

Stay Safe when Setting Sail this B.C. Day Long Weekend

Boating BC advises boaters on how to stay safe when having fun on the water this long weekend

By Lisa Geddes

Across the province, British Columbians are gearing up for the B.C. Day long weekend, which for many of us includes getting out on the water with family and friends. With our province boasting 27,000 km of coastline alone, not to mention countless lakes and rivers, there's no shortage of locations across B.C. to get on the water. Boating includes everything from paddleboards to power yachts, and kayaks to catamarans, and boaters can expect to see an increase in traffic on the water over the long weekend, so it's important to keep in mind how to stay safe when having fun on the water this weekend:

1. **Wear Your Lifejacket.** Legally you must carry a Canadian approved PFD on board, appropriately sized for each passenger. But don't just carry it, WEAR IT.
2. **Don't Drink and Boat.** Boating under the influence is not just illegal; it's irresponsible. Wait until you get back to the pier or drop anchor at the end of the day before you enjoy that cold beer or glass of wine.
3. **Take a Boating Course.** The law now requires that anyone driving a motorized boat must have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card. In fact, for your own safety and that of your passengers, we recommend you take additional boating courses.
4. **Be Prepared.** Ensure your boat has all the required safety gear and sufficient fuel. Be sure the weather is suitable for your vessel's capabilities, and that you have sail or float plan that you've shared with someone before departure.
5. **Beware of Cold Water Risks.** Even in the summer, cold ocean water is a significant risk.

While staying safe on the water is a top priority, keeping B.C.'s marine environment pristine is also very important. We recognize the potential impact that boats have on the marine ecosystem, and the communities we enjoy. It's up to all of us to understand how we can minimize our impact and practice responsible environmental stewardship, which is why Boating BC has been a long-time partner of the Georgia Strait Alliance's Clean Marine BC Program. Check out our 10 Tips to Green Boating below:

1. **Responsible Sewage Management.** Manage all sewage responsibly by using pump-out services where possible and/or dumping sewage in deep open water, away from anchorages, sensitive areas, shellfish beds and swimmers. It is illegal to release sewage at the dock, in anchorages, near sensitive areas or within three nautical miles of shore.
2. **Greywater Discharge.** Reduce greywater discharge (from sinks and showers).
3. **Refuel Responsibly.** Small spills from recreational boaters add up and have a negative impact on the environment. Take care when fueling by not rushing and using oil absorbent rags and other devices to make sure no fuel goes in the water. If you do experience a small spill, contain it with a spill kit or report it at 1.800.OILS.911.
4. **Bilge Management.** Use bilge filters or bilge pads to absorb oil and fuel so none gets pumped overboard accidentally.
5. **Use Eco-Products.** Maintain the boat using environmentally responsible products or alternatives.
6. **Pick the Right Paint.** Use hard bottom paint (non-sloughing), or eco-friendly alternatives.

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7. **Waste Disposal.** Dispose of all wastes properly. Remember that many remote areas do not have garbage facilities and it is illegal to throw anything overboard, even organic food waste!
8. **Work with Responsible Boat Yards.** Haul out at responsible boat yards with containment policies and equipment so sanding remnants and scrapings don't end up in the water.
9. **Look for Clean Marinas.** Support marinas with responsible environmental policies and practices.
10. **Get Informed on Invasive Species.** Aquatic invasive species can be spread on your hull, in the bilge and on the boat trailer. Clean, drain and dry out your boat, trailer and equipment when relocating. It is against the law in B.C. to transport invasive species – for more information visit www.bcinvases.ca.

We believe that BC is better on a boat and we wish all our fellow boaters across the BC an enjoyable, safe and environmentally friendly BC Day Long Weekend!

Lisa Geddes is the Executive Director of Boating BC, the voice of recreational boating in B.C., that is comprised of 320 member companies that represent all aspects of the boating industry.

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