

# Summertime! Keep Safe on the Water!



About 75 percent of Michigan boating accidents occur during June, July and August, when boating is in high gear around the state. More than half of all accidents occur on a Saturday or a Sunday, and a vast majority occur in the afternoon or later.

Surprisingly, only a fourth of the accidents occurred on the Great Lakes, meaning the ma-

majority occurred on the state's inland lakes. When you put boats, personal watercraft, skiers and swimmers all together on a crowded lake, there's a greater need for everyone to play it safe and use caution.

Boater education is available through your local sheriff's department, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadron,

local boat dealers and others. To locate a boating safety class in your area, visit the MI Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Web site at [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr) and click on the [Recreational Safety Classes](#) link found on the right side of the home page, or simply call the local DNR office at 269-685-6851.

Cause of Death	Total Number of Fatalities	Lifejacket		% Not Worn
		Worn	Not Worn	
Drowning	491	65	426	86.8%
Trauma	122	44	78	63.9%
Other	29	6	23	79.3%
Hypothermia	21	12	9	42.9%
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning	6	0	6	100.0%
Unknown	28	4	24	85.7%

## Alcohol and Drugs on the Water: Unsafe, Illegal

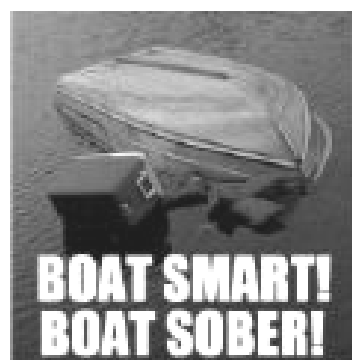
Michigan law prohibits anyone from boating while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It is also unlawful for the owner of a vessel to allow anyone else to operate their vessel if that person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Nearly 50

percent of all boating accidents involve alcohol. Studies show that passengers also are 10 times more likely to fall overboard when they have been consuming alcohol.

You can be determined to be boating under the influence if your blood alcohol concentration is greater than 0.07%.

## WEAR A LIFE JACKET!

Of all boating deaths in the U.S., 70% involve someone drowning. Of all those who drowned, 86% were NOT wearing a life jacket. Wearing a life jacket will save your life or the life of your children in an accident.



## Just remember this simple rule: Don't drink, drug, and boat!

### More Ways to Stay Safe:

**1** Make sure your boat is properly equipped with life jackets, fire extinguisher and first aid kit and your equipment is in good working order.

**2** File a float plan: Always let a family member or friend on shore know the "who, what, when, and

where" of your trip. Include phone numbers for the local sheriff or U.S. Coast Guard in the event you don't return when expected.

**3** Maintain a sharp lookout: Always be alert for other boats, swimmers or skiers and objects in the water.

This is especially true when operating in crowded water-

ways, and at night or during restricted visibility.

**4** Carry a marine radio or cell phone: Be prepared to call for help in case you are involved in an accident, your boat becomes disabled, or you need assistance. Make sure a cell phone is fully charged, but be aware that cell phones don't always work on the water.

## Berrien County Health

**Department:**  
Preventing Disease,  
Prolonging Life and  
Protecting the  
Health of the  
Community.



## SUMMER SAFETY

May is Summer Safety Month and the Berrien County Health Department will be giving you information throughout the month on summer health issues such as Lyme disease, melanoma or skin cancer detection and prevention, recreational water illness prevention, boater safety, etc. Look for the Benton Spirit Health Page in the weeks to come for more information on keeping your summer healthy and happy!

## Berrien County Sheriff's Department—Marine Division Hard at Work

To help promote a safe boating environment, the Marine Division held 11 Boater Safety Classes throughout the summer last year, certifying 177 students. Boater Safety classes are free and are a required course for anyone at least 14 years old, who wish to operate Personal Watercraft.

The Marine Department helped 1,589 people on the water last year, including those involved in six accidents. Search and Rescue efforts resulted in 8 people rescued and 3 boats recovered. The Marine Division issued 248 tickets, 818 warnings, and 2 Operating while Intoxicated arrests. There were three drownings in Berrien County in 2006.



The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

### Benton Harbor

769 Pipestone  
P.O. Box 706  
926-7121

M-139 Office  
2106 S. M-139  
927-5623

School Based  
870 Colfax Ave  
925-4500

### Niles

1205 N. Front St.  
684-2800

### Three Oaks

21 N. Elm  
756-2008

Or visit us on the web at [www.berriencohlthdept.org](http://www.berriencohlthdept.org)

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Berrien County  
Health Department

