Observe 'Safe Boating Week' Year Round

Monday, 20 May 2013

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

As spring works its way toward summer, more and more people will take to the water for recreational and commercial boating endeavors. During Thursday’s borough assembly meeting Borough Mayor Jerome Selby took the time to remind all boaters to be safe.

“On average 700 people die each year in boating related accidents in the United States. Nearly 70 percent of these are fatalities caused by drowning," Selby said. "And where as the vast majority of these accidents are caused by human error or poor judgment and a significant number of boaters lives could have been saved had they worn their Coast Guard approved personal flotation device.”

Selby read a proclamation recognizing this week as Safe Boating Week in Kodiak and the rest of the Nation. Coast Guard Auxillary Fotilla Commander Drew Herman accepted the proclamation and spoke a bit about what the week is all about.

“It’s not just a week. It’s all summer, it’s all year," he said. "Especially for Kodiak, where things are particularly tough on boaters. But we like to take this week to sort of highlight the safe boating message and recharge everybody’s memory about some of the ways we keep safe on the water.”

Herman said better outreach and education in recent years have lowered boating-related deaths in the United States.

“There has been a general decline in recreational boating fatalities over the last ten years, and commercial fatalities," he said. "Actually last year, for 2012, we were finally under 700 recreational fatalities in the United States.”

He said there are some basic things boaters can do to prevent accidents and increase their chances of survival.

“Number one thing we can do is wear life jackets. And have them on the body, because if you fall in the water around here you really can’t put them on after that. So wear life jackets, take a safe boating class. There’s classes offered by the Auxillary, by the wildlife troopers, by AMSEA. File a float plan. Let people know where you’re going, when you’re expected back," Herman said.

"Pay

attention to the weather reports. Use a locating beacon, EPIRB or personal beacon. Get a vessel safety exam. Those are free from the Coast Guard Auxillary and there’s no penalty if you don’t pass. And when you drop by the DMV, pick up the Alaska Boaters Handbook. It’s actually an excellent publication it’s got most of what you need to know.”

Safe Boating Week began on Saturday and runs through Friday.