



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

JB Pritzker, Governor
Colleen Callahan, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14, 2021

CONTACT: Rachel Torbert

OFFICE: 217-785-3953

CELL: 217-685-1163

rachel.torbert@illinois.gov

Planning Some Early-Season Boating? Review Safety Requirements Now

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Boaters are heading out on the water on pleasant spring days, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Conservation Police are reminding boat owners and operators to check their watercraft and their safety checklist to avoid encountering problems on Illinois lakes and rivers this boating season.

“No matter when you are on the water this season, make the safety of you, your passengers, and other boaters your most important consideration,” **said IDNR Office of Law Enforcement Director Timothy Tyler.** “Review a boating safety checklist, and make sure your boat is tuned up and ready for the season *before* you back down the boat ramp or push off from the dock.”

Some items on the Illinois boater safety checklist:

- Coast Guard-approved life jackets/personal floatation devices (PFDs) for everyone onboard - and all persons under age 13 must wear a PFD while a vessel is underway;
- If the boat is 16 ft. or longer, it must have a throwable floatation device (ring, cushion with straps) available;
- Working fire extinguisher properly charged;
- Working horn and a whistle;
- Navigation lights must function properly;
- Fresh flares (whether required or not); and
- Current proof of registration/copy of registration application (if required).

IDNR Conservation Police strictly enforce boating safety laws and regulations, patrolling Illinois lakes, rivers, and other waterways throughout the year to encourage safe boating and prevent boating accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

Last year, IDNR Conservation Police investigated 81 boating accidents involving 36 injuries and 21 fatalities. Conservation Police issued 863 citations and more than 3,200 warnings to boaters – and arrested more than 100 boaters on charges of operating under the influence (OUI).

“Wearing life jackets and staying sober while operating a boat are two of the most important things boaters in Illinois must do – for their safety and the safety of others,” **Director Tyler said.** “Our officers aggressively enforce the law against operating a boat under the influence. Our message to boat operators is simple: You booze, you lose.”

For more details on boating in Illinois, check out the *Handbook of Illinois Boating Laws and Responsibilities*: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/boating/Documents/BoatDigest.pdf>

###