

2003 AWARD WINNER

Connecticut has always tried to be responsive to impending problems. In the late 1980's when the legislature wanted to ban personal watercraft, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) responded by putting together one of the nations first mandatory education and certification programs for basic boating and personal watercraft, which was implemented in 1992.

Once again, in 1999 when we saw an increase in accidents and fatalities amongst paddlers, we expressed our concern by developing a basic safety course for kayakers and canoeists. A review of fatalities revealed that most paddle sport fatalities were caused by use of the wrong boat in the wrong waters, lack of wearing a life jacket or hypothermia. We saw the need for a simplified one evening course addressing the very basic concepts of paddling. Allen Ames, recently retired from our staff, developed a two-hour power-point presentation utilizing cartoon slides that emphasize serious topics. The course discusses considerations in buying a canoe or kayak, exposes paddlers to the fact that different paddle strokes exist for different situations, introduces the paddler to safety concerns and equipment, and further educates the prospects. To date the course is used statewide and taught by volunteers. We have received positive feedback from students.

The DEP was encouraged to share the course within our US Coast Guard District by Sr. Chief Petty Officer Al Johnson of Search and Rescue. The course is now being used in various states in and out of New England. Canada has requested a copy of the CD. Should any state like to receive a copy for their own use and adaptation please contact John Annino, Education Coordinator, at (860) 434-8638 or john.annino@po.state.ct.us.

The Department was very proud when our course won the 2003 Northern Region Education Advancement Award sponsored by the National Safe Boating Council and Coors Brewing Company.

Article submitted by Eleanor Mariani, Connecticut's State Boating Law Administrator, Department of Environmental Protection Boating Division, State of Connecticut.

Photo below shows Mr. Ames accepting the award at the 2003 International Boating & Water Safety Summit from Chairman Griswold and Coors representative, Deanna Rice.



YOU'RE IN COMMAND

Following are some You're in Command Press Releases, USCG Office of Boating Safety.

Up the Odds You'll Survive

Think you're safe enough when you head out on the water? The U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety says you can up the odds you'll survive a boating mishap by never boating alone; always filing a float plan; and, carrying a noise-producing device attached to your life jacket. Always wear your life jacket and make sure your jacket has reflective tape or a mirror attached.

If you fall in the water, stay with your boat or a floating object if at all possible. In colder weather, wear as much warm clothing as possible, covering head, neck, hands and feet; although it's always a good idea to carry extra clothing regardless of the season. While afloat, do not attempt to swim unless it is to reach a fellow survivor or floating object. Float as still as possible with legs together, elbows close to side and arms folded across the front of your life jacket and try to keep a positive attitude about your survival and rescue. Did we say, "Wear a life jacket"?

U.S. Coast Guard statistics confirm that accidents can and do happen in a split second and that hundreds of boaters are dying because they aren't wearing their life jackets from the start of their trip. With today's lighter, more comfortable, and attractive life jackets, including inflatables, there's no reason not to wear one. **Remember, You're in Command. Boat Safely!**



Reality Check

Sometimes, knowing the cold hard facts can help us. The U.S. Coast Guard hopes that the latest boating accident statistics will convince boaters of the need to boat more safely.

According to the Coast Guard's 2002 statistics, boating fatalities were up from 681 in 2001 to 750 in 2002, reversing a downward trend. 85 percent who drowned in 2002 were not wearing their life jackets. Boating fatalities involving alcohol rose to 39 percent in 2002 from 34 percent in 2001. Approximately 80 percent of all reported fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction.

Nearly 40 percent of the children who died in 2002 (28 age 12 and under) were not wearing life jackets. More adults between ages 30 – 39 died than any other age group accounting for one fifth of the total fatalities. The most common boats involved in reported accidents were open motorboats (41 percent), personal watercraft (28 percent), and cabin motorboats (15 percent). An estimated 85 percent of all drowning victims involved boats less than 21 feet long.

These facts show that accidents can and do happen in a split second and that hundreds of boaters are dying because they aren't wearing their life jackets. With today's lighter, more comfortable and attractive life jackets, there's no reason not to wear one.

REMEMBER, YOU'RE IN COMMAND. BOAT SAFELY!

NEW - Paddling Safety Program

The American Canoe Association (ACA), under a Wallop-Breaux funded grant, has developed a short colorful, fun 20-minute safety orientation for paddlers.

SmartStart for Paddlers offers a table-top easel of colorful posters, a full script and a resource disk. The resource disk includes a Power Point version of the materials for high tech delivery options, the full script, lesson plan, a Trainer the Trainer video segment and copies of ACA's popular *Quickstart your Canoe* and *Quickstart your Kayak* video segments. The entire kit is only \$49.95 and is available from the ACA at 1-800-929-5162 Extension 18.

