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NEWS RELEASE

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Stay Afloat, Stay Sober, and Stay Safe

Madison, WI. May 11, 2011 – Boating is one of the all-time favorite activities so many of us enjoy when the warm weather finally arrives. And in Dane County where lakes and rivers are plentiful, the Dane County Sheriff's Office Marine and Trail deputies want to remind boaters to make it a safe and fun-filled boating season for everyone.

Whether you've been around boats for many years, or are new to the sport, please take a moment to review the following boating tips.

- **Don't drink alcohol and operate a boat.** A study of boating fatalities estimates that a person with a BAC of .08 and above, are ten times more likely to be killed in a boating crash vs. someone who is sober. Alcohol also accounts for a large percentage of boating injuries and property damage.
- **Be weather wise.** Sudden wind shifts, lightening flashes and choppy water all can mean a storm is brewing and heading your way. Check your local forecast prior to leaving.
- **Don't Overload.** When you overload you are asking for trouble. Even with flotation a swamped boat is dangerous. Capsizing and falls overboard account for 70% of boating fatalities. In a smaller boat, when boarding and changing seats, stay low and near the center of the boat. Smaller boats can capsize easily if weight is not properly distributed.
- **Ventilate after fueling.** Open hatches, run the blower and most importantly, carefully sniff for gasoline fumes in the fuel and engine compartment before starting your motor.
- **Wear your personal flotation device.** PFD's don't work if you don't wear them. If you have ever tried putting on a PFD while you were in the water you know how hard it can be even in calm waters and during daylight hours. The Sheriff's Office urges everyone, before you cast off in a boat, to find a life jacket and put it on to make sure it fits you properly. If you choose not to wear it, your life jacket should always be readily available. There **MUST** be one PFD aboard of the proper size and type for each person. If your boat is 16 feet or longer, a type IV throwable must be aboard.
- **Registration and display.** Make sure your registration is up to date and properly displayed. Always carry your certificate of number aboard. If your registration is in the mail, have the appropriate paperwork.
- **Battery.** If you have batteries on board they must be secured to the boat and both terminals must be covered.

- **Test your navigation lights.** Prior to going out on the water, even if you don't plan on staying out past sunset, check both your bow and stern light and make sure they are in working order. Have spare bulbs for each light and spare fuses on board the boat. Know when sunset is and carry a boating regulations book with you and check the back of the booklet for the hours of darkness.
- **Carry a fire extinguisher.** If your boat requires a fire extinguisher, it must be accessible, charged and in working order.
- **Miscellaneous items.** Other suggested items to have on your boat include: a toolbox, first aid kit, a signaling device, a cell phone and an anchor.

Above all, have common sense. Be safe and know your boats limitations as well as your own. Respect other boaters and landowners. Know the laws as well as county ordinance for each lake you are on. Boat smart and have fun!

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