

Canadian Safe Boating Council and the Lifesaving Society team up to keep Ontario anglers safe on the water

July 1 to 9 marks National Fishing Week in Canada.

The Canadian Safe Boating Council (CSBC) and the Lifesaving Society want to remind anglers that wearing a lifejacket is even more important than wearing that 'lucky fishing hat.' But they do share one trait. They both have to be worn to be effective. According to the Lifesaving Society's 2016 Canadian Drowning Report, 82 per cent of recreational boaters who drowned in the past five years were found not wearing a lifejacket or personal floatation device (PFD). More than half (54 per cent) of boating deaths occurred during powerboat use, with small powerboats less than 5.5 metres in length (26 per cent) the most common vessel type. A majority of these victims were males (80 per cent) between the ages of 20 and 60, often out for a day of fishing. Many of those who don't wear their lifejackets or PFDs believe that, since they are good swimmers, having them onboard and within easy reach is good enough. But a lifejacket stored under a seat or up in the bow will be of no help when the unexpected happens, like falling overboard while trying to net the catch.

'National surveys clearly show that more than half the recreational boats sold in Canada are used for fishing on a regular basis,' CSBC Chair John Gullick said. 'During National Fishing Week, the Canadian Safe Boating Council would like to remind all anglers not only to have their lifejacket onboard their boat, but to look after it and wear it. If you happen to fall overboard, it will give you the time you need to calm down, catch your breath, assess your situation and effect, or help effect, a rescue. In two out of three drownings related to boating, the victims were less than 15 meters from some form of safety.'

Many of today's anglers are delighted with the models that are designed especially to suit their needs. They're rugged, allow for full freedom of movement to cast and are constructed with lots of pockets for gear. Some even come equipped with an attachment from which to hang a landing net. When choosing their lifejacket, anglers should also check the label to make sure it is Transport Canada approved, is the correct size and fits snugly.

'The Lifesaving Society of Ontario is pleased to promote the Hooked on Lifejackets program,' Barbara Byers, public education director with the Lifesaving Society, said. 'Our organization is dedicated to drowning prevention and strongly supports anglers wearing their lifejackets while enjoying our waterways.'

Fishing is a part of our Canadian fabric and an activity that's easy to get hooked on. At this important time of year, CSBC and the LSS are asking those who fish to 'Get Hooked on Lifejackets' too.

This initiative is made possible through support of Transport Canada's Office of Boating Safety.