



U.S. Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary
Flotilla 91 - Fort Myers Beach, FL
Southeast District

NEWS RELEASE

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Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 91 Promotes Safe and Sober Boating Across Fort Myers Beach This Labor Day Weekend

FORT MYERS BEACH, Fla. August 24, 2026 — Labor Day weekend brings a surge of recreational boaters and paddlers to the local waterways of Fort Myers Beach. To ensure a safe holiday on the water, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 91 is partnering with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), the U.S. Coast Guard, and local law enforcement for the national Operation Dry Water heightened awareness campaign from September 5–7, 2026.

As the volunteer civilian component of the Coast Guard, the Auxiliary focuses its efforts on boater education, vessel safety checks, and public outreach. While local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies conduct increased water patrols and safety checkpoints to remove impaired operators, the Auxiliary works alongside these partners to inform the public about the severe risks of boating under the influence (BUI).

Alcohol use remains the primary contributing factor in recreational boater deaths. Operating a vessel under the influence—or riding as an impaired passenger—significantly increases the likelihood of preventable incidents, injuries, and fatalities on the water.

"The tragedies that happen on our waterways because individuals choose to boat while impaired are preventable," says Gary Martell, Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla Commander of Flotilla 91, Fort Myers Beach. "It is our job to do everything we can to ensure the safety of our recreational boaters and paddlers. That is why the Coast Guard Auxiliary is joining all 56 states and U.S. territories to do our part in keeping boaters safe and preventing incidents, deaths, and injuries caused by boating under the influence."

Key Safety Reminders for Local Boaters:

- **Boat Sober:** Operating any vessel—including powerboats, sailboats, personal watercraft, and kayaks—under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal and dangerous on all waterways.
- **Designate a Sober Skipper:** Ensure a competent, fully sober operator is at the helm at all times.
- **Wear a Life Jacket:** Always wear a Coast Guard–approved life jacket when on or near the water.
- **Expect Increased Water Presence:** Local law enforcement will be actively monitoring waterways and checkpoints to remove impaired operators and protect the community.

Launched in 2009 by NASBLA and the U.S. Coast Guard, Operation Dry Water is a year-round national campaign dedicated to making waterways safer through public education and targeted enforcement.

For more boater safety information, visit OperationDryWater.org or contact Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 91 Fort Myers Beach.



The message is simple - Don't Drink and Drive





DRINK. DRIVE. DESTROY.

BOATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE IS NEVER WORTH IT.
You make the choice. You live with the consequences.

THE CONSEQUENCES CAN BE DEVASTATING.

DEATH	SERIOUS INJURY	COLLISIONS	LASTING IMPACTS
			
One bad decision can take a life—yours or someone else's.	Lives can change in an instant. Injuries can be catastrophic and permanent.	High speeds, poor judgment, and impaired reactions lead to deadly crashes.	Families are forever changed. Guilt, grief, and trauma last a lifetime.

COMING SOON! OPERATION DRY WATER

LAW ENFORCEMENT IS STEPPING UP PATROLS TO KEEP OUR WATERS SAFE.

- Increased patrols on the water
- Sobriety checkpoints
- Zero tolerance

Don't drink and drive. Get home safely. Every time.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

Boating Under the Influence (BUI) is illegal. It's the same as driving a car.

-  You can be arrested.
-  Fines can be thousands of dollars.
-  You can lose your boating privileges.
-  You will have a criminal record.

THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK. BOATS + ALCOHOL DON'T MIX.

			
Alcohol is a factor in OVER 1/3 of all fatal boating accidents.	Impairment affects judgment, balance, vision, and reaction time.	It endangers everyone on board and other boaters.	It puts families, children, and communities at risk.

REAL DECISIONS. REAL CONSEQUENCES.



"I lost my husband that night. The driver was drunk. Nothing will ever be the same."
— Wife and Mother



"I was 20 years old. Drinking and driving the boat ruined my life." I'll live with that mistake forever."
— Boater, BUI Conviction



"The crash took my son and his best friend. Please don't let this happen to your family."
— Father

INCARCERATION IS A REAL RISK

You could spend time in jail.
One decision can take away your freedom.



YOU ARE THE CAPTAIN. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE.

Your passengers. Your boat. Your choices. Your consequences.

BOAT SOBER. SAVE LIVES.
Respect the water. Respect the law. Respect life.

ENJOY THE WATER. MAKE SMART CHOICES. BE RESPONSIBLE.



OPERATION DRY WATER IS COMING. LAW ENFORCEMENT IS WATCHING.

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE. IT'S NOT WORTH IT.



PLAN AHEAD

Designate a sober captain. Use a sober ride. Make it home safe.

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