

## Insurance 101: Don't Be a Pain in the Boat

If you think your local lake or river looks more congested with boaters and personal watercraft than it did in the past, you're right. Statistics show that nationally there are two million more boats on our coastal waters, lakes and rivers than there were in 1990.

More boats means more risk of collisions, and unless you're insured, the cost of repairs or injuries will likely come out of your own pocket. If you and your family are heading out for some fun on Washington's waterways, it's important to remember to protect your loved ones and your investment.

According to the U.S. Coast Guard, there were 96 reported accidents in Washington in 2006 and \$946,905 in property damage. Between the years 2002 and 2006, there were a total of 595 boating accidents in Washington. However, the tally is probably much higher, as only about 10 percent of accidents are reported to authorities.

**Comment [A1]:** Check [www.uscgboating.org/statistics/stats.htm](http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/stats.htm) for state-by-state statistics

Like your car or truck, your boat requires its own insurance policy. In many states, boat owners insurance is required by law, and if you have an outstanding boat loan, your lender may require you to have a boat owners insurance policy. In addition, most marinas and yacht clubs require insurance if your boat is docked at their facilities.

Boat ownership exposes customers to many of the same risks as automobile and home ownership, including the risk of causing bodily injury to other people, damage to others' property, or damage to their own property. Boat owners potentially have a lot to lose if they head out on the water without insurance coverage.

Various coverages available to boat owners include coverage for theft or physical damage; liability coverage, in the event someone else is injured; and medical payments coverage, in the event the policyholder injured. Even the safest boat drivers are susceptible to changing water and weather conditions and the actions of other boaters.

Boaters may be eligible for discounts on their insurance premiums. Allstate offers a New Boat Discount that ranges from 25 percent for a new boat to 10 percent for a boat that is 5 years old.

Boats equipped with an automatic fire extinguisher system might be eligible for a Protective Device Discount of 5 percent, and boats with diesel engines could qualify for a 5 percent discount as well.

Certified boaters may also qualify for the Boating Education Discount. If boat owners complete an approved course in boating education, they could qualify for a discount of up to 5 percent. Check with your insurance agent to find out more about boat safety and to locate a boat-safety course near you.

**Comment [A2]:** This discount information is specific to Washington. Versions for other states will be produced using information from PMO.

The Insurance Information Institute, a non-profit consumer education organization, offers the following safety tips:

- Before setting out, make sure to check weather forecasts.
- Let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return.
- Check engine, fuel, electrical and steering systems, especially for exhaust-system leaks.
- Carry one or more fire extinguishers, matched to the size and type of the boat. Keep them readily accessible and in condition for immediate use.
- Equip the vessel with required navigation lights and with a whistle, horn or bell. Consider additional safety devices, such as a paddle or oars, a first-aid kit, a supply of fresh water, a tool kit and spare parts, a flashlight, flares and a radio.
- Make sure that every person on board the boat wears a life jacket.
- Keep alert around other watercraft, swimmers, floating debris and shallow waters.
- Don't overload the boat. Don't stand up or shift weight suddenly in a small boat; and don't permit riding on the bow, seatbacks or gunwales.
- Don't mix alcohol and boating.