



# News Release

**For Immediate Release**  
June 18, 2015

**Contact:**  
Dennis Weber  
[Dennis.Weber@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Dennis.Weber@parks.ca.gov)  
916.651.8724

## Recreational Boaters Advised to Exercise More Caution this Summer *Low water levels causing hazards*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — An analysis of 2014 recreational boating accidents shows that drought makes boating riskier, according to the California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways.

Recreational boating accident statistics collected by DBW show that although the total number of reported boating accidents in the state fell slightly from 2013 to 2014, drought conditions persisting throughout the state bring additional risks.

“As water levels drop, underwater hazards become more prevalent,” said DBW’s Acting Deputy Director Christopher C. Conlin. “It is critical for all boaters, inland and coastal, to plan ahead, exercise caution and make sure everyone in a boat is wearing a proper-fitting life jacket.”

Low water levels and boat operator inattention were the primary factors in the increased number of recreational boat collisions with fixed objects and groundings last year. Other highlights from a summary of 2014 boating accidents include:

- A 59 percent increase from 2013 in collisions with fixed objects and a 23 percent increase in groundings.
- Accidents on lakes decreased 29 percent, while accidents on coastal waters increased 35 percent, reflecting the drought-induced shift of boating recreation from inland lakes to coastal areas.
- Of the 39 California boating fatalities in 2014, 59 percent of victims drowned. In those cases where investigators could determine whether a life jacket was used, 96 percent of victims were not wearing a life jacket.



Boater on California's waterways should use common sense and follow this advice to stay safe:

- **PLAN AHEAD:** You should plan ahead and [find out](#) if your favorite boating spot has any boating operating restrictions. If your favorite spot is closed for boating and you opt to boat in a river or ocean, remember that operating vessels in these environments is very different than in lakes. Plan ahead, take a [boating safety class](#) or invite someone with experience to show you how to boat safely in rivers or the ocean.
- **EQUIP YOUR BOAT:** Make sure your boat is ready for the boating season. All [required equipment](#) must be onboard. Most importantly, make sure you have Coast Guard-approved and properly fitted [life jackets](#) for everyone on board.
- **HAZARDS:** Adjust your boating activities to the [drought conditions](#). Water conditions are low enough in many places to make for hazardous boating. Areas that were easily boated a year ago may be dangerous this year. Keep a proper lookout for trees, snags, sandbars, etc.
- **BOAT RESPONSIBLY:** Take a [boating safety class or course](#) to further minimize boating accidents. It is also critical for everyone in a boat to practice [common sense measures](#), such as wearing a life jacket at all times, avoiding the consumption of alcohol and operating boats at safe speeds. Last year, the [top three causes \(statewide\)](#) of boating accidents were operator inattention, excessive speed and operator inexperience.

DBW promotes boating and water safety through an array of awareness programs, including a safety media campaign. The theme of this year's campaign is -- "Make your H<sub>2</sub>Oath at BoatCalifornia.com and Wear It California!"

The campaign's messages emphasize the importance of wearing a life jacket and saving water. Water conservation can keep water in California's lakes and therefore provide more recreational opportunities. The use of life jackets can help you enjoy these recreational opportunities in a safe manner -- accident statistics show that fatalities can be decreased significantly when boaters wear a properly-fitted life jacket.

Please visit [www.BoatCalifornia.com](http://www.BoatCalifornia.com) to explore ways you can keep your family and friends safe on California's waterways this summer and to take the H<sub>2</sub>Oath.

###

**NOTE TO MEDIA: Story opportunities on boating and water safety can be scheduled with California State Parks.**

***About California's Drought***



Facebook.com/CaliforniaStateParks

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)



@CAStateParks

2

*For more than two years, California has been dealing with the effects of drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit [Drought.CA.Gov](http://Drought.CA.Gov). Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com).*

**About Parks**

*To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state’s extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation.*

**About DBW**

*DBW is a division within California State Parks. The division provides safe and convenient public access to California’s waterways and leadership in promoting safe, enjoyable and environmentally sound recreational boating.*

*Subscribe to California State Parks News via e-mail at [info@parks.ca.gov](mailto:info@parks.ca.gov) or via [RSS feed](#).*

