

Delaware Office of Boating Safety and Education encourages boaters to 'Spring Aboard' by taking a boating safety course

Nationwide campaign kicks off season with the message that great days on the water start with boating safety education

DOVER – The Delaware Office of Boating Safety and Education within DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife joins the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to encourage boaters to "Spring Aboard," a March 19-25 nationwide campaign to prepare for boating season by enrolling in a boating safety course.

"Our boating safety education program plays a significant role in Delaware's strong boating safety record," said Division of Fish & Wildlife Director David Saveikis. "As a lifelong boater myself, I encourage boaters to learn the boating 'rules of the road' and to practice safe boating each and every time they head out to enjoy our beautiful waterways."

"Though some accidents are unavoidable, we need everyone on our waterways to be alert, use common sense and avoid actions that put themselves, their passengers and other boaters at risk," added Chief Drew Aydelotte, Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police.

"Education is the key to Delaware's success in boating safety," Chief Aydelotte said. Under Delaware law, all persons born on or after Jan. 1, 1978 must successfully complete a boating safety course in order to operate a boat or personal watercraft in Delaware waters. In 2016, 2,261 students took

boating safety courses online or in a classroom.

“Last year, we had one boating-related fatality and 31 reportable boating accidents, which, while unfortunate, still puts Delaware below the national average based on the relative number of boaters. One boating accident is one too many,” said Sgt. John McDerby, Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police boating safety coordinator, noting that to date this year, Delaware has had two reported boating accident and no fatalities. “To help maintain Delaware’s boating safety record, we recommend that everyone planning to operate a boat in Delaware waters take a safety course first, whether they are required to or not.”

U.S. Coast Guard statistics from 2015, the most recent year available, indicate that when the level of operator education was known, 80 percent of boating deaths occurred on boats where the boat operator had never received boating education instruction. Forty-nine states and U.S. territories require proof of completion of a boating education course for operators of some powered vessels, and many states, including Delaware, require completion of a course verified by NASBLA as meeting the national boating education standard for powerboat rental or operation.

Delaware’s 8-hour basic boating safety course, which fulfills Delaware’s mandatory boating safety class requirement, is offered in multiple locations statewide in one to four sessions. Upon completing the course, boaters receive a boating safety certificate, which they must carry with them while boating as proof of course completion.

The course covers the rules and regulations of Delaware’s waterways including appropriate speed limits, responsible boating skills and awareness and how to distinguish navigational aids and water depths. Also covered are weather tips, information about basic engine mechanics and required and/or recommended safety equipment, what to do if a Fish &

Wildlife Natural Resources Police officer stops your vessel and the dangers of boating under the influence.

Delaware's Office of Boating Safety and Education also provides volunteer instructors to private and non-profit organizations, schools, clubs and the general public to educate boaters on skills and seamanship and to encourage them to be safe, knowledgeable and responsible.

Several providers also offer a Delaware-approved online version of the boating safety course. For more information, including Delaware's boating safety course schedule and access to the online Delaware Boating Handbook, please click [Delaware Boating Safety](#), or contact Sgt. John McDerby at 302-739-9913 or email john.mcderby@delaware.gov.

DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife recognizes and thanks the majority of anglers, hunters and boaters who comply with and support Delaware's fishing, hunting and boating laws and regulations. Citizens are encouraged to report fish and wildlife and boating violations to the Delaware Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police by calling 302-739-4580. Wildlife violations may also be reported anonymously to Operation Game Theft by calling 800-292-3030 or online at <http://de.gov/ogt>.

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) is a national nonprofit organization that works to develop public policy for recreational boating safety. NASBLA represents the recreational boating authorities of all 50 states and the U.S. territories. The association offers a variety of resources, including training, model acts, education standards and publications. Through a national network of thousands of professional educators, law enforcement officers and volunteers, NASBLA affects the lives of over 73.5 million American boaters.

Like Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police on Facebook,

www.facebook.com/pages/Delaware-Fish-Wildlife-Natural-Resources-Police.

Follow Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police on Twitter, https://twitter.com/DE_FW_NRPolice.

Media contact: Sgt. John McDerby, DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police, 302-739-9913 or 302-354-1386, or Joanna Wilson, DNREC Public Affairs, 302-739-9902

Vol. 47, No. 64