



Press Release

For more information, please contact:

Ed Sweeney DC-A

Chief - Department of Public Affairs

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

916-284-8507

DC-A@auxpa.org

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE "WAKE" OF A NEAR TRAGEDY **Coast Guard Auxiliary reminds boaters - "you are responsible for your boat's wake"**

SACRAMENTO - After a near tragedy last weekend on the Sacramento River, the Coast Guard Auxiliary is reminding boaters that the wake that their boat leaves can be a serious danger to others, and that boaters are responsible for any damage caused by their wake.

Two men in a 21 foot ski boat were passing through Old Town Sacramento last Saturday afternoon, when they were passed by two large cabin cruisers going in opposite directions. Each cabin cruiser was violating the no wake zone, and were throwing 3-4 foot high wakes. The ski boat, which only had about a 12 inch freeboard, was swamped by the large wakes, and with little warning - both passengers were plunged into the water, scrambling to grab a life jacket and anything else that could help them stay afloat.

To make matters worse, both of the offending vessels left the scene without offering assistance.

Fortunately for the two men, there were some Good Samaritans in the area. With assistance from the local sheriff, the Good Samaritans assisted the men to safety. The vessel was able to be saved by a commercial salvor before it completely sank, but it did suffer major water damage.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary wants to use the "lessons learned" in this unfortunate incident to remind all boaters about the following safety tips.

- **You are responsible for damage caused by your boat's wake:** The Navigation Rules make it quite clear that the operator of a vessel is responsible for any damage caused by the wake a vessel produces. This not only includes damage caused to other vessels, but to people, property (such as docks) and the environment as well. Use courtesy and common sense when approaching other vessels, and keep your wake to a minimum.
- **Maintain a sharp lookout at all times:** The Navigation Rules also require all vessels to maintain a proper lookout at all times. This is so that early and corrective actions can be taken to avoid collisions, and to prepare for large wakes, as was the case herein. Pay attention to your surroundings at all times and be prepared to take evasive action when necessary to avoid a collision or other tragedy.
- **Observe all "No Wake" and other restricted operations signs:** No wake and other restricted operations signs are there for a reason. Follow them at all times when underway on your boat. When in doubt about the meaning of an aid to navigation, slow down or stop.
- **Always wear a life jacket:** In the case described above, the passengers thrown into the water were not wearing life jackets at the time of the incident, but were assisted by other boaters in the area. The Coast Guard Auxiliary recommends that boaters wear a life jacket at all times when underway, since tragedy can strike quickly and without warning, leaving no time

to done a life jacket as the disaster happens. "Trying to put on a lifejacket while or after an accident happens is like trying to fasten your seat belt just before your car is involved in an accident - it is often too late," says Leanne Sweeney, Division Captain for the Coast Guard Auxiliary in the Sacramento area. "And once you are actually in the water, it is quite difficult if not impossible to put on a life jacket."

- ***Be prepared to assist other boaters in an emergency.*** Federal law requires you to provide whatever assistance you can anyone at sea in need of help, as long as such assistance does not endanger you, your passengers, or your vessel. In so doing, you are protected by the "Good Samaritan" clause of the Federal Boating Safety Act of 1971. Be prepared for emergencies - carry the required safety equipment, as well as recommended items, like a first aid kit and marien radio (to call for help). Also, educate yourself, and be personally prepared - take a boating safety course, as well as first aid and CPR courses, so that you can be ready to help when disaster strikes. And if you are involved in an accident of any type on the water, **never** leave the scene.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary hopes that by following these simple and effective safety tips, all boaters will have a safe and enjoyable outing on the water.

-###-

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is composed of uniformed volunteer's who assist the Coast Guard in all of its varied missions, except for military and direct law enforcement. These men and women can be found on the nation's waterways, in the air, in classrooms and on the dock, performing Maritime Domain Awareness patrols, safety patrols, vessel safety checks and public education.

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary was founded in 1939 by an Act of Congress as the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve and re-designated as the Auxiliary in 1941. Over 27,000 members donate millions of hours annually in support of Coast Guard missions.

For more information on the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, visit us at www.cgaux.org or www.axupa.org