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INDEPENDENT

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Coast Guard Aux NEWS

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Suffolk County Blazes Its Own Path on Boating Safety

The US Coast Guard continues to support the States and our other partners in their efforts to increase recreational boater education. And education generally means safer boating. In fact, consistently over the years, Coast Guard's Boating Statistics show huge percentages (80 percent - 90 percent some years) of all reported fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction. And now, Suffolk County has passed what is arguably the toughest boating safety instruction law in New York State – everyone who boats in the County shall (read: must) have formal, approved boating safety education.

Like a Driver's License

Can you imagine having a driver's license issued by NYS and, upon entering Connecticut; you find that it isn't valid? A driver's license for every State makes no sense. There has to be some base line that the States, individually and taken as a whole, accept as a minimum standard that is accepted everywhere.

Well, this isn't true yet with respect to boats but it is slowly happening. With this legislation just passed in Suffolk County, a boating safety certificate issued by the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, the US Power Squadrons or any entity that meets the standards set by NASBLA (National Association of Boating Law Administrators) must be held by the skipper, period, full stop, if operating a recreational vessel in Suffolk County waters.

What about boaters from NJ or CT? Well, those states already have a state-wide boating safety certificate program, so they are good to go. Boaters from Nassau County or New York City? Sure, as long as they have a boating safety certificate issued by an authorized entity. No certificate. Well, better get on it. (See below.)

Suffolk County Waters means What?

If it flows in, through or by Suffolk County, it counts. And the certificate needs to be on the board, and apply to the skipper at the helm, if/as/when the boat is stopped by law enforcement. Or else, penalties ensue . . . First offense is a \$250 fine. Second offense? \$500. After that, you are guilty of a misdemeanor and the fine is \$1,000 per offense. You may also find yourself a guest of the local constabulary, for up to one year.

Any Exemptions?

Well, yes. Boating Safety instructors certified by New York State are exempt. Boating Safety Instructors of the US Power Squadrons are exempt. All members of the US Coast Guard, US Coast Guard Auxiliary and US Navy are exempt. Police officers, fire and rescue personnel acting

pursuant to assigned duties are exempt. Persons licensed by the US Coast Guard, or the Merchant Marine or Canadian Coast Guard, to operate vessels are also exempt. If you are one of those, you are good to go. If you aren't, and haven't taken an approved boating safety class, you must act. The Clock is Ticking...

The law goes into effect next September – so the perfect time to get started is now.

Basic Course Requirements

The kind of course that the State is looking for, (from an approved instructor, Bunky, not your uncle) has these basic characteristics:

Introduction to Boating – Types of power boats; sailboats; outboards; paddle boats; houseboats; different uses of boats; various power boating engines

Boating Law – Boat registration; boating regulation; hull identification number; required boat safety equipment; operating safely and reporting accidents; Federal boat law; state boating laws; personal watercraft requirements.

Boat Safety Equipment –Personal flotation devices ("life jackets"); fire extinguishers; sound-producing devices; visual-distress signals; dock lines and rope; first aid kit; anchors and anchor lines; other boating safety equipment.

Safe Boating – Bow riding; alcohol and drug abuse; entering, loading, and trimming a boat; fueling portable and permanent tanks; steering with a tiller and a wheel; docking, undocking and mooring; knots; filing a float plan; checking equipment, fuel, weather and tides; using charts; choosing and using an anchor.

Navigation – The U.S. Aids to Navigation system; types of buoys and beacons; USCG navigation rules; avoiding collisions; sound signals; PWC "tunnel vision."

Boating Problems – Hypothermia; boating accidents and rescues; man overboard recovery; capsizing; running aground; river hazards; strainers: emergency radio calls; engine problems; equipment failures; carbon monoxide (CO); other boating and PWC problems.

Trailer, Storing and Protecting Your Boat – Types of trailers; trailer brakes, lights, hitches, tires, and bearings; loading, balancing, and towing a trailer; towing (and backing) a trailer; boat launching and retrieving; boat storage.

Hunting and Fishing, Water-skiing and River Boating – Carrying hunting gear and weapons in a boat; fishing from a boat; water-skiing safety guidelines and hand signals; water-skiing with a PWC; navigating rivers, and other boating tips. Where to find such classes? Start here -
HYPERLINK "http://www.d1south.org/pages/boating_safety.php"
http://www.d1south.org/pages/boating_safety.php

Put in your zip code – and click "submit"

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the DISR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at [DSO-HR](#) and we will help you “get in this thing...”