



Paddle Safe Week: Talking points

- The Paddle Safe Week campaign, July 18–24, 2021, focuses on encouraging people to learn more about safe paddling practices and to stay safe on the water throughout the year.
- According to the Outdoor Foundation's [2019 Special Report on Paddlesports and Safety](#), paddlesports continue to grow in popularity – especially kayaking and stand up paddling. Yet only 23% of kayakers and 31% of stand-up paddlers have considered taking formal training to further their skills.
- Kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards and other paddlecraft are vessels and subject to federal, state and local recreational boating laws and ordinances.
- Paddlers are responsible for knowing the legal requirements.
- Legal requirements are minimal and do not maximize chances of being rescued in a timely manner or surviving an accident.
- According to national and state recreational boating accident data, paddlecraft are at a higher risk of capsizing and swamping.
- Since 2012, close to half of all boating fatalities in Washington state involved paddlecraft.
- Nationally, where cause of death was known, 79% of paddle-related fatalities from 2015 to 2017 involved drownings. Of those drowning victims, 74% were not wearing a life jacket.
- Accidents can happen to anybody, at any time, and when it's least expected.
- Federal and state law requires that the following equipment be carried on paddlecraft.
 - One properly fitted, serviceable, Coast Guard-approved life jacket per person on board.
 - A sounding device: horn, whistle or bell.
 - At least one navigation light, such as a lantern or flashlight.
 - On coastal waters, nighttime visual distress signal such as flares.



- Safety is a choice, and the following choices will minimize risks:
 - Getting educated (learn from the pros, understand navigation rules and waterways)
 - Learning how to self-rescue
 - Always wearing a life jacket (and leash on a SUP)
 - Avoiding boating-under-the-influence
 - Packing required and essential gear and being prepared for worst-case scenarios
 - Checking weather and water conditions and understanding the impact on ability to control a vessel
 - Being visible to other boaters
 - Dressing for immersion and cold-water safety
 - Filing a float plan

- For detailed paddlesport safety tips, visit PaddleSafeWa.org.