

Sober boating

Drinking and boating accounts for about 40 percent of boating-related fatalities on Canadian waterways. In 2018, the Canadian Safe Boating Council (CSBC) along with our enforcement and Search and Rescue partners are also concerned about the potential impact of legalization of recreational marijuana and the increase in use and abuse of prescription narcotics on boating incidents and fatalities.

To raise awareness and reduce impairment-related deaths, the CSBC is launching year six of an initiative called "Operation Dry Water". Its goal is to stress the importance of boating sober.

With the summer boating season in high gear, the August 4 - 6 long weekend is the perfect time to remind Canadian boaters about the risks of impaired boating. Combined with sun, wind, waves and the rocking motion of the boat, the effects of alcohol and drugs on the water can be greatly increased.

"The CSBC, its partners and sponsors would like, through this and our other initiatives, to raise attention to the problem of boating under the influence and to remind boaters to boat sober," stated John Gullick, chair of the Canadian Safe Boating Council.

Operation Dry Water will focus on the potential risks of impaired boating, and remedies that are currently in place to discourage it.

Federal statutes dictate that boaters can be charged with Impaired Operation of a Vessel under the Criminal Code of Canada if they are found to be impaired. Under current and proposed legislation, human-powered craft are not excluded from the definition of a vessel and, so, are subject to the same penalties. Some provinces have enacted legislation where impaired boating can affect your automobile driving privileges.

Operation Dry Water is aimed at reducing the number of impairment-related accidents and fatalities on the water while fostering a stronger and more visible deterrent to alcohol and drug use while boating. The end goal? To achieve safer and more enjoyable recreational boating.

During the August long weekend, a number of police agencies will be offering the media the chance to ride along while they conduct on-water vessel safety checks. Please contact your local detachment to see if they are offering this opportunity.