

Stay Safe afloat

It goes without saying that we live in a coastal community where a significant percentage of residents consistently take to the water in one manner or another.

The Pamlico/Tar River and its tributaries — from Tranter’s Creek in the west to the Pungo River and Pantego Creek in the east — are filled with vessels of various shapes and sizes. Kayaks, canoes and personal watercraft share the water with boats for fishing, skiing and sailing. As we head into the summer months, the volume increases, turning it into a nautical jungle out there.

That is why the Pamlico Sail and Power Squadron and the Coast Guard Auxiliary are promoting National Safe Boating Week during May 19-25, considered by some as the informal start of summer.

“We want people to be safe while enjoying their time on the water,” Capt. Anthony Popiel, commander of Coast Guard Sector North Carolina in Wilmington, said in a recent news release. “Some simple things they can do to stay safe and be prepared should a problem arise are to wear their life jackets, let someone on shore know exactly where they are going and when they expect to return, and carry a VHF-FM marine band radio. Cellphones are not a reliable form of communication on the water, whereas a marine radio will be heard by any boat or land station within range of the distress call.”

The Pamlico Sail and Power Squadron is a great resource for boating safety.

“We conduct a wide range of boater-education courses and seminars,” said John Rebholz, public relations officer with the Pamlico Sail and Power Squadron. “These range from the America’s Boating Course, which meets the state requirement on boater education to weather seminars. We conduct vessel safety checks along with the Coast Guard Auxiliary. This is a free service where a trained inspector will review with you the state/federal requirements on boating equipment. The inspector will advise you of any needed equipment required to meet government requirements. If your vessel meets the requirements, we will furnish you with a decal that identifies your vessel as having been inspected and passed the requirements. You can contact us to have your vessel inspected by going on www.pamlicosailandpowersquadron.com.”

Recreational boating has the potential for a lot of aquatic fun, but a day on the water can turn tragic in the blink of an eye. Use National Safe Boating Week as a time to educate yourself about making your boating experience a safe one.

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