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Chairman

Government & Partners Relations Committee

Date: 5/14/2011

**Subject: USPS OFFICIAL POSITION OF MANDATORY LIFE JACKET WEARING**

The official position of the USPS is to endorse the National Boating Safety Advisory Resolution regarding mandatory life jacket wear for certain boats and that USPS actively promote mandatory life jacket wear through surveys, engaging with the public, and lobbying Congress.

The following is supporting information for above USPS Board official position.

Advisory Council 87

Resolution 2011-87-01

Appropriate Regulations for Life Jacket Wear by Recreational Boaters

United States Power Squadrons Position Paper: In more than a decade of boating accidents leading to fatalities, it is clear that 80 percent of deaths were due to drowning. Of those, the United States Coast Guard determined that more than 80 percent of victims would have survived had they been wearing a life jacket. In spite of more states and territories adopting various mandatory boating safety education requirements, there has not been a significant decrease in the annual accident, injury and fatality rates. Both Congress and the Administration have made it clear to the Coast Guard that this is a priority.

In 2010, the United States Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety brought a request to the National Boating Safety Advisory Council (NBSAC) to evaluate whether the Coast Guard should pursue legislative measures to establish mandatory wear of life jackets for boats under 26 feet or to come up with any other recommendations regarding boat type or activity. There followed in a series of meetings of a specially appointed subcommittee presentation, analysis and discussion of data based on 11 years of boating accident statistics.

The widely debated issue was brought to the full National Boating Safety Advisory Council and a vote taken to pass on a Resolution to the Coast Guard for action which passed by a majority vote on 2 April 2011. The Board of Directors for the United States Power Squadrons has voted unanimously to endorse this resolution by conducting surveys, engaging with the public and lobbying Congress. This will include support to the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety as appropriate with instituting draft legislation, public comment periods, passage of the bill and implementation. Following are some of the factors leading to the decision to support:

1. The Coast Guard through the grant program has funded many different outreach and educational programs, for at least the past 15 years, all aimed at getting boaters to wear life jackets.

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2. Most states and territories have partnered with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and the National Safe Boating Council (NSBC) to hold outreach programs emphasizing the need to wear life jackets while boating. Most notable was the recent "Wear It!" campaign conducted in several states.
3. Many advertisements from the National Marine Manufacturers Association now show people wearing life jackets.
4. For years the United States Power Squadrons training courses have emphasized the need for wearing life jackets, especially on small open boats. The United States Guard Auxiliary training courses have also emphasized the wearing of life jackets.
5. Many other organizations involved in recreational boating have also carried the message of the importance of wearing life jackets.
6. The U.S. Coast Guard contracted with JCI to survey life jacket wear in states with large numbers of registered boats, heavy numbers of accidents or both. The result during the last 11 years is that the wear rate for adult boaters in open boats has ranged between 5 percent and 6 percent.
7. Congress and the Office of Management and Budget are starting to pressure the Coast Guard to deliver better results for the money spent on promoting life jacket wear.
8. With millions of dollars in outreach, advertising and education having been spent with no measurable results in increased life jacket wear, the majority of the members of the National Boating Safety Advisory Council saw the need to seek out other means to achieve positive results.
9. In focusing on open boats under 18 feet, the NBSAC was told that it would cover approximately 83 percent of boaters at highest risk of unexpectedly entering the water without a life jacket and drowning.
10. During the past three years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers worked on establishing mandatory life jacket wear policies on two lakes near the Mississippi River. One lake received signage, radio and television ads. The other lake received only minimal attention and enforcement. On the lakes with heavy outreach, the wear rate for life jackets exceeded 70 percent for the last two years. In the minds of many of the NBSAC members, the results bolster the case for mandatory life jacket wear.
11. The NBSAC Life Jacket Subcommittee will be reconvened to deal with issues including which types of boats and or activities would be exempted from the mandatory wear requirements such as sponsored events, races and regattas.