

NYSG Suddenly-In-Command Education Focused on Safety

According to the 2013 New York State Recreational Boating Report, 63 percent of boating emergencies occur while cruising or drifting on the water. The types of emergencies include collisions, grounding, capsizing, person overboard or ejected from the boat, sudden illness (heart attack), and fire or explosion.

With nearly 457,000 registered powerboats and approximately 300,000 non-power watercraft in New York State (among the top 10 states for the number of registered boats), safety education is a must for New York boaters and their passengers.

What do you do when you are a passenger enjoying a boat ride, when an emergency occurs and you find yourself in charge of the boat?

To educate non-boaters about the basic safety and operational information they need to assess an emergency situation, stabilize the vessel, summon assistance, and potentially pilot the boat, New York Sea Grant partnered with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary to offer free Suddenly-In-Command introductory training.

Components of the program included:

- a hands-on life jacket drill with various types of floatation devices and inflatable life vests
- basic boating terminology
- introduction to basic boating equipment
- how to properly signal distress with a flag
- how to summon assistance with three types of emergency flares, whistles, marine radio, and cell phone, and
- a live demonstration of how to safely ignite a hand-held flare.

The educational outreach took place “aboard a boat” at the five-day Central New York Boat Show in Syracuse in February 2015. The New York State Parks Marine Services Division joined the partnership with three days of in-water demonstrations at Empire Farm Days in Seneca Falls in August. Audience members represented all ages and boating experience levels and, at the farm show, a perhaps-underserved group, NY’s Mennonite community.



A NYSG partnership with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, NYS Parks Marine Services, boating industry, and event venues provided critical boating emergency education to the public. Photos: Brian P. Whattam

“The 2015 Central New York Boat Show is pleased to bring this critical water safety education to show visitors to help protect family members and passengers who may suddenly find themselves in an emergency situation and in charge of getting the boat back to shore or getting help.”

— CNY Boat Show Manager Drew Wickham

Partners:

- U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
- Boating Industries Association of Upstate NY
- Central NY Boat Show
- Empire Farm Days
- New York State Parks Marine Services Division
- Frontenac Harbor Marine

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is New York Resilient Communities and Economies

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

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