

National Recreational Boating Safety Coalition

October 28, 2015

The Coalition met at the offices of AAA in Washington, DC. Tom O'Day chaired the meeting.

Attendance

Tom O'Day (NRBSC); Steve Blackistone (NTSB); Barry Strauch (NTSB); Gale Alls (USPS); Earl Waesche (NBF); Bruce Johnston (USCGAux); Reuben Overmark (SafeKids); Joseph Carro (USCG); David Kennedy (BoatUS); Pam Dillon (NASBLA); David Dickerson (NMMA); Libby Yranski (NMMA), and Bruce Dungan (USBA).

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

Pam Dillon, NASBLA's Education and Standards Division Coordinator, briefed the coalition on the ongoing development of boater education standards.

- NASBLA works with the American National Standards Institute to obtain national accreditation for its boater education programs. This week NASBLA is submitting new standards; the biggest change is adopting provisions for cold water immersion in place of hypothermia. This reflects the experience that often cold-water drownings result from the immediate reaction to cold water rather than the long term effects of hypothermia.
- NASBLA is working with U.S. Sailing on the development of its new skills standards, seeking to ensure that the two organizations' standards are compatible.
- NASBLA is working with BSAC to address the current Coast Guard requirement that boating instructors who receive compensation have a Captain's license. This effectively prevents many marinas and similar facilities from offering boater education classes.
- NASBLA continues to work on boater education reciprocity among the states. The biggest challenge is that some states only recognize education cards that have been issued by another state agency, rather than a private organization.
- NASBLA has received a Coast Guard grant to promote boater education.
- States do not have data on challenge exam results given to boaters who seek an exemption from education requirements. Anecdotally, there is a perception that about half of those who take challenge exams do not pass. [David Dickerson pointed out that this might be a good argument for implementing the education requirement.]
- Currently, about 24 percent of all boaters have completed a boater education course. This number increases by about one percentage point per year.

The 2016 NASBLA annual conference will be held September 11-14, 2016 in Seattle, WA.

Coast Guard

Different versions of the surface transportation trust fund reauthorization bill, which contains reauthorization of the sport fish restoration and boating safety programs, have been approved by the full Senate and by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Congressional leaders are hoping to have a final bill by Thanksgiving.

The Coast Guard has completed a series of new public education videos that are now available on its web site.

The Coast Guard is changing the scheme it uses to type PFDs since the current scheme is complex and often confusing to consumers.

National Transportation Safety Board

NTSB is considering holding a 1-day public forum in early 2016 on issues related to shared waterways. Investigators are now visiting specific ports and waterways to better understand the nature of the problem. The Passenger Vessel Assoc. has urged NTSB to conduct this forum. One issue arises when people rent boats without knowing the rules of the road for that specific location. However, the Coast Guard has reported that there have not been a lot of accidents in this type of waterway.;

NTSB has opened an investigation into the loss of the U.S. cargo ship *El Faro* on Oct.

1. Currently it has contracted with the Navy to conduct a search for the vessel, which will be ongoing for the next couple of weeks. Coalition participants who are interested in receiving periodic updates on the investigation should contact Steve Blackistone (blackis@ntsb.gov).

National Marine Manufacturers Assoc.

David Dickerson reported that NMMA has a model vessel registration law that can be used as a resource for states that are considering amendments to their current law.

The Miami Boat Show will take place in February 2016.

State Legislative Action

Tom O'Day distributed a summary of gaps in boater education and PFD laws, 2015 legislative activities, and some prospects for 2016. The summary has been revised to emphasize the length of time it will take for states with a "born after" exemption in their law to cover all boaters.

An updated summary, reflecting discussions at the meeting, will be circulated separately. The summary especially notes new mandatory laws in California, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, and North Carolina. It also notes other new laws and activity in Alaska, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, South Dakota, Virginia, and Washington.

Most states have adjourned their 2015 sessions.

Next Meetings

The coalition will meet again on March 23, 2016.

Other 2016 meeting dates are June 15 and October 19. A meeting notice and advance agenda will be sent shortly before each of these meetings.

Coalition participants were urged to provide updates, especially regarding state legislative developments, to Tom O'Day for circulation between meetings. There are numerous organizations on the Coalition's mailing list that do not regularly attend meetings, but are interested in such updates.