

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. Coast Guard

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**U.S. COAST GUARD ALERTS HOLIDAY BOATERS
TO CARBON MONOXIDE RISK**

Danger May Be Greater Than Previously Thought

Washington, DC (June 26, 2003) -- Amid growing evidence that Carbon Monoxide-related illnesses, injuries, and fatalities on the water may be far greater than reported, the United States Coast Guard is asking recreational boaters to take special care during the busy July 4th holiday weekend.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, tasteless, and highly toxic gas produced by boat engines, generators, and stoves. Some boaters are aware that CO can accumulate inside engine compartments, but few understand that the gas can pool in deadly concentrations outside the boat as well -- around engine and generator exhaust outlets, under and around swim platforms, and even in an open cabin when conditions are right.

"We've had some tragic accidents involving Carbon Monoxide," says Captain Scott Evans, Chief of the Coast Guard's Office of Boating Safety. " The reason they are tragic is that virtually all injuries and fatalities involving CO are preventable through simple awareness on the part of the boat owner and operator."

Many in the boating safety community believe that Carbon Monoxide-related injuries and fatalities may go underreported because they are attributed to other causes such as seasickness or intoxication. There is growing concern that as many as 15 percent of the deaths attributed to drowning in fact occurred when a swimmer was already unconscious from exposure to Carbon Monoxide.

"Boaters can greatly reduce the risk to themselves and their passengers by educating themselves about CO," continues Captain Evans. "They should know where exhaust outlets for the engines and generator are on their boat, and keep everyone clear. They should understand how and where CO can accumulate -- for example, when slow speeds and a following wind create a backdraft that draws CO into the cabin. They should forbid high-risk behaviors like teak surfing, and treat symptoms like headache, dizziness, and nausea as possible CO poisonings until another cause is pinpointed."

"We want everyone to have a wonderful time boating on the holiday weekend. Boaters can also remember that boating safely reduces accidents and rescue missions --which allows the Coast Guard to better perform its other missions, such as homeland security."

A news package will be satellite fed at the following times and dates:

Thurs. 6/26 – 2:30-3:00pm ET

Friday 6/27 – 10:30-11:00 ET

Wed. 7/2 - 2:00–2:15pm ET

All feeds on C-Band – Galaxy 3, Transponder 3 – DL 3760 H – Audio 6.2 & 6.8
This feed is sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard for your free and unrestricted use. For transmission problems call 202-408-3424

Boaters interested in more information on Carbon Monoxide and recreational boating can look for publications produced by the U.S. Coast Guard, at www.uscgboating.org, or call the U.S. Coast Guard's Infoline at 1-800-368-5647.