

**"WEAR IT" MARKETING CAMPAIGN DESIGNED TO INCREASE LIFE JACKET WEAR RATES ACHIEVES POSITIVE RESULTS**

*Recreational Boating Safety Partners Pilot Initiative Inspires Boaters on the California Delta to "Wear It!"*

WASHINGTON D.C. – The National Safe Boating Council announced that the pilot initiative designed to measure the effect of marketing outreach on actual life jacket wear in the California Delta resulted in a notable percentage increase, near doubling, in a one-year period. The initial unveiling of the study results represented a highlight moment at the October National Boating Safety Advisory Council meeting in Washington D.C., a forum that facilitates opportunities for boating safety advocates to advise the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety on recreational boating safety matters.

"The Coast Guard has committed numerous hours and resources to public outreach focused on increasing boating safety – particularly life jacket wear – on America's waterways," said Jeff Hoedt Chief of the U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Division, the organization that initiated and funded the pilot initiative. "In keeping with our goal to identify those strategies proven to be most effective, this campaign achieved measurable results in the desired outcome (life jacket wear). The end result in California – a sizeable increase that we hope will continue to grow."

Overall, the observational study was conducted over four separate time periods throughout July and August of 2007, in a total of ten observation sites (as far away as San Francisco), seven of which were designated in the central Sacramento area. The chosen sites were known only to JSI, Inc., the independent research company under contract to the Coast Guard and responsible for the study, until the conclusion of the campaign. Final results indicated that the 2007 life jacket wear rate for all powerboats in the central sites registered at 12.2 percent, as compared with the baseline 2006 measurement of 6.2 percent in the same area. The study excluded measurements of children and personal watercraft users, populations that could skew results as these groups are required by law to wear life jackets.

According to Ray Tsuneyoshi, Director of the California Department of Boating and Waterways, a key partner in the overall campaign, "I speak for all boating safety advocates in California when I say that we were delighted that the Delta was chosen for this first-time effort. These extraordinary results underscore

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the importance of outreach and education, and more specifically, the value of "one voice – one message" targeted approach. Our efforts on the Delta may well be the springboard for similar initiatives across the state, as well as across the country."

The California Delta was chosen as the site for this initiative – dubbed "Wear It California!" – due to the area's national reputation as a boating hot spot, and its fairly significant contribution to the state's overall boating accident statistics: on average, a total of ten percent of all of California boating accidents occur in the Delta area alone. Launched during National Safe Boating Week in mid-May, the three and a half-month campaign was focused in the central Delta region, and featured: intensive advertising; approximately 25 media stories; over 50 coalitions with area marinas, community organizations, and retail outlets; over ten community events; multiple radio promotions; and a campaign boat crewed by "ambassadors" who perused the Delta waters, distributing inflatable life jackets and safety tips to recreational boaters. In return for the life jacket, boaters were asked to document their commitment to always "wear it" by submitting a signed pledge card. In total, 1,200 pledge cards were collected over the summer months.

Life jackets are the proven number one way to save a life in the event of a sudden, unexpected capsizing or fall overboard, incidents that account for 85 percent of all boating accident fatalities nationwide. "The results of this initiative will go far to encourage the national boating safety community that we can, indeed, communicate that message in such a way that boaters don't just listen, but actually respond," says Virgil Chambers, Executive Director of the National Safe Boating Council, a lead organization in the "Wear It California!" effort. "By utilizing sound strategy and communicating to a defined target audience, we have proven that we can not only achieve significant visibility of life jacket messages, but we can actually inspire changed behavior. That's exciting."

According to the 2006 Boating Statistics Report published by the U.S. Coast Guard, 90 percent of boaters who drown were not wearing a life jacket. The JSI Study Report indicated that, nationally, less than 4.1 percent of power boaters (excluding children and personal watercraft users) have been observed wearing a life jacket.

The JSI Wear Rate Observation Study and the "Wear It" California initiative were funded under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administrated by the U.S Coast Guard.

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