

Stay safe on the water this summer

- By Harbourmaster Martin Moore

Keeping safe on the water over summer involves more than just wearing a lifejacket. It means thinking ahead of potential problems and considering others. It's like driving on the road really!

The slogan for Safer Boating Week 2017 still applies, which is Prep, Check and Know - Prepare your craft, check your gear and know the rules.

Prepare your boat or jetski, especially if you haven't taken it out yet this summer - get the engine serviced, make sure the radio works, and think about what could go wrong well before it does.

Check that you have the right gear. In Hawke's Bay it is compulsory for lifejackets to be worn on all craft under 6 metres, powered or otherwise. This may not be the rule in other parts of New Zealand, so if you have boating visitors please remind them so they can be prepared. On craft over 6 metres the skipper should have enough, correctly sized lifejackets for everyone on board.

It's been great working with a number of schools this year, so that more children know how to be safer on a boat. They have learned they must wear a lifejacket that fits them, as an ill-fitting lifejacket is of little use.

It's also no shame for adults to wear a lifejacket if they feel they need to, as they may be safer - 60% of boating fatalities could have been prevented by wearing a lifejacket.

Knowing the rules is easy to sort out. The Hawke's Bay Navigation Safety Bylaws are online at hbrc.govt.nz, search #navsafety. The Maritime Rule 91 on recreational boating is on www.maritimenz.govt.nz. Get familiar with these rules – ignorance is no excuse.

This week I've installed new signs at the Port Entrance boat ramp, at the Napier Sailing and Fishing clubs ramps and at Porangahau to remind boaties of the rules. It's easy to ignore a sign, but please don't ignore these – check that you understand the boat launch lanes, speed limits and other hazards.

Most boaties and jet skiers are good at keeping their speed down around other craft and people in the water, but a few numpties come very close to hurting someone.

The speed limit is less than 5 kph within 50 metres of another vessel, raft or person in the water, or within 200m of the shore. I'll be keeping a particularly close watch on speed limits in the Inner Harbour and along Napier beaches this summer.



HBRC Harbourmaster Martin Moore
Photo: Tim Whittaker



Along Hardinge Road beach in Napier a row of black and yellow buoys mark the 200m distance from the shore, a zone where swimmers should be safe in the water. A major thanks to Turners and Growers who mostly funded these. Boats and jetskis have no need to go into that zone at all, as there's plenty of ocean to play in.

Jetkis – yes, most of the complaints I get are about jet ski noise and risky behaviour. Jetskis are fun, but the noise is like a dentist drill to people living nearby. Be considerate in areas close to houses, particularly in Clive, and although the speed restriction is lifted on the Clive River at certain times, please give the neighbours a break in the evenings and go home early!

Wairoa boaties will find that HBRC has helped install a new boat ramp on the Wairoa River (on the opposite bank from town) for your use. Plus for your comfort, there's now a toilet block at the Whangawehi ramp.

As the Harbourmaster I am not here to spoil people's fun – neither are the voluntary boating advisors who might also stop and have a chat. But we will respond when people see risky behaviours or get fed up with excessive noise out on the water. If you need to report any nuisance or dangers, please contact the Harbourmaster's phone 027 445 5592 or HBRC's duty manager 0800 108 838, and send photos or video to Harbourmaster@hbrc.govt.nz

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