How To Stay Safe On a Boat This Summer

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The weather is already heating up, and you may be thinking about getting out on a boat to enjoy some summer fun with your friends and family. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many people may choose to safely enjoy their time on the water. However, boating accidents can lead to significant injuries for those on board. During the latest reporting year of data, the US Coast Guard states that there were 4,145 total boating accidents across the country. These incidents led to thousands of injuries and more than 600 deaths. If you are going to be spending any time on the waterway this summer, there are various safety tips then we want to discuss with you today.

Always Have a Life Jacket

Life jackets are an essential part of boating safety, whether you are on a motorized or non-motorized water vessel. Statistics from the US Coast Guard show that approximately 75% of all boating deaths are due to drowning and that 84% of drowning victims were not wearing a life jacket when they went into the water.

We need to point out that even skilled swimmers need to wear life jackets when they are on a boat. A fall from a boat can lead to a personal injury that involves an individual hitting their head and becoming disoriented or injured, making these kinds of boat injuries difficult to stay above water. Every life jacket needs to be the
appropriate fit for the wearer’s size and weight. Always ensure that the life jacket properly fastens.

**Use Good Judgment**

When boating, good judgment goes a long way. This can include the following:

- Never operating a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs as this can affect judgment, vision, balance, and coordination.

- If the weather looks rough or if the forecast for the day does not look good, you need to consider not going out on the boat. Bad weather conditions can create tremendous hazards for boaters.

- Always operate at a safe speed. Open waters can be deceptively dangerous, and operating at high speeds increases the risk of a collision with other boats, docks, the shoreline, and obstacles in the water.

**Be Careful When Participating in Water Sports**

Many people in and around our area like to participate in various popular water sports, including water skiing, tubing, wakeboarding, kneeboarding, etc. If you or your family members will be participating in these activities, you need to thoroughly understand how to safely use all materials and objects involved.

- Learn how to get out of the water safely and how to use the tow rope.

- Understand basic hand signals and how to use a spotter in the boat.

- Make sure that the tow line does not get caught in the propeller of the boat or wrapped around any person.

- Wait for a propeller to stop moving before getting back on the boat.

- Only participate in water sports during the daytime.

**Ensure a Boat has Been Properly Maintained**

The truth is that boats are high maintenance vessels. If you and your family own a boat or are enjoying time on a friend’s boat, ensure that the vessel has been properly inspected and maintained. If you will be enjoying boating activities or water sports on a rented boat, make sure you only work with accredited businesses with extensive experience handling boats.

**Be Mindful of Social Distancing**

Boats are not conducive to the social distancing measures necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. This summer, you should consider only going out on a boat with those who live within your household. Failing to do so could risk you or somebody you love contracting the virus, which is not something you want to experience.