

## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING



## PREPARATION

### Objectives

The Smart Boating, Safe Boating Station teaches participants safety fundamentals for boating and water-based activities that often accompany boating. The content addresses both individual and group responsibility and emphasizes preparation that helps boaters prevent emergencies and respond to them.

Upon completion of the station, participants will know how to:

1. **Choose a life jacket that is the proper size and fit**
2. **Be a responsible passenger on a boat**
3. **Handle emergency situations that occur near the water**

### Materials

*For Presenter:*

- Life jacket to wear throughout the program

*For Virtual Boat Ride:*

- Boat Mat from online Passport Kit
- 7 life jackets in sizes that are inappropriate for the group and in poor condition

*Tie or tangle the straps so life jackets are bound together in a heap.*

*Place the bundle on the Boat Mat but not covering the seat areas.*

*Untidy, substandard life jackets work well for this activity and are often available at thrift stores.*

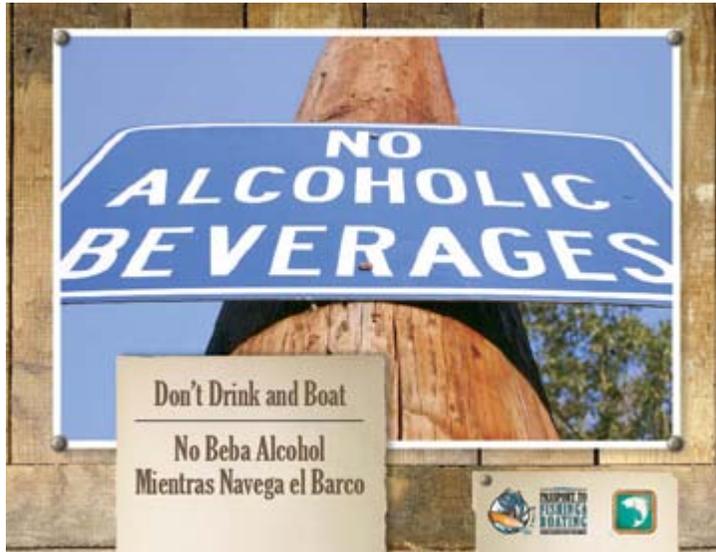
- Adequate supply of newer, attractive life jackets – one per participant



## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING

- Small “Don’t Drink & Boat” poster from the online Passport Kit



### *For Rescue Demonstration:*

- Branch, oar, towel, fishing rod and/or other practical tools that can be used to reach a victim
- Small hard or soft plastic beverage cooler
- Ring buoy or boat cushion to throw to a victim
- Where to purchase materials:
  - **Mark Stephens, of Project F.I.S.H.**  
at Michigan State University.  
Mark may be reached via phone 517-432-2700,  
email [steph143@msu.edu](mailto:steph143@msu.edu) or visit [www.projectfish.org](http://www.projectfish.org)
  - Visit your local retailer.

## PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- I. Introduce yourself and the station
  - A. Select up to seven participants to “ride” on the Boat Mat.
  - B. The mat holds six passengers and one captain.
  - C. Have the selected participants take their seats on the designated areas on the mat.
- II. Objective 1: Choosing life jackets
  - A. Discuss the relationship between being prepared and boating responsibly.



## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING

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1. Weather changes, engine problems and other unexpected occurrences can happen suddenly.
2. Being out on the water means shelter, assistance, etc. may not be close by – and a boater can't simply walk away.
3. Wearing a life jacket is the number one step in being prepared.

### B. Point out that no one in the boat is wearing a life jacket.

1. If the boat began to sink, everyone aboard would need to find a life jacket, put it on and fasten it properly in 15 seconds or less.
2. Tell the boaters their 15 seconds starts NOW and begin timing.
3. When time runs out, tell the boaters to FREEZE.
4. Analyze the situation with the group while the boaters remain "frozen".
5. Most likely, no one will have been able to even get on a life jacket in the 15 seconds, let alone fasten it properly.
6. Have the boaters un-freeze and finish putting on their life jackets – which should be ill-fitting and/or in substandard condition.
7. Lead the group in a discussion of the key issues:
  - a. Boaters should have already been wearing life jackets before the boat began to sink.
  - b. The life jackets that are on board are in poor condition and are not the correct sizes for the boaters who are depending on them.
  - c. Even the strongest swimmers rely on a properly fitting jacket to save their lives if they are injured, ill or unconscious.

### C. Explain that responsible boaters carefully select life jackets that fit correctly.

1. Hold up samples to demonstrate that life jackets come in various sizes and styles.
2. Show the group how to read the inside label to find a jacket that matches their weight range.
3. Discuss how the life jacket should fit – snugly and with minimal lift in the shoulders.

## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING

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4. Remind participants that all buckles must be fastened securely.

D. Instruct the entire group to select a life jacket from the pile or box that is appropriate for them.

1. Remind them to check labels, fasten all buckles, etc.

2. Have parents or adult volunteers tug at the shoulders to check fit.

3. Make sure every participant has the opportunity to select an appropriate jacket and knows how a properly-fitting life jacket feels on his or her body.

4. Participants – except for the seven Boat Mat occupants – can remove life jackets and return them to the pile or box once they're confirmed to have a proper fit.

### III. Objective 2: Being responsible passengers

*(Presenter may want the occupants of the Boat Mat to act out some of the following passenger do's and don'ts.)*

A. Before boarding, passengers should ask the skipper or captain:

1. For permission to come aboard.

2. Where the life jackets are located.

B. Once on board, passengers should:

1. Sit in an actual seat – not on the sides or bow of the boat or perched on the seat back.

a. Encountering waves, crossing another boat's wake or hitting debris in water are common occurrences that jostle passengers.

b. Passengers who are not seated properly can be injured or even thrown overboard.

c. Dangling arms or legs in the water is never a good idea.

2. Speak up if they see a safety hazard.

a. Mention hazards such as gas can with no lid, a log floating ahead in the boat's pathway, etc.

b. Ask the group to name other hazards they should mention.

3. Wear their life jackets at all times.

4. Be aware that alcohol and boating do not go together.

## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING

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BOATING**

FISHING & BOATING SAFETY FOR FAMILIES

a. Drinking and boating is just as dangerous as drinking and driving.

b. Water, sports drinks and juice are good choices for staying hydrated in the exposure to sun and wind that occurs when boating.

5. Pay attention to what the captain says and follow instructions carefully.

#### IV. Objective 3: Handling emergencies

A. Explain that boaters stop to help each other when there is trouble on the water – so signaling other boats by waving arms/towels/flags or using the boat’s communication system is a good way to get help.

B. Discuss falling in the water as an emergency that can occur when people go boating or engage in other water-based activities.

It’s also an emergency that often involves just two people: the victim and the helper.

1. Only those who have lifeguard training should enter the water and try to help someone who has fallen in or is in trouble.

2. There are four ways to help without jumping in the water: Reach, Throw, Row or Go.

C. Pick two volunteers to demonstrate Reach.

1. Set up the scene: the volunteers are on a dock, either fishing or getting ready to go boating, when one of them falls in the water.

2. The faller should thrash about on the ground or floor to mimic the panic, splashing, etc. that would occur with an unexpected fall.

3. Explain that Reach is an immediate way the person on the dock can help the faller – but the helper cannot use his or her hands because the victim will likely pull the helper into the water, too.

4. Help the volunteers demonstrate how an oar, towel, fishing rod, branch, shirt, etc. can be used to pull in the victim safely.

5. Have the helper lie down, lock arms around a pretend dock post and use legs/feet to pull in the victim as a demonstration of how to use the body for the Reach method if no other tools are available.

## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING



### D. Select two new volunteers for Throw.

1. Set up the scene: the victim has fallen in the water or gotten into trouble while swimming but is too far away for the helper, who is on the boat, to Reach.
2. Assist the helper in demonstrating how to Throw a ring buoy or boat cushion so the victim can use it to stay afloat. (Helper and victim should be about 20 feet apart.)
3. Point out that other objects can also be used – such as a plastic cooler or a life jacket – so long as they float; have helper throw alternative object to victim.

### E. Move on to Row (*No volunteers needed.*)

1. Explain that if a victim is hurt or unconscious, the helper may have to go to the victim.
2. Remind the group that only lifeguards should swim to a victim; instead, they should Row.
3. Go over some of the things a helper can use to Row: small boat, raft, log and/or other things that float and are large enough for two people to hang onto.
4. Discuss how the helper should move the victim back to the boat.
  - a. Guide the victim toward the boat ladder if one is available.
  - b. If helper cannot get victim out of the water and onto the boat, victim can hang on the boat's side until further assistance arrives.
  - c. If victim is unable to hang on boat's side, use the Row object to float beside the boat until further assistance arrives.

### F. Finish the series with Go (*No volunteers needed.*)

1. Emphasize that “Go” means go for help – not go into the water.
2. If adults are nearby, instruct participants to run toward them yelling, “HELP!”
3. Discuss where they can Go for help if no people are in sight – shoreline homes, campsites, docked boats, etc.
4. On a boat, advise the group to use a cell phone to call 9-1-1 and to signal for help from other boats passing by.

## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING



### G. Hypothermia.

1. Explain that hypothermia is a danger responsible boaters must understand.
2. Hypothermia occurs when the body's core temperature is lowered from its normal 98.6 degrees to less than 95 degrees. People afflicted with hypothermia have trouble thinking and moving.
3. Because most water in North America is colder than human body temperature and because water reduces body temperature 25 times faster than air, hypothermia can set in quickly.
4. To avoid hypothermia as long as possible while awaiting help, victims should:
  - a. Pull their bodies into a ball to reduce heat loss.
  - b. Keep elbows close to sides, pull knees toward the chest and cross feet so legs touch together.
  - c. Life jacket is very important in combating hypothermia! Without it, victims must use energy to stay afloat rather than to stay warm.

### V. Review of Station's Major Points

- A. Wearing a life jacket that is in good shape, the correct size and properly fitted is one of the most important parts of smart, safe boating.
- B. Responsible boat passengers stay seated in an actual seat, wear their life jackets at all times, watch for safety hazards, listen to the captain, and know that alcohol and boating don't mix.
- C. Reach, Throw, Row and Go are effective ways to help when someone falls in the water and there is an emergency situation.

## STATION: 3

# SMART BOATING, SAFE BOATING



## TIPS and OPTIONS

- Presenter should be well versed on current local laws and requirements so he or she can speak accurately about life jackets. Even if the state does not require it, participants should be encouraged to wear life jackets at all times around the water.
- When practicing the presentation, give extra attention to word choice. This station deals with dangers on the water and a positive approach that emphasizes staying safe and staying alive is more effective with young audiences than using words such as “drown” and “dead.”
- Materials should be organized by the sections in which they’ll be used: Virtual Boat Ride (includes choosing life jackets and being a good passenger) and Handling Emergencies.
- Position Boat Mat (and its seven occupants) so the entire group can see all the action – while also allowing room for the occupants to scramble about during the 15-second life jacket activity.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further background information applicable to the Smart Boating, Safe Boating Station:

- Take Me Fishing®: <http://www.takemefishing.org/boating/know-your-boat/boat-safely>
- BoatU.S.: <http://www.boatus.com/foundation/>
- National Safe Boating Council: <http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/>
- U.S. Coast Guard: <http://www.uscgboating.org/>