

-- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

COAST GUARD LIFE JACKET RULE BECOMES EFFECTIVE
ON DECEMBER 23

Rule Intended to Minimize Drownings Among Children Under 13

United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC (December 9, 2002) --

The United States Coast Guard's Life Jacket Rule will go into effect December 23, 2002.

In support of the ongoing efforts of the states and Coast Guard to improve boating safety, the Coast Guard is requiring that all children under 13 years of age wear Coast Guard approved life jackets, while aboard recreational vessels underway, except when the children are below decks or in an enclosed cabin.

This rule was created to address the problem of childhood drownings while boating.

Between 1995 - 2001, 210 of our children, under the age of 13 died while boating. One hundred and twenty one (121) of them by drowning. Most of these deaths could have been prevented if the child had been wearing a properly fitting life jacket.

This Rule affects only those States that have not established requirements, by statute or rule, for children to wear life jackets. For the remaining states, the rule recognizes and adopts the existing state regulation, even if it is less stringent.

"Statistics show that life jackets save lives --but only when they are worn," says Captain Scott Evans, Chief of the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Office in Washington, D.C. "Children customarily wear protective gear when rollerblading, skateboarding, and bicycling, and similar precautions are in order on the water. The Life Jacket Rule was proposed to make sure that there is a life jacket rule in all states."

Penalties for a boat operator who fails to have all children under the age of 13 wear a life jacket are similar to those for failing to have life jackets on board. Penalties may be assessed up to a maximum of \$1,100 for each violation.

The United States Coast Guard published the Interim Rule June 24, 2002, in the Federal Register, and in cooperation with states, conducted an education and public awareness phase that began July 1 and will end December 31, 2002. States with no current regulation for life jacket wear by children include Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, the Northern Mariana Islands, New Mexico, North Carolina, Virgin Islands, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

For more boating safety information see www.uscg.mil/news and www.uscgboating.org.

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