



Canadian Safe Boating Council
Conseil canadien de la sécurité nautique



Fall Boating – It Takes a Little More Care

Boating in the fall offers colourful vistas, quiet anchorages and excellent fishing. However, it is not without its challenges. Safe boating at this time of year requires boaters to be more self-sufficient and to take extra precautions.

Lifesaving Society Manitoba and the Canadian Safe Boating Council want to remind boaters of these important tips:

The Weather – Check the forecast. The mix of warm and cold air can result in a strong wind and waves making it treacherous for small boats. Fog can also be an issue. While daytime temperatures can still be warm, dressing for the water temperature can slow the onset of hypothermia if the unexpected happens and a boater finds himself in the water. Wearing an approved lifejacket or PFD is essential to staying afloat.

Communication – In the fall, there are fewer boats on the water to offer assistance. Boaters should leave a float plan with someone on shore who can take action if they are overdue. Have a marine radio or cellphone available to call for help. Make sure the cellphone is stored in a waterproof case.

Being Prepared - Carry some small tools and parts to fix minor problems to prevent being stranded. Boaters need to ensure their boat and engine are mechanically sound. The use of a fuel additive prevents water in the fuel line from freezing. If the boat has portable fuel tanks, it is a good idea to have a spare on board.

The Water – Boaters should be wary of reduced water levels after a long, hot and dry summer. They should also watch for debris and chunks of ice that could penetrate a boat's hull at high speed.

Warm weather allows us to extend cottage and boating season well into the fall, sometimes even beyond Halloween. It is important to realize, however, that we are seeing increasing variability of fall weather, with cooler nights resulting in cold water in lakes, rivers and streams across Canada, despite the warmer days. Cold shock is a very real concern for anyone falling into the water, and you can drown in seconds unless you have prepared ahead by wearing appropriate clothing and an approved lifejacket or personal flotation device.