

# Tips To Keep You Safe On The Water

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Mary Donaldson/KMXT

With the most coastline in the United States, Alaska has no shortage of water activities. But being on the water does bring risks, and even death, if you aren't well prepared. Mary Donaldson has this report.

Recreational boating in Alaska brings fun for many, though it doesn't come without danger. Statistically, there are about 19 fatalities annually, says Mike Folkerts, the recreational boating safety specialist for the Coast Guard in Juneau. He says it doesn't sound like much, but those statistics rise far above the number of fatalities in one of Alaska's most dangerous industries.

(Folkerts 1 :19s "by quite a ways.")

Folkerts says nine people have already died this year on the water, with two of those deaths being involved with what he calls paddlecrafts, or canoes and kayaks.

Kodiak resident Hal Long has been kayaking around the island for over 20 years, and has been teaching kayaking safety classes since about 2002. He says he teaches self and assisted rescues, which are essential for kayaking safety.

(Long 1 :39s "change of clothes right there.")

He also gives tips on what type of clothing is appropriate for kayaking. Long says "cotton kills."

(Long 2 :26s "…or layer down.")

Long says another key is communication: let a friend or family member know when to expect you back from your trip.

(Long 3 :17s "…you're off the water.")

Folkerts says that the most important thing you can do to stay safe on the water is to always wear a personal floatation device.

(Folkerts 2 :28s "…thing you can do.")

Last year, there were 17 recreational boating fatalities in Alaska, with 7 of those deaths involving paddlecraft. Recreational boating fatalities have increased nationwide from 99 deaths in 2006, to 107 in 2007. Long teaches kayaking safety classes every April with each class having four sessions.

"m Mary Donaldson.

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