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—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—

*2004 NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK (May 22-28)
Asks Boaters To Take Command Of Their Safety By Wearing A Life Jacket*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) National Safe Boating Week (May 22-28) highlights the need for boaters to take command of their safety by wearing a life jacket at all times while on the water. According to the Coast Guard's latest available statistics, 750 boaters died in 2002. 85 percent of those who drowned were not wearing their life jackets, even though in many cases, there were life jackets aboard.

"Our boating accident statistics show that wearing your life jacket is the number-one action you can take to greatly increase your chances of surviving a boating accident," said Rear Admiral Jeffrey J. Hathaway, Director of Operations Policy, United States Coast Guard. "Boaters need to take charge of their safety and the safety of their passengers by making sure everyone is wearing a life jacket from the start of their trip. It's not enough to stow it away or sit on it. The reality is there is rarely enough time to reach a life jacket, because accidents happen so quickly and unexpectedly. Up to 440 boaters would have survived in 2002 if they'd simply put on their life jackets before they headed out."

"With today's lighter, more comfortable, and attractive life jackets, there's no reason not to wear one," said Virgil Chambers, Executive Director of the National Safe Boating Council (NSBC). "There are life jackets for almost every activity, too – from hunting and fishing, to paddling and general recreational boating. There are jackets that inflate in the water and jackets that don't look like life jackets at all. Make sure you have the right one for your chosen activity and make sure it fits."

NSBC produces National Safe Boating Week, along with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, through a grant from the Aquatic Resources (Wallop-Breaux) Trust Fund administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

"The Coast Guard together with the National Safe Boating Council and our other boating partners are determined to reduce the number of accidents and fatalities on the water. But we can't do this unless we can convince the boating public to take the necessary steps to boat more safely, like wearing your life jackets. Remember you're in command of your safety. So, boat smart. Boat safe. Wear it!" said Hathaway.

For more information visit www.safeboatingcampaign.com

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BOAT SMART. BOAT SAFE. WEAR IT!

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