

Cold weather boaters are at a higher risk

Hunters and anglers in small boats are at risk of drowning if they don't take proper precautions, warns the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). In cool weather, pleasure boaters dwindle, and lakes and rivers are primarily used by hunters and anglers. Many times, these outdoorsmen don't see themselves as boaters, and to them the boat is little more than a way to bring home dinner, a trophy, or a good fish story.

"Hunters and fishermen rarely take safe boating classes offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary or the US Power Squadron," says Dan Heskett, assistant director of the KDWP's Law Enforcement Division. "Wearing a life jacket is often viewed as uncomfortable and in the way. And hunters often use small craft that are unstable. Falling overboard is easy, even without a collision, bad weather, or high speeds, and that can be a prescription for disaster in cold water."

Heskett also notes that hunters and fishermen spend much of their time in shallow water around standing timber, submerged rocks, and logs because

these are a great places to locate (or hide from) quarry. Unfortunately, falling headfirst from a standing position into shallow water around rocks and logs is a good way to be knocked unconscious and drown. A person can also hit one's head on the gunwales of the boat.

But following some simple rules recommended by the Coast Guard can prevent disaster and ensure a safe and rewarding day on the water:

Avoid alcohol because balance and judgment will be impaired and resistance to hypothermia reduced;

Always wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket when in a boat;

Fish or hunt with a buddy;

File a "float plan" by making sure someone knows where you are and when you're expected back;

Take a safe boating class; and get a vessel safety check.

For more information on safe boating in Kansas, go to the KDWP website, <<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/>>www.kdwp.state.ks.us, and click the "Boating" icon at the top of the page.



Park Manager, Toby Kuhn trims up the grounds for fall. As a state park employee there is never a shortage of things that can be done. There is mowing, trash and limb removal, painting and repairs of structures, docks and bathhouses not to mention the upkeep on the cabins.

-Telegram photo by Dana Paxton



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