

ALASKA'S BOATING SAFETY DOLLARS AT WORK

Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Office of Boating Safety

BACKGROUND

Boats are an integral part of the lifestyle of many Alaskans. Alaskans use boats to enjoy the state's world-class recreational opportunities and as a primary means of transportation and subsistence. Unfortunately, Alaska also has one of the highest non-commercial boating fatality rates (fatalities per 100,000 registered boats) in the nation. From 1990 through 2011 far more Alaskans died in recreational boating accidents than died in commercial fishing. Most of these fatalities could have been prevented. A ten year study of Alaska's boating fatalities reveals:

- 9 of 10 involve boats under 26 feet in length
- 9 of 10 of those who die are adult males
- 5 of 6 experience a vessel capsize or fall overboard into Alaska's cold water
- 3 of 4 are powerboats

The Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 (46 U.S.C. 13101) provided the first federal funding to the states to *"encourage greater state participation and uniformity in boating safety efforts, and particularly to permit the states to assume the greater share of boating safety education, assistance, and enforcement activities."* Since the act was passed, the U.S. Coast Guard estimates that more than 27,000 lives have been saved. Nationally, the number of non-commercial boating fatalities has been cut in half; even though boat ownership more than doubled over the same period.

However, from 1987 to 1998, Alaska was the *only* state without a boating program. As a result, Alaska's share of federal funding available for boating safety was divided among all the other states. At the same time, because U.S. Coast Guard registered our boats, Alaska's registration fees went into the U.S. Treasury instead of remaining in the state.

In June 1998 Alaska became the last state to establish a boating safety program when the Office of Boating Safety was established by Department Order. The Alaska Boating Safety Act (AS 05.25) was drafted, introduced in the 1999 legislative session, and signed into law on May 11, 2000, and Alaska qualified for the state's full share of federal grant funds for state boating programs. The Alaska Boating Safety Program relies almost entirely on this grant.

Alaska's investment in boating safety is small when compared to the lives saved

Program Mission

With the intended purpose of improving boater behaviors, reducing boating deaths, injuries and property damage, and enhancing the enjoyment of Alaska's waterways, *"It is the policy of the state to promote the safety of persons and property in and connected with the use, operation, and equipment of boats on the water of the state and to promote the uniformity of laws relating to boat safety"* (AS 05.25.050).

Program Objectives (AS 05.25.053)

1. Cooperate with other state and federal agencies and organizations to provide for boating safety programs statewide.
2. Secure the benefits available to the state under 46 U.S.C. 13101 - 13110; and take the actions necessary to continue to qualify for federal grant funding under 46 U.S.C. 13102, and the U.S. Coast Guard / State of Alaska Memorandum of Understanding.
3. Provide a boating safety education program to increase public awareness of boating risks, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities of Alaska's boaters:
 - Develop educational materials relevant to the needs of both urban and rural boaters.
 - Support statewide boating safety training programs.
 - Support education programs for children and high - risk groups.
 - Train, certify, and support boating safety instructors.
 - Evaluate, on an ongoing basis, of the effectiveness of programs.
4. Provide for an Alaska Boating Safety Advisory Council.
5. Provide for a uniform state waterway marking system.
6. Provide for a boat registration and numbering system through the Department of Administration, Division of Motor Vehicles.
7. Provide for boating accident and casualties reporting in cooperation with the Department of Public Safety.
8. Provide boating safety patrol and law enforcement activity through the Department of Public Safety.
9. Provide for boating law enforcement training in cooperation with the Department of Public Safety.
10. Promote the uniformity of laws relating to boating safety.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The *Kids Don't Float* life jacket loaner program is a collaborative partnership between the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, the Alaska Boating Safety Program, the U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska Safe Kids, and local sponsors. A total of **617** life jacket loaner board stations are active in **249** communities. The Alaska Boating Safety Program is the primary supplier of life jackets for the program, with **34,722** life jackets provided to date.

The *Kids Don't Float* schools program provides boating safety education for Alaska's students. Attendance numbers now total **84,668**.

The program offers *Alaska Water Wise (AWW)*, Alaska's nationally approved and Alaska – relevant, boating safety course.

- **2,129** boaters (representing all of Alaska's census areas) have completed an *AWW* course.
- The program trains Alaskans to teach *Alaska Water Wise* courses and supports their efforts to teach boating safety in and around their communities. **301** potential instructors from more than **52** Alaska communities in **24** of the state's **27** census areas have completed the *Alaska Water Wise Instructor* course.
- Those who meet program requirements for state instructor certification are placed on the state boating safety instructor registry and authorized to teach *Alaska Water Wise (AWW)*. There are currently **126** instructors on the registry.

The program conducts an ongoing social marketing campaign on radio and television, produces publications and articles including the popular *Alaska Boater's Handbook*, and the handbook supplement series, award - winning posters and brochures, interpretive panels for display at boat launches, presents seminars, and produces instructional films such as *Boating Alaska* and *Cold Water Boating*.

The program develops curriculum and provides marine law enforcement training for the Alaska State Troopers and other Alaska law enforcement officers including instruction in boating laws at the Alaska Law Enforcement Training Academy, the 40 hr Alaska Boating Law Enforcement (ABLE) course, and financial support for officers attending national level training such as the NASBLA Boating Under the Influence and Boat Accident Investigation.

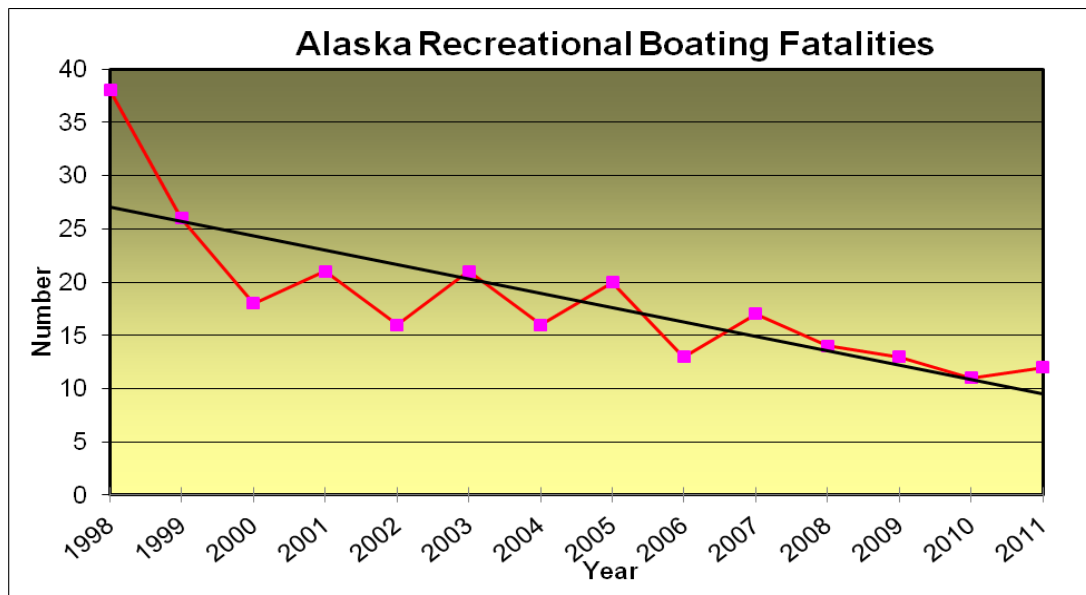
Observational behavior studies, statewide boater surveys, instructor and course evaluations, student testing, and U.S Coast Guard statistics are examples of sources used to evaluate program performance.

The Alaska Office of Boating Safety has received numerous awards including the U.S Coast Guard's prestigious *Meritorious Public Service Award*, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators *Compass Award*, and the National Safe Boating Council's *Boating Education Advancement* and *Boating Safety Youth Program Awards*.

The Alaska Boating Safety Program is entirely user – funded; through the federal *Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund* and a portion of Alaska's state boat registration receipts.

RESULTS

Alaska's recreational boating fatalities have dropped since the program began in 1998. In comparing the number of fatalities during each of the two five - year periods within the previous 10 years, fatalities have dropped 22.1%.



At least **19** Alaskan children have survived a water emergency thanks to a *Kids Don't Float* loaner life jacket.

2006 Alaska Boater Survey:

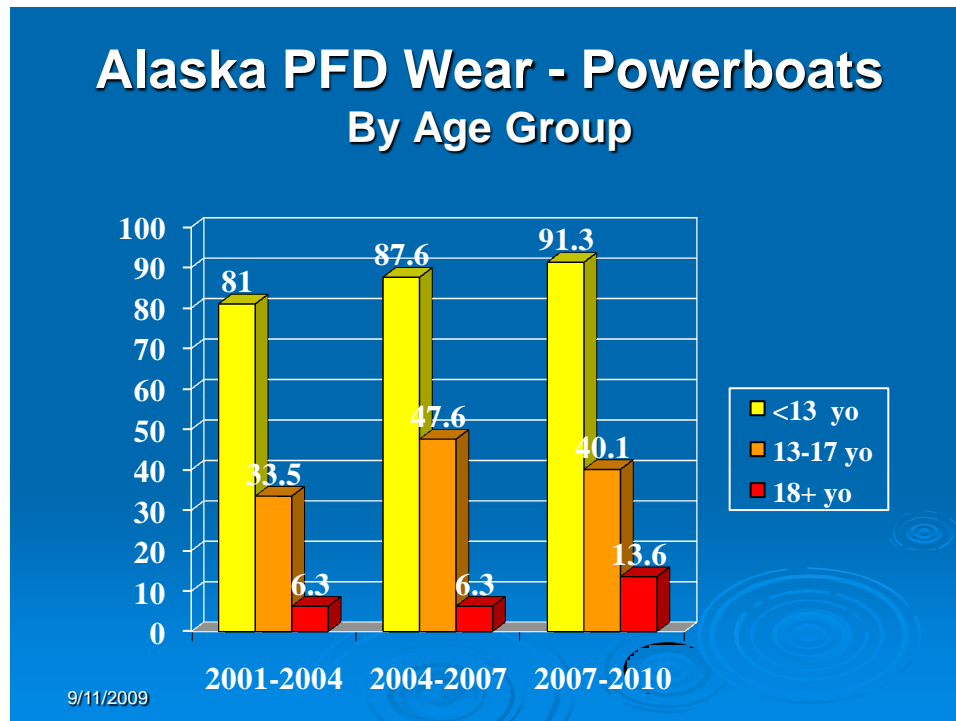
25% of Alaskan boaters say they wear a life jacket more often today than they did five years ago

12% of Alaskan boaters say a life jacket saved the life of someone in their household

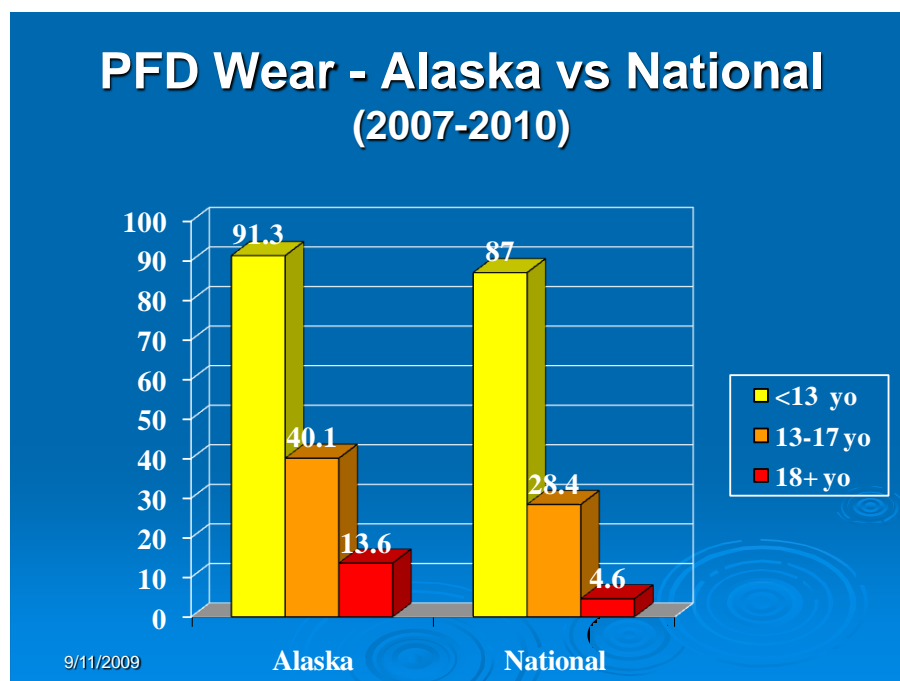
77% of Alaskan boaters believe everyone should be required to wear life jackets when in open boats

72% of Alaskan boaters say they have taken a boating safety course, compared to 46% five years ago

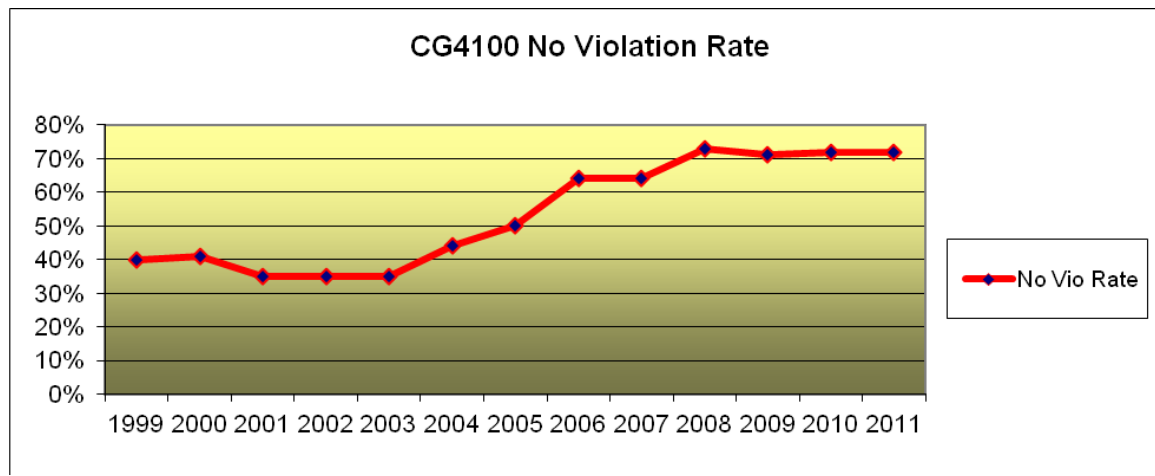
U.S. Coast Guard observational life jacket wear rate studies show increases in life jacket wear.



Observed life jacket wear rates in Alaska are above the national average in all age groups.



USCG law enforcement boarding statistics show high compliance with safety equipment carriage requirements



STAFFING DETAIL

The Alaska Boating Safety Program has four full time staff. Three were pre – existing positions within the Division of Parks that were moved into the boating safety program.

Boating Law Administrator – (Program Coordinator II, PCN 10-5101)

Each state's Boating Law Administrator plans, implements, and directs the functions of their state's boating program. This position formulates and revises the program's budget, policies, and management strategies, coordinates with other state agencies that provide Alaska's program elements, assures maximum utilization of financial and human resources, identifies and adopts the best practices of other state boating programs, designs ways to evaluate performance of the program, and leads the analysis of boating related issues affecting the State. The position serves as the state's official representative on local, regional, and national levels with regard to recreational boating issues, policy development, and program funding and also provides regulatory interpretive assistance to agencies and the public.

Boating Education Coordinator – (Program Coordinator I, PCN 10-5257)

The Boating Education Coordinator plans, develops, and coordinates the delivery of a variety of educational programs statewide. This position's duties include curriculum development, professional training, and overseeing paid and volunteer boating safety instructors, overseeing all *Kid's Don't Float* schools programs, providing a variety of seminars and presentations, managing the Alaska Boating Safety Instructor Registry, and assisting and supporting boating safety instructors statewide. This position also trains law enforcement officers in boating law and marine law enforcement, and is a law enforcement field - training officer.

Boating Education Specialist – (Project Assistant, PCN 10-5260)

This position independently provides a variety of high quality and Alaska - relevant public boating education and interpretive programs that promote safe, enjoyable boating experiences, for children and adults, performs outreach and schedules programs, develops, prepares for, and executes boating education programs including *Alaska Water Wise* and *Kids Don't Float* classes, workshops, and presentations. Ensures all programs satisfy the standards and policies of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Office of Boating Safety.

Administrative Assistant – (PCN 10-5062)

Administrative support functions in the areas of budget preparation and financial monitoring/reporting, purchasing, inventory, travel, training, personnel, and information dissemination. Duties include gathering information for and preparing budgets, federal grant applications and reports, fiscal and financial tracking of expenditures, procurement of equipment, supplies, and professional services, preparing and tracking reimbursable services agreements, executing payments, processing time sheets, arranging travel, preparing and processing travel authorizations, coding, certifying, and reconciling invoices, attending meetings and drafting meeting minutes, handling public and agency inquiries, assisting unit staff with boating safety program activities, preparing advertising orders, organizing media campaigns, developing and maintaining web pages, and setting up and maintaining a highly organized system of electronic databases, files and records.

ENDORSEMENTS FOR THE ALASKA BOATING SAFETY ACT OF 2000:

- Alaska Municipal League
- United States Coast Guard
- United States Coast Guard Auxiliary
- Valdez Harbor Users Association
- Seward Boat Owners Association
- Whittier Boat Owners Association
- Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association
- Alaska Marine Dealer's Association
- Trails and Recreational Access for Alaskans Board (TRAAK)
- Alaska Safety Advisory Council
- Kenai River Special Management Area Citizen's Advisory Board
- Alaska Boating Safety Advisory Council (ABSAC)
- Mat-Su State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board
- Big Lake Community Council
- Sitka State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board
- Denali Safety Council (members: National Bank of Alaska, University of Alaska, Teamsters local 302, Carr's, Anchorage Daily News, VECO, Alyeska Pipeline, ARCO, NANA/Marriott, Federal and State OSHA, Anchorage Safe Communities)
- Alaska Department of Public Safety
- Alaska Wildland Adventures
- National Transportation Safety Board
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services - Community Health and EMS Section
- Western States Boating Administrator's Association
- National Association of State Boating Law Administrators
- South Peninsula State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board
- Alaska Recreation and Park Association
- Kodiak State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board
- Fairbanks Paddlers
- Valdez City Council
- Kachemak Bay State Park Citizen's Advisory Board
- Alaska Harbormaster's Association
- Fairbanks Area Alaska State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board
- Kodiak City Council
- Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
- Valdez State Parks Citizens Advisory Board
- River Management Society - Alaska Chapter