

Boating Safety Alert

May 29, 2024

As National Water Safety Month in May draws to a close, it's crucial for everyone in Scouting to continue to focus on facilitating safe aquatics programs this summer. A few recent incidents serve as reminders of the ever-present need for vigilance.



Please review the following Boating Safety Alert information and share with all Scouting units, camp staff and volunteers immediately:

- 1) Ensure the principles of [Safe Swim Defense](#) and [Safety Afloat](#) are always followed. Both training courses must be renewed every two years.
- 2) Leverage the annual swim check process to ensure everyone is prepared to participate based on their swim classification (nonswimmer, beginner, swimmer). Review [Aquatics Supervision Chapter 5](#) for details.
- 3) Per [Safety Afloat Principle #4](#), “Properly fitted life jackets with U.S. Coast Guard approval for the activity must be worn by all persons while boating.”
- 4) Utilize the Buddy System (see [Safety Afloat Principle #5](#) and [Safe Swim Defense Principle #7](#)). All participants in an activity afloat are paired as buddies who are always aware of each other’s situation and prepared to sound an alarm and lend assistance immediately when needed.
- 5) Review [Aquatics Supervision Chapter 7](#) prior to facilitating swimming activities from boats.
Reminder - swimming from a boat under way is not authorized.
 - If Scouts are towed behind or allowed to swim from the boat, then the engine must be turned off prior to anyone entering or leaving the water.
 - For tow sports, there must be a designated observer or lookout in addition to a qualified boat operator (see chapter 26 “Tow Sports” of [Aquatics Supervision](#)). That person and the boat operator will both visually inspect the water entirely around the boat and confirm by a headcount during a buddy check that everyone in the party is either securely on board or well clear of the propulsion system before the engine is re-started.
- 6) Reminder - Motorboats may be operated by youth, subject to state requirements, only when accompanied in the boat by an experienced leader or camp staff member who meets state requirements for motorboat operation.

From [Scouting’s Commitment to Safety](#), “In Scouting, we will not compromise the safety of our youth, volunteers, and employees. Safety is a value that must be taught and reinforced at every opportunity. We are all responsible and must hold each other accountable to provide a safe environment for all participants.”

Questions regarding aquatics programs? Email outdoorprograms@scouting.org.