

THE LIFE LINE

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SUMMER 2025

KICKING OFF THE BOATING SAFETY SEASON



In proud support of National Safe Boating Week and as part of a cherished tradition, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 054-23-07 (Herring Bay) launched the 2025 summer recreational boating season with two successful events focused on vessel safety, training, and public outreach.

Vessel Safety Check Training Refresher

Ahead of the May Flotilla Business Meeting, members gathered for a hands-on Vessel Safety Check (VSC) conducted aboard one of our own member's boats. This annual refresher not only helped our qualified Vessel Examiners (VE) sharpen their skills, but also served as a valuable training opportunity for those in VE training and members interested in becoming a certified examiner. The event fostered peer learning and reinforced our commitment to promoting recreational boating safety through excellence and professionalism.

Marina Safety Day at Herrington Harbour South

On Saturday, May 17, the official start of National Safe Boating Week, our Flotilla hosted its annual Marina Safety Day at Herrington Harbour South Marina in Rose Haven, Maryland. With the sun shining and boaters bustling about the marina, our members set up a vibrant Public Affairs booth to engage the boating community. We spoke with dozens of recreational boaters about the importance of onboard safety equipment, proper preparation, and safe boating practices.

In tandem with the outreach, our team conducted over a dozen VSCs throughout the day, ensuring that boaters had the required safety gear and offering recommendations for safer boating. These efforts were well-received by marina members, many of whom expressed appreciation for our service and expertise.

To wrap up the day, our members came together for a celebratory barbecue, enjoying fellowship and camaraderie after a productive and impactful event.

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THE ANCHOR — AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR SAFETY EQUIPMENT

The anchor, despite its clever shapes and sizes, is after all simply a combination of metal shapes. It is a relatively unsophisticated part of boating hardware, when compared to the Very High Frequency radio, the chart plotter, the sounder, the personal locator beacon, or even the compass or personal flotation device. Also, it is not given the stature it deserves among the several important safety devices on your boat. It is not even federally required. The anchor is, however, in this writer's opinion, an essential element of safe boating and, depending on the circumstances, a necessity.

If a vessel is in distress due to a fouled prop or loss of power in a channel or inlet, near rocks or shore or a shoal, the anchor and rode may indeed be the first safety equipment the skipper will deploy – even before calling for assistance. And if a “Mayday” is necessary, anchoring will fix the vessel's position, making it easier for rescuers -- your location being critical information in a search and rescue.

So, anchoring properly the first time is key. In an emergency, a boater may only have one chance to anchor to avoid peril. Here are some steps to secure a good set:

- 1) If time permits, flake the appropriate amount of rode on deck to ensure no tangles.
- 2) Calculate at least seven feet of rode for each foot of water depth, plus the distance from the bow to the waterline.
- 3) Ensure the bitter end of the rode is secured.
- 4) Always anchor from the bow.
- 5) Approach the anchoring location slowly upwind or up current (whichever is stronger).
- 6) Do not release the anchor until all forward motion has stopped and/or the boat is backing away.
- 7) Release the anchor and rode *slowly* as the boat begins moving astern (with wind or current and/or by using reverse). Never drop the anchor and rode in a bundle, as the anchor is likely foul around the rode.
- 8) Once you have released a proper amount of rode, tie it off and apply a short burst of reverse power.
- 9) Safely grab the anchor rode just past the bow, and check for vibration. Vibration means the anchor is likely dragging. Try releasing more rode. If, however, the rode is already greater than a 10 to 1 ratio of rode to depth from the bow, either your anchor may be fouled or is not designed for the type of bottom, or you are in weather where your anchor is not adequate to hold your vessel.
- 10) Once the anchor holds, take two bearings by standing near the bow with your arms about 120 degrees apart, with each pointing to a fixed object on shore or on the water. Repeat this process in 10 or 15 minutes. If your arms are no longer pointing toward the same objects, you are dragging anchor. Repeat this process often, as conditions change, or the boat swings, and the anchor could let go. If available, use the Global Positioning System (GPS) plotter to set an anchor alarm to warn when the boat moves outside of a fixed circumference.
- 11) If anchoring overnight, with wind, current, and tide changes, and the boat swinging on its anchor, it is especially important to set a GPS anchor warning or consider establishing a periodic watch.

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SAFETY IN REDUCED VISIBILITY

Oftentimes, boaters will encounter weather conditions in which reduced visibility becomes a significant danger. Most situations are caused by fog but could also be the result of heavy rain, snow or haze. Here are some guidelines to follow in such situations:

Reduce Speed

Obvious as it may sound, many boaters do not consider this as their first and best response. You should always operate your vessel at a safe (i.e., slow) speed in reduced visibility. It is important that an operator can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and to be able to stop their vessel within a distance that is appropriate to the existing circumstances and conditions.

Avoid Collisions

To avoid a collision you must see and be seen and hear as well as be heard. Rule 35 of the Navigation Rules dictates the specific sounds required for your vessel type and situation and alerts other vessels in your vicinity as to both. It is the best possible way to avoid a collision. Rule Eight defines the actions to avoid a collision with due regard to the observance of good seamanship.

Post a Lookout

While this is a legal requirement for boaters at all times when underway, it just makes good sense to have an extra pair or two of eyes looking for dangerous objects in the vicinity.

Listen

While you are always required to post a lookout, you should also make sure they pay especial attention to listen for any horns, bells or whistles indicating an oncoming (or anchored) vessel, even those that may be approaching from astern.

Cut Your Engine

This is another boater's best safety device in reduced visibility conditions. Stopping your engine and thus eliminating internal noises can give a lookout a better opportunity to detect external sounds and focus on their possible direction and location.

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BOATING SAFETY SEASON (CONT'D)

Looking Ahead

Both events highlight the strength of our Flotilla's commitment to boating safety, training, and community engagement. As the summer season begins, we remain dedicated to our mission of promoting safety on the water and building strong relationships within our maritime community.

Bravo Zulu to all who participated and helped make these events a success!

Brian Shrift, FSO-IS

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REDUCED VISIBILITY (CONT'D)

Radar

If your vessel is equipped with an operational radar, you are legally required to turn it on and use it in reduced visibility. However, this does not exempt you from also providing a human lookout. Utilizing a radar reflector on your boat can also help to make it more visible to a radar equipped vessel.

Anchoring

If the weather as well as the depth of the water or other conditions warrant, anchoring your vessel until the visibility conditions improve may be a good option. Remember to choose a safe location and do not anchor in a busy channel. Turn on your anchor light and make the appropriate sound signal, which is one prolonged blast followed by two short blasts, at intervals of not more than two minutes.

Announce Your Position

If you feel that the preceding steps alone are insufficient to insure your safety, it is permissible to transmit a "Securite" message on Channel 16 and announce your position so as to alert other vessels in the area as to your presence. When conditions improve, call again and cancel the "Securite" message. Always remember to follow proper radio procedures when using a maritime radio.

THE LIFE LINE ANCHORING (CONT'D)

12) If there are other vessels in your anchorage, calculate your swing circle from the anchor placement to the stern, to prevent colliding with adjacent vessels.

Inspect your ground tackle regularly. As with life jackets, ensure that the anchor is readily accessible; that it can be deployed quickly in an emergency; that the bitter end is secure; that the rode is not knotted, frayed, or otherwise compromised; that the shackles and thimble are in good shape; and that the anchor is of a proper design and weight for your vessel and locale. And, finally, practice technique, just as with a man overboard drill, so you can quickly and confidently use this important part of your emergency gear.

Joseph DiStefano, FC

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AWARDS

Joseph DiStefano - Five Year Membership
John Wright - Basically Qualified

PASSING THOUGHT

Common sense is a flower that doesn't grow in everyone's garden.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 14 - Flotilla meeting, Cedarhurst Community Center, Shady Side, Maryland, 1900

August 11 - Flotilla meeting, Cedarhurst Community Center, Shady Side, Maryland, 1900

September 8 - Flotilla meeting, Cedarhurst Community Center, Shady Side, Maryland, 1900

October 11 - Flotilla meeting, Cedarhurst Community Center, Shady Side, Maryland, 1900

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