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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 21, 2020

Vessel Safety Checklist and Reminders Offered for Whidbey Island Boaters

Oak Harbor, WA - Due to current COVID restrictions, the [Deception Pass Sail and Power Squadron \(DPSPS\)](#) safety examiners are not able to provide the [vessel safety checks](#) usually offered free to the Whidbey local boating community. Until the safety checks can be conducted by their trained and certified examiners, DPSPS is offering a condensed listing of the major safety items and reminders.

The squadron's certified vessel examiners shared that the most common "noncompliance" issues seen, which are expired, or out-of-date, flares, and non-working navigation lights.

Squadron commander Pat Waters encouraged boaters to seek that peace of mind that their boat meets federal safety standards so in an emergency they'll have the necessary equipment to save lives and summon help. Waters also reminded that whether new to boating or an "old salt," the Deception Pass squadron will soon be holding the [America's Boating Course](#), taught by local, experienced boaters familiar with Puget Sound waters.

"COVID restrictions have thrown a temporary loop in our educational efforts, but we plan to offer the vessel checks and this course soon. We'll keep you posted." [The DPSPS Vessel Safety Check](#) is similar to the review that is performed by the U.S. Coast Guard if you are boarded, except that it is voluntary, and only you receive the results.

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Important Reminders and Safety Items:

1. Life jackets. You must have a Coast Guard- approved personal flotation device (PFD – or “lifejacket”) for every person on board the vessel. Check them periodically to make sure they work. Whether for adult or child, the PFD should be appropriate for the activity and fit right; adults must ensure that the kids wear them. Have a throwable cushion or life ring of some sort on board. The U.S. Coast Guard recently updated PFD labels that rely more on icons than wording, but PFD’s labeled under the previous system still meet regulatory requirements.

For more detailed information on PFD’s, visit this link:

<https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php>

NEW LIFE JACKET LABEL

ADULT UNIVERSAL
User Weight: ~40 kg (88 lbs)
Chest Size: 76-132 cm (30-52 in.)

PERFORMANCE LEVEL
Measured in newtons.

70

TURN ABILITY
(SEE BELOW)

WARNINGS
(SEE BELOW)

- Lower level number offers more mobility, comfort, and style with good flotation, and intended for near shore (calm water) activities.
- Higher level number offers greater flotation, turning, and stability in the water, and for offshore activities (greater time to rescue).
- There are areas where you may be boating near shore when rescue is hours away, and a higher level is needed.
- Be honest about your swimming ability. Poor swimmers may need a higher level to stay upright and easily tread water.

50 **70** **100** **150**

NEAR SHORE (CALM) **OFFSHORE (WAVES)**

INCREASING TIME TO RESCUE

WARNINGS
Some life jackets are **NOT APPROVED** for:

- Water skiing
- Tubing
- Personal watercraft or wakeboarding
- White water paddling

TURN ABILITY

- Life jacket will turn an unconscious wearer face up—test before use.
- Life jacket will not turn an unconscious wearer face up.

USCG Approved 160.054XXXXXX
TC Approved XXXXXXXX-X
ANSI/CANUL 12402-5

Model: XXXX Style: XXXX
Lot No. XXXX

Approval conditions state that this device must be worn to be counted as equipment required by vessels meeting Transport Canada or USCG regulations.

USCG APPROVED

APPROVED USE IN U.S. AND CANADA

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2. **Visual distress signals** are required on all boats 16 ft. or longer, and will help others locate your boat quickly, day or night, in the case of an emergency. Signals include day signals such as a big orange signal flag. A minimum of three “day and night” flares are recommended, and make sure they are not expired. Also available is a U.S.C.G. approved, flashing-day-and-night-SOS strobe lights. A flashlight with new batteries should always be on board also.

3. **Fire extinguishers.** In recent months, the USCG has modified their regulations, involving a new classification system, regarding the use of portable fire extinguishers. If your vessel was built after August 22, 2016, your vessel falls under the new system.

Length (X feet)	Vessels built before August 22, 2016 (minimum number of B-I portable fire extinguishers required ¹)	
	No fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space	Fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space
X < 16	1	0
16 ≤ X < 26	1	0
26 ≤ X < 40	2	1
40 ≤ X ≤ 65	3	2

¹One B-II portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two B-I portable fire extinguishers.

Length (X feet)	Vessels built after August 22, 2016 (minimum number of 5-B portable fire extinguishers required ¹)	
	No fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space	Fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space
X < 16	1	0
16 ≤ X < 26	1	0

Length (X feet)	Vessels built after August 22, 2016 (minimum number of 5-B portable fire extinguishers required ¹)	
	No fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space	Fixed fire extinguishing system in machinery space
26 ≤ X < 40	2	1
40 ≤ X ≤ 65	3	2

¹One 20-B portable fire extinguisher may be substituted for two 5-B portable fire extinguishers.

(Source: U.S. Coast Guard)

4. **Familiarize yourself with Navigation Rules.** The Navigation Rules are much like the rules of the road on the highway. They establish a consistent way to navigate safely and avoid collisions when two boats are crossing paths, are on course to meet head-on, or when one boat wishes to overtake another.

You can download a copy of the U.S. Coast Guard's Navigation Rules here:
<https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=navRulesContent>.

5. **Check navigation and running lights to make sure they are functioning.** A white navigation light is required for use during low visibility such as fog, heavy rain, dawn or dusk.

6. **A marine VHF radio** is presently not a mandatory safety requirement, but we feel it should be. Cell phones are great, but signals are weak in some areas around the islands.

7. **Noise makers, such as a horn, whistle or bell.** Navigation Rules require you to use sound signals during periods of limited visibility and in meeting, crossing, and over-taking situations. The law states you must have some means of making an efficient sound signal. Air-powered horns are great for a small boat.

8. **Check that the bilge pump(s) are dry, clear of waste, and working properly.** Carry at least one bucket with you!

9. **Make sure you have an anchor with enough rode (connecting line).** Also check the adequacy for the areas you expect to be in, including heavy weather while at anchor. Also, two anchors can make for a better night's sleep.

10. **Have nautical charts** of the areas where you plan on going. A GPS chart plotter is fantastic, but make sure it is up to date. If you can get paper charts, do so. It makes planning ahead easier. A digital depth sounder is also vital to know how much water is under your boat.

11. **File a float plan.** Someone responsible needs to know what you are planning, where you are going, and when you plan to return. If you don't show up as planned, then the authorities will have some idea of where to look.

To see an example of a float plan, click here:
<http://floatplancentral.cgaux.org/download/USCGFloatPlan.pdf>.

12. **Carry a well-stocked First Aid kit.**

For more detailed information on boating safety and regulations, please refer to the following links:

1. Washington State information on boating safety, regulations and requirements, and education: <https://parks.state.wa.us/988/Boat-prepared>.
2. Checklist for Washington State Required Equipment: <https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/9369/WA-Required-Boating-Equipment-Checklist?bidId=>
3. U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Rules (Rules of the Road): <https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=navRulesContent>
4. The official website of the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division: <https://www.uscgboating.org/index.php>
5. A Boaters Guide to the Federal Requirement for Recreational Boats, and Safety Tips <https://www.uscgboating.org/images/420.PDF>

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