

Enhancing Boating Education Programs

This Info Sheet gives a brief overview of the wealth of helpful information you can find in *Best Practices Workbook for Boating, Fishing, and Aquatic Resources Stewardship Education (Workbook)*. See the back for details.

The National Association of Boating Law Administrators developed standards for the minimum body of knowledge that must be included in a 6-8 hour boating education course (www.nasbla.org/education_standards.htm).

► Safety is the Focus

Most boating education programs differ from other fishing and stewardship education programs because their emphasis often is on safety. All education programs must consider safety, but most boating programs have safety as their primary focus.

More than 8,000 boaters lost their lives during the 1990s. Nearly 80 percent of these fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had no formal boating instruction. Education and enforcement are the two basic approaches to reducing fatalities, injuries, and property damage related to boating. Education is fundamental and lays the foundation for safe boating behavior.

► Get It Out There

Effective programs ensure the availability of boating education. Boater safety education is offered in every state, although the agencies responsible for this function and methods of delivering it vary considerably from state to state. Partnering with other organizations provides opportunities to get important messages to a wider range of people. The boating community offers numerous opportunities for partnerships.

Recreational boating education in the U.S. is offered through a partnership between government agencies and a vast collection of non-governmental organizations, such as:

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators - www.nasbla.org
 National Water Safety Congress - www.watersafetycongress.org
 National Safe Boating Council - www.safeboatingcouncil.org
 U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary - www.cgaux.org
 Boat Education - www.boat-ed.com
 BoatUS - www.boatus.com
 BoatClass - www.boatclass.com
 Boatsafe - www.boatsafe.com

► Make it Solid

Effective programs ensure the content of boating education programs is well defined. You may have a variety of goals and objectives for your programs, such as to introduce youth to the fun of paddle sports or to help people meet mandatory boating education requirements. These courses will be quite different, but it is important to make sure the content of each is well defined.

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► Deliver It Well

Effective programs ensure the quality of education programs. Instructor selection, preparation, and training are critical to ensure the accurate and consistent use of boating program materials. With training in the use of curriculum materials and teaching strategies, instructors are more likely to achieve the goals and objectives you have set for your program.

► Spread It Around

Effective programs get more people to participate in boater safety education. How to do this?

Make Boaters Aware of the Programs

Some boaters look for courses when they first get a boat. Others may not be aware of the courses, or may not see the need for them. Public awareness campaigns can assist in these cases.

Make Boater Education Mandatory
More than half of the states have some form of mandatory boating education. Nationally, a general consensus exists among boating safety educators that a reduction in fatalities, injuries, and property damage might be accomplished by making boating education mandatory.

Offer Incentives

Many insurance companies offer discounts to individuals who successfully complete boating safety courses.

Offer other Benefits

Many people who don't think they need boating education will come to an event that offers other benefits. Consider offering programs such as "Discover the Fun of Kayaking," or "Learn Effective Ways to Fish from Your Boat," etc. You can include boater safety information in these courses.

► Get Them to

Take Action

Effective programs get more people to act on what they learn. The *Workbook* has a lot of tips about how your program can encourage learners to take action. A few of these include:

Effective Programs Match

Developmental Stages of Learners
Real learning occurs when the task is useful to the learner and when he or she is psychologically ready.

Effective Programs are Relevant to the Everyday Life of the Learner

A lot of boating deaths occur because anglers or personal watercraft operators do not see themselves as "boaters." Provide users specific examples of how to apply safety principles to their situations.

Effective Programs

Empower Learners

Provide learners more than information. Help them become knowledgeable about boating issues, help them work toward behavior changes, and empower them to make informed and responsible decisions.

Effective Programs Consider the Social Context

Other people surrounding a boating experience can either positively or negatively affect what an individual learns at a boater safety education program.

Provide users specific examples of how to apply safety principles to their situations

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

This information sheet is just the tip of the iceberg. MUCH more information on planning, developing, and evaluating education programs can be found in the *Best Practices Workbook for Boating, Fishing, and Stewardship Education*. The more Best Practices you can incorporate into your program, the greater the chance that your program will achieve the goals you set for it.

To review and/or order copies of this and other Information Sheets, the *Workbook*, or other Best Practice tools and materials, go to: www.RBFF.org/educational/bestpractices.cfm or contact RBFF at: 601 N. Fairfax St. • Ste. 140 Alexandria, VA 22314-2054 • 703 519 0013