

## Life jackets are useless unless boaters wear them

"Life Jackets. They Float. You Don't" is the theme of National Safe Boating Week, May 17-23.

"It's a fact, not just a slogan," said state Marine Board Director Paul Donheffner. "We know life jackets save lives. Nationally, boating fatalities dropped to an all-time low last year. Oregon had the second lowest year ever, with only eight fatalities. We believe more use of life jackets has improved the survival rate."

The typical fatal boating accident is a capsizing or a fall overboard from a small boat, often in daylight and in good weather. "In that kind of accident, a life jacket can keep you afloat until rescue arrives," said Donheffner, "and it can help protect you from hypothermia in the Northwest's chilly waters."

He also noted that only one of the eight people who died in Oregon boating accidents last year wore a life jacket.

Boating is a favorite outdoor activity here. One in every 16 Oregonians owns a boat, according to a Marine

Board survey, and many more enjoy boating as passengers. Whether skipper or passenger, state and federal laws require carrying enough wearable jackets for every person on board.

"We strongly urge people to wear their life jackets, not just have them nearby," said Donheffner. "We are seeing a disturbing increase in boating fatalities in 1997. So far this year, eight people have died and none of them wore life jackets. Most of the boating

season is still ahead of us—we'd like to make it safer for everyone."

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