



The Strategic Plan of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program

2022-2026

United States Coast Guard
Office of Auxiliary & Boating Safety (CG-BSX)

“Tomorrow looks different. So will we.

We will be a more adaptive and connected

Coast Guard that generates sustained

readiness, resilience and capability

in new ways

to enhance our Nation’s maritime

safety, security, and prosperity.”

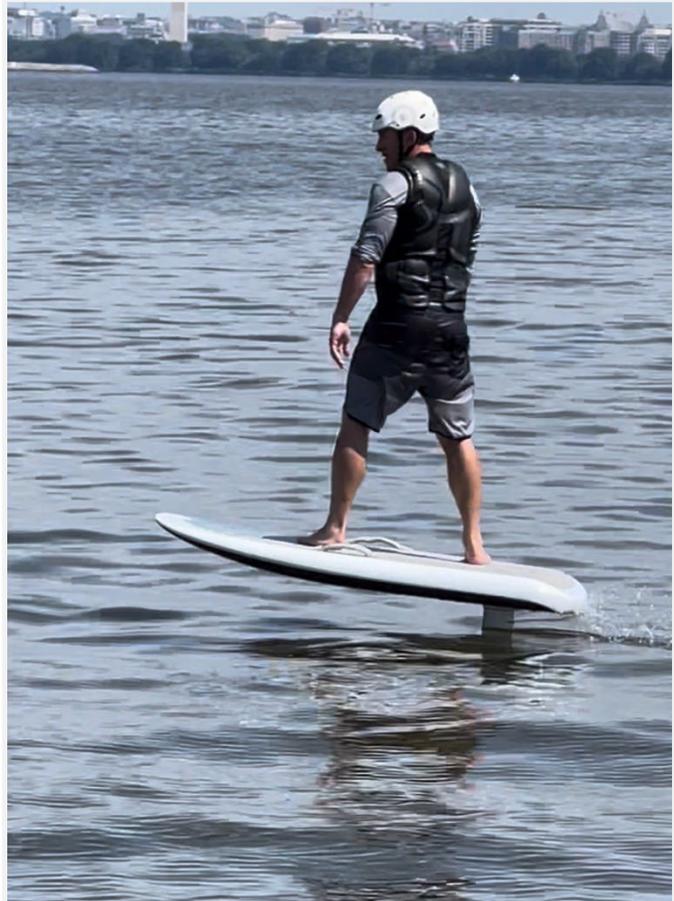
ADMIRAL LINDA FAGAN

**27th Commandant of the United States Coast
Guard**

FOREWORD

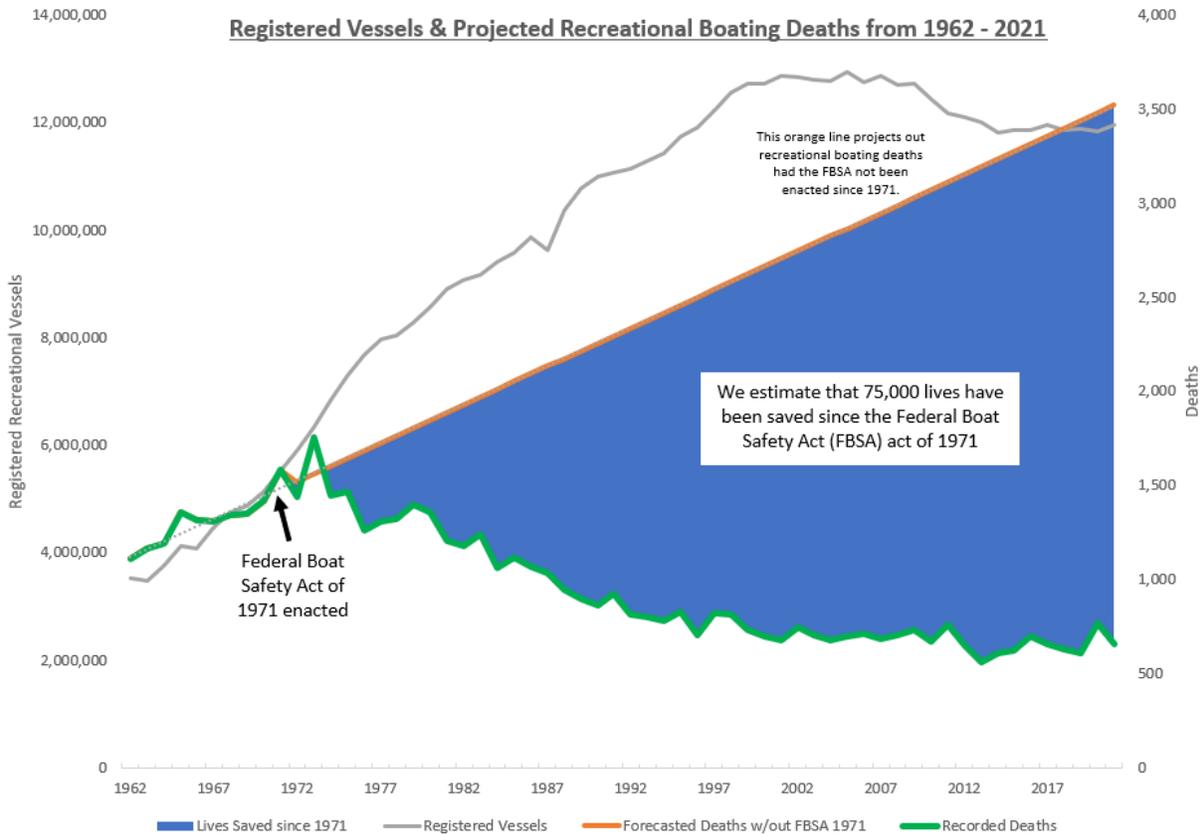
Recreational boating is a sport, pastime, and passion that allows Americans to safely and responsibly enjoy our nation's waterways. One-quarter of all Americans participate in boating, a number that reached 84.5 million boaters aboard 25.5 million boats in 2018 according to the National Recreational Boating Safety Survey.

The popularity of boating appears to have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and data from the National Marine Manufacturers Association indicated there has been an *increase* in sales of new recreational boats in both 2020 and 2021 when compared to 2019. Americans are also increasing the variety of watercraft they enjoy, including new types of vessels such as Mechanically Propelled Personal Hydrofoils (MPPH) and Motorized Surfboards (MSB). The number of human-powered craft continues to grow, and our survey indicates more Americans own these craft than power boats.



The National Recreational Boating Safety Program (RBS Program) has had a positive impact on this growing number of boaters. The U.S. Coast Guard, the states, industry, national nonprofit public service organizations, and other members of the recreational boating safety community are pleased to report that boating is safer.

In 1971, the U.S. Congress authorized the creation of the RBS Program via the Federal Boat Safety Act. Over the fifty years that have followed, the estimated number of recreational boats has more than doubled, while the number of reported boating incidents has decreased by more than 50%. The RBS Program has saved an estimated 75,000 lives.



While this trend is impressive, more can be done. No one expects that someone in their family will be involved in a boating incident, yet each year, adults and children are lost or injured and property is damaged. The good news is that by educating the public about boating safety and by using data, we can continue to increase preparedness and decrease risk.

This Plan is the fourth in a series of five-year strategic plans. A broad coalition of recreational boating leaders, including private citizens, organizations, the boating industry, and state and federal agencies developed and implemented them. This Plan builds upon past collaboration, continues key activities, and adds new activities.

We have made great progress with the availability of new types of life jackets, engine cut-off switches, safer vessels, and a wide variety of prevention measures from the many members of the recreational boating safety community in the U.S. and across the globe. This progress targets ongoing boating incidents. The Coast Guard records an incident when at least one of the following thresholds is met: a death/disappearance, injury that required medical treatment beyond first aid, damages to the vessel or other property that equaled or exceeded \$2,000, or a complete loss of vessel. In calendar year 2021, the Coast Guard counted 4,439 incidents that resulted in:

- 658 deaths;
- 2,641 injuries; and
- \$67.5 million dollars of property damage.

The fatality rate in 2021 was 5.5 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels. This rate represents a 15.4% decrease from the pandemic-induced high boating activity levels in 2020, where the fatality rate was 6.5 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels.

For perspective, in 1971, when the Federal Boat Safety Act was first passed, the fatality rate was 20.6 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels. Through the implementation of this Strategic Plan, the Coast Guard, with the help of the recreational boating community, intends to continue to reduce recreational boating casualties over the next five years.

The developers of this Plan have reviewed the current state of the RBS Program, analyzed key data, drivers and trends, and assessed potential actions. Building on this foundation, they have identified strategic goals and laid out an agenda for Program achievement. This Plan will serve as a map to sustained success to allow boaters continued enjoyment and safe operation on our nation's waters.

The Coast Guard thanks the National Boating Safety Advisory Committee (NBSAC) for their significant effort and input into this Plan.

MISSION

The mission of the National RBS Program is to ensure the public has a safe, secure, and enjoyable recreational boating experience by implementing programs designed to minimize the loss of life, personal injury, and property damage while cooperating with environmental and national security efforts.

AUTHORITIES

In 1971, Congress passed the Federal Boat Safety Act. This law established the National Recreational Boating Safety Program and created the National Boating Safety Advisory Committee (NBSAC) (46 U.S.C. 15105). In 1983, Congress revised, reorganized, and codified Title 46 U.S.C. as follows:

Section 13102(a): "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, the Secretary shall carry out a national recreational boating safety program. Under this program, the Secretary shall make contracts with, and allocate and distribute amounts to, eligible States to assist them in developing, carrying out, and financing State recreational boating safety programs".

Section 13104(c): "The Secretary may allocate not more than 5% of the amounts available for allocation and distribution in a fiscal year for national boating safety activities of national nonprofit public service organizations." In December 2015, Congress updated and amended 46 U.S.C. Chapter 131 and other related sections, reaffirming the authorization and value of this Program.



The Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division will encourage State RBS agencies to support the initiatives and activities stated in the Strategic Plan. Part of the eligibility requirements for federal funding to the States are linked to the current Strategic Plan, such as an adequate law enforcement and education programs and a system for reporting marine casualties. Also, future Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcements for the National Nonprofit Organization Grant Program will be aligned to support initiatives and activities in the Strategic Plan.

PLAN OVERVIEW

Federal law (46 U.S. C. 15105) mandates that the Secretary of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating establish NBSAC and consult with it on regulations and other major boating safety matters. NBSAC's 21 members are drawn from the states, industry, and national recreational boating organizations and the public. This Strategic Plan was developed collaboratively with the members of



NBSAC and input from additional stakeholders of the RBS Program.

The Coast Guard delivered Task Statement 2021-01-02 in October 2021 and requested NBSAC provide recommendations for this Strategic Plan. NBSAC accepted this Task Statement, which was assigned to the Strategic Planning Subcommittee, and provided recommended Initiatives, Courses of Action, and Activities to the Coast Guard in April 2022. NBSAC considered open items from the 2017-2021 National RBS Strategic Plan, current NBSAC recommendations, and key areas of focus.

The Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety then reviewed these suggested Initiatives, Courses of Action, and Activities to finalize this Plan. To maintain pace with technology and the recreational boating community, we are committed to enacting this Plan while also working to continuously improve. Improvements to this Plan will be adopted as needed and approved by the Chief of the Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety.

Working together, the Coast Guard and NBSAC will execute Task Statements and Recommendations, and the Coast Guard will prioritize the accomplishment of Plan Activities.

To review the **NBSAC recommendations**, visit [here](#).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In order to accomplish our strategic goals, we must recognize and work to overcome both current and past challenges while we leverage opportunities. In some cases, we may turn a challenge into an opportunity. For example, new technologies make it easier for the inexperienced boater to go farther and faster and participate in more diverse boating activities from one single platform presenting new risks and challenges. However, the same new technology can also provide a more stable boat, a more reliable power system, and increased maneuverability. This Plan includes new strategic activities intended to turn new technology challenges into opportunities to make boating safer and more enjoyable. The following is a short summary of key challenges and opportunities:



1. Behaviors.

Boaters have adopted safe behaviors that have significantly reduced incidents. However, as mentioned in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, segments have yet to adopt key behaviors. Most notable is the wearing of life jackets. The majority of boating deaths are drownings, and the majority of drownings are victims who are not wearing life jackets. Changing this behavior is

a challenge, but the RBS Program has made advances with improved life jackets, laws that increase life jacket wear, and education to make boaters aware of the risk. Sober boating is also a critical priority since alcohol is the greatest contributing factor in boating deaths. Awareness, education, and interventions are priorities for this Strategic Plan.

2. Technology.

Advances in technology represent both a challenge and an opportunity. New technology in boat manufacturing can outpace regulation and policy, and the RBS Program must monitor these changes and forecast the needed actions to ensure safe boats. The last Strategic Plan focused on identifying improvements to RBS Program directives, and this remains a priority for this Strategic Plan; however, changing regulation is, by necessity, a deliberate process.

Technology has provided options, especially in how we communicate and educate the American recreational boating public. During the pandemic, the states quickly allowed alternatives to classroom training, letting educators reach boaters through virtual teaching. This proved to be a highly effective tool, and its continued use increases the outreach to

boaters. This Strategic Plan focuses on using virtual delivery of content as yet another option of reaching the boater; there is no desire to replace face-to-face education and contact but to provide another option for communicating the message.

3. Trends.

The Coast Guard is focusing significant effort on analyzing casualty data regarding these trends and will work to identify interventions that can reduce risk. One of the greatest assets is the outstanding reporting of incidents, which allow the RBS Program a greater awareness of causal and contributing factors and the underlying interventions to target them.

4. Program Management.

One of Commandant Fagan's priorities is to "Leverage data as the catalyst to transform the Coast Guard's strategic advantage." The RBS Program has great data analysis capabilities and continues to build partnerships with the States, industry, nonprofit organizations, and other Coast Guard offices so we can leverage data to target needed actions and reduce risk. Incident reporting remains a critical element of the RBS Program, and it will continue to be a focus of this Strategic Plan.



PERFORMANCE INITIATIVES

This Strategic Plan supports the mission of the RBS Program. It contains three Initiatives designed to prevent deaths and injuries of recreational boaters. They are:

Initiative 1: Positively Influence Recreational Boater Behavior

Initiative 2: Positively Influence Recreational Boat and Accessory Manufacturers

Initiative 3: Leverage Recreational Boating Data



Staff from the Boating Safety Division will facilitate the execution of the Activities to implement these three Initiatives.

Under each Initiative, we have identified specific Courses of Action (CoA) and Activities. Here is the comprehensive list. We've also identified which Activities are tied to NBSAC recommendations.



Initiative 1: Positively Influence Recreational Boater Behavior

CoA 1.1 Increase the number of boaters that meet national best practices for knowledge and skills standards.

Activity 1.1.1 Implement revised policy that explains CG Restricted Operator of Passenger Vessels (ROUPV) licensing requirements for on-water instructors receiving compensation.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2014-91-01 On-Water Instructor Licensing

Activity 1.1.2 Knowledge Courses: Facilitate the full adoption of the Model Act for Boating Safety Education and the improvement, marketing, and delivery of boating safety education courses to recreational boaters nationwide including the preservation of virtual class delivery.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-10 Boating Safety Education Requirements for Recreational Boat Operators

CoA 1.2 Encourage Wear of Life Jackets

Activity 1.2.1 Implement an evidence-based and effective campaign(s) targeting the highest-frequency casualties and the highest-frequency group(s) for each desired behavior change including paddlers.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-01 Appropriate Regulations for Life Jacket Wear by Recreational Boaters

Activity 1.2.2 New Device Acceptance – Evaluate Level 50 performance for meeting carriage requirements.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-01 Appropriate Regulations for Life Jacket Wear by Recreational Boaters

Activity 1.2.3 Inflatable Age Requirement – Review effectiveness and safety of teens/children wearing inflatable vests in lieu of PFDs. Pursue policy or regulations based on this review.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-01 Appropriate Regulations for Life Jacket Wear by Recreational Boaters

Activity 1.2.4 Review feasibility of requiring mandatory life jacket wear for recreational vessels below 16 feet, PWCs, Kayaks, and Canoes.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-01 Appropriate Regulations for Life Jacket Wear by Recreational Boaters

CoA 1.3 Create a safety culture among livery operators

Activity 1.3.1 Identify methods to increase safety for rental operators, including peer-to-peer, such as more in-depth on-water training or take-along literature discussing navigation rules, safety measures, boating tips. Increase awareness of resources.

Activity 1.3.2 Promote best practices among the States requiring the issuance of a "Dockside safety checklist," consisting of selected facts about state-specific boating

laws and safe boat operation that a rental or livery agent or vessel leasing business is required to present to those who rent or lease a motorboat or personal watercraft. The dockside safety checklist can be reviewed and initialed by the person operating the motorboat before the boat can be rented or leased and operated. Investigate and recommend safe practices targeted to the peer-to-peer boat market.

CoA 1.4 Increase operator compliance with NAVRULES.

Activity 1.4.1 Implement a new marketing campaign(s) explaining navigation rules.

Activity 1.4.2 Encourage states to enforce evidence-based navigation rule infractions as a preventive measure.

Activity 1.4.3 Inland Navigation Rules Modification. Modify the inland navigation rules to remove the unintentional preemption of the states from enforcement.

CoA 1.5 Increase enforcement/awareness of BUI and BUI-D laws

Activity 1.5.1 Liaise with the States and recreational boating stakeholders to evaluate the possibility and effectiveness of aligning national BUI and BUI-D policy with DUI.

Activity 1.5.2 Encourage the States to review and update the national model for marine law enforcement officer BUI and BUI-D training.

Activity 1.5.3 Coordinate national awareness campaigns focused on the effects of alcohol and boating.

CoA 1.6 Maintain broad-based positive marketing, communication, and education plan based on boating incident data.

Activity 1.6.1 Address the following with a consumer-facing message:

Engine Cut-off Switch (ECOS)

Boating Under the Influence

Life Jacket Wear

Amalgamated International and U.S. Inland Navigation Rules

Education

Vessel Safety Check

Electronic Locator Beacon (ELB) Use, including Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), Personal Locator Beacon (PLB)

New Fire Protection requirements

Activity 1.6.2 Tailor Fact sheets for Engine MFG, Boat MFG, Accessory MFG, Dealers, and Service Professionals to use in their marketing and product design and consumer interaction.

CoA 1.7 Employ strategies to address new boaters, including paddlers.

Activity 1.7.1 Publish new methods to reduce deaths, injuries, and incidents on boats operated by new users.

Activity 1.7.2 Develop a performance standard for the alternative use and possession of visual distress alerting and locating signals, which are required by 33 CFR 175.
-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-09 Alternative Options for Distress Alerting and Locating Signals for Recreational Boats

Initiative 2: Positively Influence Recreational Boat and Accessory Manufacturers

CoA 2.1 Ensure that boats and associated equipment are manufactured in compliance with USCG regulations.

Activity 2.1.1 Produce a report of common regulatory non-compliance and safety discrepancies. Set targets for improvement where appropriate.

Activity 2.1.2 Create a voluntary pilot program that establishes elements to be included in a technical file/compliance book with the intent to serve as evidence of compliance with Federal regulation.

Activity 2.1.3 Institute risk-based factory visits. Factory visits are a critical means of ensuring recreational boats are constructed per regulatory requirements and policy. Prioritizing visits is a critical part of compliance efforts.

Activity 2.1.4 Determine active Manufacturer Identification Codes (MICs). A manufacturer must have a MIC in order to construct recreational vessels for commercial sale. Maintaining these MICs to determine which manufacturers are currently constructing recreational boats assists compliance efforts by the Coast Guard.

CoA 2.2 Adopt comprehensive regulatory reform

Activity 2.2.1 Update and amend the 33 CFR 179/181/183 requirements to better reflect the population of boats and current practice (e.g., Outboard, pontoon).

Activity 2.2.2 Establish minimum safety requirements for Electric propulsion and autonomous vessels and other emerging technologies.

Activity 2.2.3 Pursue the ability of the Coast Guard to effectively manage non-compliant builders with consequences up to and including MIC suspension and revocation.

Activity 2.2.4 Begin a regulatory project on Emergency Cut-Off Switch link wear to support the current statutory language and to further provide clarity to the requirements for installation and use.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-11 Support for a Regulatory Project on Engine Cut-Off Switch Devices

Initiative 3: Leverage Recreational Boating Data

CoA 3.1 Continue the National Recreational Boating Survey and investigate new methods to measure boating activity and exposure

Activity 3.1.1 Implement the next National Recreational Boating Safety Survey to capture the totality of recreational boating in the United States. Work closely with boating safety stakeholders to understand the data behind the Survey.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-05 Scope and Frequency of the National Recreational Boating Survey

Activity 3.1.2 Investigate new and/or supplemental methods for measuring nationwide boating activity and exposure.

CoA 3.2 Implement data and evidence-based decision making and research to promote recreational boating safety

Activity 3.2.1 Review the literature concerning risk and evidence-based practice and models applied in different fields/professions and establish the characteristics and requirements of a valid, reliable, and practical boating safety evidence-based practice and model.

Activity 3.2.2 Collaborate with stakeholders to understand other data efforts and sources related to boating safety, specifically in the public health, transportation safety and drowning prevention areas of practice.

Activity 3.2.3 Develop and implement improved methods for studying human factors in recreational boating incidents.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-07 Increased Emphasis on Human Factors

Activity 3.2.4 Implement comprehensive program evaluation into the boating safety grant program.

CoA 3.3 Establish authoritative data governance and modernize data collection

Activity 3.3.1 Ensure recreational boating safety equities are represented in Coast Guard efforts to modernize data collection and case management.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-03 MISLE Database improvements

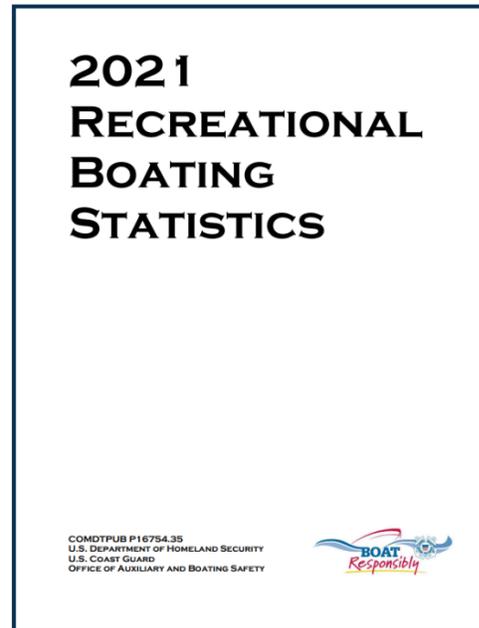
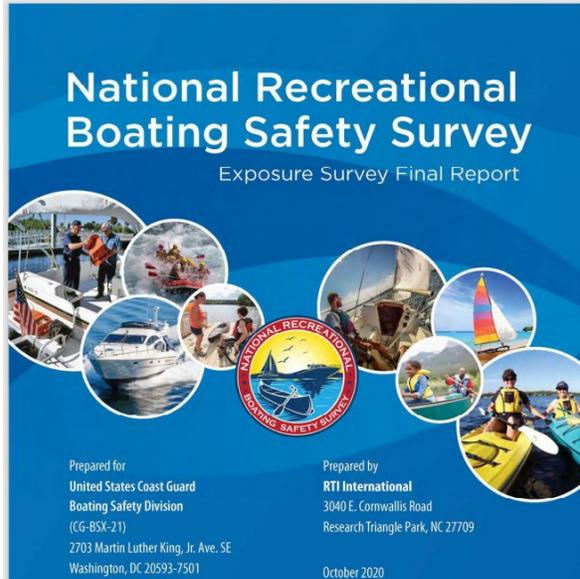
Activity 3.3.2 Improve the national Boating Incident Reporting System with updates to related policy, regulations, and BARD.

-NBSAC Recommendation: 2022-03-12 Improved Boating Incident Reporting System

CoA 3.4 Promote data governance and transparency

Activity 3.4.1 Promote data governance and transparency to enhance the strategic use of data and enable better decision making in improving boating safety.

Activity 3.4.2 Facilitate adoption of the Uniform Certificate of Title Act for Vessels (UCOTA-V) by states.



To review the **National Recreational Boating Safety Survey**, visit [here](#).

To review the **Recreational Boating Statistics**, visit [here](#).

Appendix A--Acronyms

BARD	Boating Accident Report Database
BSX	Boating Safety Division, U.S. Coast Guard
BUI	Boating Under the Influence
BUI-D	Boating Under the Influence-Drugs
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CoA	Course of Action
DUI	Driving Under the Influence
ECOS	Engine Cut-Off Switch
ELB	Emergency Locator Beacon
EPIRB	Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon
MFG	Manufacturer
MIC	Manufacturer Identification Code
MISLE	Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement
MPPH	Mechanically Propelled Personal Hydrofoils
MSB	Motorized Surfboards
NAVRULES	Navigation Rules
NBSAC	National Boating Safety Advisory Committee
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunities
PFD	Personal Floatation Device
PLB	Personal Locator Beacon
RBS	Recreational Boating Safety
ROUPV	Restricted Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel
UCOTA-V	Uniform Certificate of Title Act for Vessels
U.S.C.	United States Code
USCG	United States Coast Guard



The U.S. Coast Guard hereby approves the
Strategic Plan of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program
2022-2026

/Troy P. Glendye/
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Chief, Office of Auxiliary and
Boating Safety

Signed _____

Date February 01, 2023