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Robert N. Babezki
Public Affairs Officer
rbabezki@uscgaux-ocnj.org

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609-384-6225

Wear Your Lifejacket

Boaters enjoy the feel of sun and spray. So it's tempting to go boating without wearing a life jacket — especially on nice days. But that's no excuse not to wear a life jacket on the water! According to the U.S. Coast Guard, three-fourths of 2011's 758 fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those, over eighty (80) percent were reported as not wearing a life jacket.

Federal law states that all recreational boats must carry one wearable lifejacket for each person aboard. Any boat 16 ft. and longer (except canoes and kayaks) must also carry one throwable lifejacket. Though it is not required that adults wear a lifejacket, one should be worn at all times when the vessel is underway. In New Jersey, children 12 and under must wear a lifejacket when aboard any boat underway. A wearable lifejacket can save your life, but only if you wear it.

While underway and not being worn, lifejackets must be readily accessible. You must be able to put them on in a reasonable amount of time in an emergency. They should not be stowed in plastic bags, kept in locked or closed compartments or have other gear stowed on top of them.

Modern life jackets are available in a wide variety of shapes, colors and sizes. Many are thin and flexible. Some are built right into fishing vests or hunter coats. Others are inflatable — as compact as a scarf or fanny pack until they hit water, when they automatically fill with air.

The best lifejacket is the one you will wear.



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The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard created by an Act of Congress in 1939. The Auxiliary, America's Volunteer Guardians, supports the Coast Guard in nearly all of its missions.