned were using vessels less than 21 feet in length.
- Operator inattention, operator inexperience, improper lookout, machinery failure, and excessive speed rank as the top five primary contributing factors in accidents.
- Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; it was listed as the leading factor in 17% of deaths.
- Twenty-four children under age thirteen lost their lives while boating in 2012. Ten children or approximately forty-two (42) percent of the children who died in 2012 died from drowning. Two children or twenty (20) percent of those who drowned were wearing a life jacket as required by state and federal law.
- The most common types of vessels involved in reported accidents were open motorboats (47%), personal watercraft (19%), and cabin motorboats (15%).
- The 12,101,936 recreational vessels registered by the states in 2012 represent a 0.59% decrease from last year when 12,173,935 recreational vessels were registered.

Although the number of fatalities has decreased, even one is too many. Note the causes listed above and be prepared to mitigate the risks by having all the proper equipment and training, do not speed, and do not drink while operating a watercraft. The following example illustrates how important it is to always expect the unexpected:

An Airman rented a jet ski from a local vendor. He was provided a life vest and escorted to the jet ski. He was on it for about 30 minutes when he made an abrupt maneuver at an unknown speed. As he negotiated the jet ski sharply to the right, he was partially ejected. He fell backwards and to the right where his right foot caught the foot well, causing injury to his lower leg. Additionally, as he was ejected, he lost grip of the throttle and the jet ski came to a stop. He sustained a compound fracture to the right lower leg and was placed on three days quarters followed by a month on convalescent leave.



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How could this have been prevented? No one will know for sure, but being properly prepared might give you the extra edge you need to avoid an accident.

Additional information includes:

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/educate/boating.htm>

<http://www.discoverboating.com/resources/article.aspx?id=236>

<http://hss.edu/onthemove/staying-safe-while-performing-water-sports/>

<http://www.ironmountaindailynews.com/page/content.detail/id/529310/Water-ski-safety-tips.html?nav=5004>

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nhrota/SafetyTopics/Vacation/Pages/JetSkiSafety.aspx>

<http://www.pwia.org/governmentrelations.aspx> (map with state regulations)

<http://www.uscgboating.org/>

