

## "Operation Dry Water"

HCSO Marine Unit deputies will be on the lookout for impaired boaters.

- Friday
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- Tampa Bay Waters
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## "Operation Dry Water"



HCSO Marine Unit deputies along with state and federal boating agencies will be out in force June 24-26 for Operation Dry Water (ODW), an annual campaign focused on the detection and enforcement of boating under the influence (BUI). A secondary objective is to raise awareness among all boaters that it is unsafe as well as illegal to operate a boat under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

More than 17 percent of boating fatalities result from alcohol use. States have gotten tougher in recent years in enforcing laws against this high-risk behavior. Operating a recreational vessel with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher is against federal and most state laws. Boaters caught operating under the influence will find their voyage terminated and their vessel impounded. Additionally, penalties can include arrest, fines, loss of boating privileges, even loss of driving privileges.

As part of this national effort, Operation Dry Water, a multi-agency, education and enforcement initiative launched by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) in 2009 in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, puts thousands of local, state and federal marine law enforcement officers on the water the weekend before the Fourth of July weekend to give BUI enforcement high visibility before a holiday known for drinking and boating - and deadly accidents.

We want recreational boaters to have fun on the water, but we intend to exercise zero tolerance for BUI," says Sheriff David Gee. "With field sobriety tests for use on the water now validated, we hope to be even more effective at stopping intoxicated boaters and to impress upon everyone that operating a recreational vessel while under the influence is too great a risk - to themselves, to their boat, and especially to others."

## Facts About Boating Under The Influence

- U.S. Coast Guard 2009 data reveal that alcohol was a primary contributing factor in 16 percent of fatalities from recreational boating accidents.
- Operating a boat with a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of .08 or higher is against federal law and most State laws.
- Alcohol can impair a boater's judgment, balance, vision, and reaction time. It can increase fatigue and susceptibility to the effects of cold-water immersion. Sun, wind, noise, vibration, and motion - "stressors" common to the boating environment - intensify the side effects of alcohol, drugs, and some medications.
- Alcohol consumption can result in an inner ear disturbance that can make it impossible for a person suddenly immersed in water to distinguish up from down. Impairment can be even more dangerous for boaters than for drivers, since most boaters have less experience and confidence operating a boat than they do driving a car. Boaters average only about 110 hours of boating per year.
- A three-year field evaluation by the Southern California Research Institute recently validated a battery of tests for marine use that are now the basis for efforts to implement a National Marine Field Sobriety Test standard.
- Combined with chemical tests using blood, breath, and urine samples., these validated ashore and afloat tests give marine law enforcement officers an impressive arsenal in their ongoing efforts to enforce BUI laws.
- Persons found to be Boating Under the Influence can expect to incur severe penalties. If a boat operator is BUI, the voyage may be terminated, the boat may be impounded and the operator may be arrested. Penalties vary by state, but can include fines, jail, loss of boating privileges, even loss of driving privileges.
- Alcohol is also dangerous for passengers. Intoxication can lead to slips, falls overboard and other dangerous accidents. It is illegal in every state and territory to operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. BUI laws pertain to ALL boats, from canoes and rowboats to the largest ships.