



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
Waterways Policies and Activities Division (WWM-1)
2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, STOP 7501
Washington, DC 20593-7501

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Contact: LCDR John Downing
Phone: (202) 372-1568
E-Mail: cgwwm@uscg.mil

On-Water Mass Gatherings – Recreational, Sporting, or Cause-Related Events

On-water mass gatherings pose concerns due to the safety issues they create for the boating public and the Maritime Transportation System (MTS). Regardless of the nature of these gatherings, whether recreational, sporting or cause-related, they are primarily a boating safety issue. As these types of marine events continue to grow in popularity throughout the country, the Coast Guard will work together with its port partners to ensure the safety on the marine transportation system. These actions will take into account health and safety factors including but not limited to local COVID-19 and social distance guidelines as well as current unrest.

The Coast Guard issues permits for, and monitors marine events, to ensure safety of life at sea and on our waterways. Permits are required for powerboat races, sailing regattas, and other marine events that have the potential to draw an accumulation of spectator craft, may obstruct a waterway, or introduce extra or unusual hazards to the safety of human life on the navigable waters of the United States. A large gathering of recreational boaters would not necessarily meet the requirement for an event permit. It is recommended you contact your local Captain of the Port to determine if your event will require a permit.

The Coast Guard and our port partners are committed to ensuring the safety and security of the waterway. The Coast Guard and other local agencies will provide on-water safety and law enforcement assets. The goal of these patrols is to ensure mariners using the waterway are not negatively impacted due to the anticipated increase in vessel traffic and to ensure that commercial traffic can safely continue operations.

Regardless of the nature of the event, the Coast Guard's role is to ensure the safety and security of the maritime transportation system. The presence of the Coast Guard and its partners on the waterway is not to support the event itself, but to ensure the waterway is safe for all mariners due to the anticipated increase in traffic.

Boating accidents can occur quickly and without warning. To ensure a safe and enjoyable time on the water, the Coast Guard is asking boaters to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and safety equipment before getting underway. This includes a properly fitting life jacket for each passenger, a VHF radio, and flares. The Coast Guard regularly conducts recreational boating safety checks. Failure to have the necessary safety equipment may result in the termination of a voyage. Having the basic equipment can ensure a safe and enjoyable day on the water.

It is recommended participants in the event, and mariners in general, follow guidance from the CDC and local government health authorities to prevent the spread of coronavirus, including social distancing and the use of face coverings when social distance cannot be maintained.

Questions concerning this notice may be forwarded to Coast Guard Office of Waterways Policies and Activities Division (CG-WWM-1) by email to cgwwm@uscg.mil.

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