



**For Immediate Release**  
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**National Safe Boating Week Kicks-Off;**  
**Boating Accidents Decline at Lake Mead National Recreation Area**  
*Local Media Events Planned for Week of May 19*

**LAS VEGAS** — As National Safe Boating Week begins, the Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership ([www.BoatLakeMead.com](http://www.BoatLakeMead.com)) reminds boaters that most accidents can be prevented when boaters put safety first. In 2007, the National Park Service (NPS) reported a 30 percent decline in boating accidents over 2006 (109 boating accidents in 2007 compared to 155 in 2006) on the waters of Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA), which is comprised of Lakes Mead and Mohave in Nevada and Arizona. The Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership wants to remind all visitors to the park that steps can be taken to improve boating safety in their own states and while visiting Lake Mead NRA.

“Every year the park receives thousands of visitors to Lakes Mead and Mohave over Memorial Day weekend and about 8 million more throughout the year,” said Lake Mead NRA Superintendent Bill Dickinson. “The majority of accidents are completely avoidable. We organized the Partnership to encourage visitors to play it safe from the start. Taking a boating safety course and wearing a life jacket reduces the rates of accidents, but because water levels change at Lake Mead each year, it is important that you also become familiar with our local conditions.”

National Safe Boating Week takes place May 17-23, always on the eve of Memorial Day weekend, the unofficial opening of boating season and one of the busiest boating weekends at Lake Mead NRA. At least 225,000 visitors are expected, the majority of which come from the tri-state area that includes Arizona, California and Nevada. According to U.S. Coast Guard data from 2006, there were more than 12.7 million registered recreational boats in the U.S. with approximately 58,000 registered in Nevada, 150,000 registered in Arizona and 960,000 registered in California.

Local media events will be held to discuss boating and shoreline safety, fire prevention and the Park’s anti-litter campaign. Events will be held at Echo Bay at 11 a.m. on May 20, Hememway Harbor at 11 a.m. on May 21 and Katherine’s Landing at 9:30 a.m. on May 22.

The Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership advises boaters to “play it safe” by following the strictest of guidelines, which include:

1. Always wear a life jacket and wetsuit bottoms when operating personal watercraft (PWC);
2. Take a boating safety education course before leaving the dock or marina (even if it isn’t required by state law, or if you’re an experienced boater);
3. Learn and follow all local navigation rules;
4. Stay sober and never boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs;

5. Get a vessel safety inspection (offered free by many organizations to assure boats are equipped with proper safety gear and the vessel is in "seaworthy" condition).

These are guidelines the Partnership advises all boaters to follow. In some cases, they might be required by law. For instance, anyone born after January 1, 1983 must carry proof of having passed a boating safety course to operate a boat in the state of Nevada. In other cases, such as in Arizona, any boater 12 years or younger must wear a life jacket at all times and anyone riding a PWC regardless of age must always wear a life jacket. For more information on the tri-state area's boating requirements, visit [www.boatcoloradoriver.com](http://www.boatcoloradoriver.com).

"Accidents happen in the blink of an eye, which is why we should always wear our life jackets. It will not save our life if it is stored somewhere on the boat," said Maureen Healey, Executive Director of the Personal Watercraft Industry Association and one of the Partnership's founding members.

"Boaters born on or after January 1, 1983 are required to complete a boating education course to operate a motorboat of more than 15 horsepower on Nevada's sections of Lakes Mead and Mohave," said Edwin Lyngar of the Nevada Department of Wildlife. "This class not only meets the requirements of Nevada's law, it will also make you a better, safer boater. All boaters should take one of these classes, even if it's not required."

The majority of boating accidents, and contributing factors to these accidents, are operator-controlled. Collisions with another vessel and collisions with fixed objects are the top types of boating accidents. Reckless operation and operator inexperience are the leading contributors to these accidents. Statistics also indicate alcohol was involved in approximately 19 percent of all boating fatalities in 2006, and about 70 percent of all fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not taken a boating safety course.

"It's simple, an educated boater is a safer, more responsible boater," said Kevin Bergersen, Boating Law Administrator with Arizona Game and Fish Department. "Boaters should put safety first all year long, not just during National Safe Boating Week."

"Boating is one of America's most enjoyable pastimes and if safety becomes every boater's top priority, we can prevent a very good day on the water from becoming a tragedy," said Raynor Tsuneyoshi, Director of the California Department of Boating and Waterways. "Boaters are reminded that if you boat, it's your responsibility."

Launched in January 2006, the Partnership was created by the National Park Service, the California Department of Boating and Waterways, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) to promote safe boating practices all year long among boaters who visit Lakes Mead and Mohave in Nevada and Arizona. For more information about the Partnership, visit [www.boatlakemead.com](http://www.boatlakemead.com).

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