

Safe Summer Boating

Summer boating around Marco Island is both enjoyable and less crowded. There are also some unique factors to keep in mind when boating this season.

Keep a keen eye on the weather as thunderstorms, squalls and sudden drops in temperature can occur. In addition to checking the weather before you leave your dock, listen to marine forecasts on your VHF radio, channel 16. If inclement weather is forecast, get off the water as soon as possible. If you can't get to shore, crouch down in the middle of the boat or go below, if possible. Make sure everyone is wearing their life jackets.

The humidity and intense summer sun can lead to dehydration & sunburn. Make sure there is plenty of sunscreen and water on board.

Alcohol, in addition to being dehydrating, can be even more hazardous on water than on land. The waves, vibration, engine noise, sun, wind, spray and other stressors of the marine environment can accelerate the effects of alcohol and the drinker's level of impairment. The same amount of alcohol can therefore impact a boat operator's coordination, judgement and reaction time even faster than if he or she was driving a car. If alcohol is including in your gathering, designate a *sober skipper*.

You may encounter more wake boarding and tubing as our waterways are less crowded. Remember, specially modified wake boats can develop large waves that can swamp a small watercraft. If you do encounter this situation, cross the wake at an angle. You also have to be alert to the possibility of fallen boarders in your planned course of travel. People in the water are not always easily visible.

If you are on the towboat, make sure you have an alert spotter so that the captain can stay focused on the water ahead. You should have a flag raised anytime someone is in the water to alert other boaters.

As always, make sure you leave a float plan. Explain all the safety and other rules before leaving the dock, taking special care that children understand. If you are rafting off with other boats, have fenders in place and make sure guests know how to climb from one boat to another. The engines should never be on when swimmers are in the water. Make sure your 1st aid kit is equipped and accessible.

America's Boating Club – Marco Island can schedule a free Vessel Safety Check (VSC) conducted by certified examiners to help make sure you are properly prepared for your summer boating adventures. For more information on boating safety, learning to be a better boater or to schedule your VSC, please go to marcoboatingclub.org.