

Over 200 boating accidents reported

Cool lake water on a hot sunny day offers a tempting escape for Texas boating enthusiasts. More than 450,000 Texans will take to the water for pleasure and fun this summer. Some of these outings will end unhappily.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department reports that during the first six months of this year, 23 persons were killed in boating accidents and 77 persons injured. Dollar damage in the 227 accidents reported to the department exceed \$200,000. The heavy season for this type of accident is not yet over.

Before casting off, boaters should be aware of some safety precautions.

It is a good idea to make a water safety checklist and use it. Some important points to remember are:

(1) Boat capacity. One of the major oversights of boat operators is improper loading and overloading of the boat. Know the capacity of your boat and don't exceed it.

(2) Life preservers. Wearing a life jacket while boating is like wearing a seat belt when riding in a car. Both make good sense. Have at least one approved life preserver on board for each passenger.

(3) Fuel supply. Paddling in from the middle of a lake can ruin your day. Check your fuel supply before

casting off. Make sure you have enough fuel to get you out and back safely. But, just in case, have an extra oar on board.

(4) Fire extinguisher. Fire and explosion accidents are usually caused by an operator's improper installation or maintenance of engine and equipment. Take care of your boat and its parts. Always carry a fire extinguisher on board.

(5) Advance planning. Before leaving, tell someone on shore when to expect you back. A planned trip is safer.

(6) Theft protection. Your boat and equipment are popular items with thieves. Guard against theft. Know

what equipment you have in your boat. Etch your driver's license or boat number on all valuable equipment and make sure everything is secure before leaving the boat. Always store your boat and equipment in a safe place.

(7) Good judgment. Don't operate in waters which exceed the limits of your craft, your training or experience.

If boating is in your summer plans, learn how to operate your craft safely. Call the Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadron in your area or the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for information on free classes in boating traffic safety.

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