



Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

For Immediate Release

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Cold Water Increases Risk of Boating Fatalities

Harrisburg, PA— The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) strongly encourages boaters to wear their life jackets on cold Pennsylvania waters.

Cold water shock is a leading killer of boaters in Pennsylvania. It is caused by sudden immersion into water less than 70 degrees Fahrenheit. With water temperatures now falling into the 50 degree range, sudden immersion can kill a boater within seconds of submersion. The PFBC encourages boaters to be safe on the water by wearing their life jackets.

“Too many people are dying because they don’t recognize the danger of cold water,” PFBC Boating and Access Director Dan Martin said. “Year after year, it’s the same story. Someone falls overboard or capsizes their small motorboat, canoe or kayak and drowns because of the effects of cold water shock.” Cold water shock causes an involuntary reflexive torso gasp. The victim will commonly inhale water, become disoriented, panic, and lose the ability to swim. “It is very common for even strong swimmers to go under very quickly in cold water,” Martin said. “They don’t have time to get hypothermia, another dangerous condition brought on by the cold; they drown too quickly for hypothermia to be a factor.”

“The sad thing is that all boating fatalities are preventable,” Martin said. The number one way to be safe on the water is to wear a life jacket. Eighty percent of all recreational boating fatalities could be prevented if the victim had been wearing a Coast Guard approved life jacket at the time of the accident.

Visit the PFBC’s website at www.state.pa.us to learn more about safe boating.

BE SAFE. WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET.

Our Mission:

www.fish.state.pa.us

To protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth’s aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities.