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## Dealing With Sponsored Content

Here in our little boating niche, we're sometimes a bit insulated from the rest of the world. I recently attended the convention of American Society of Journalists and Authors — even though being there meant missing a day of fishing — and as a writer, found it quite an eye-opening experience.

For starters, the rates paid by marine publications really aren't as uncompetitive as we think they are. In fact, they're more or less in line with other publications in other industries of the same size. Yet it's still tough to make a decent living as a boating writer, mostly because there just isn't enough work to go around. And one of the biggest sources of work in this day and age is writing what's cryptically called "sponsored content".

We know sponsored content by many names: content marketing, advertiser supported content (or so-called native advertising), and (my favorite) stealth advertising. A company or organization pays the writer to write about a particular product, event, place, or service, to get their commercial message out to the public.

There are two schools of



Credit: Society of Professional Journalists

thought: The first is that it's bad, and potentially unethical. The second is that sponsored content is what's keeping publishing afloat, gives us the ability (read: budget) to examine products and events in detail, and allows us to continue communicating to the general public. Without it, publications would go under and our voices would be stifled.

Both views are correct.

Staffers used to be more or less immune to this quandary thanks to the rigid separation of editorial and advertising, but we all know that this is no longer true. No matter what your position is as a boating writer, you either have been or will be forced to grapple with the issue of writing sponsored content.

So, what are we to do? Shrug off our ethics as an old-

fashioned notion? Refuse the job and starve or get fired? I don't have the answer, but after sitting in on two panels of editors and writers from various fields discussing the topic I do have two suggestions.

Number one, visit the BWI web site and read our stated ethics

([www.bwi.org/ethics-policy/](http://www.bwi.org/ethics-policy/)). It's not impossible to write sponsored content while adhering to the principals we claim to espouse.

Number two — and this is the only thing that makes number one possible — always retain the final say in what gets published under your byline. Make it clear to whomever you're writing for that your number-one job is to communicate factually, critically when appropriate, and above all, honestly.

Your name is what makes the difference between pure advertising, and service journalism. Sponsored content can be one, the other, or something in-between.

You can reach me at [ultan-gler@aol.com](mailto:ultan-gler@aol.com).

**Lenny Rudow**  
BWI President

# Boating Safety Overview from 2015

In its annual report containing Recreational Boating Statistics for 2015, the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety counted 4,158 accidents that involved 626 deaths, 2,613 injuries and approximately \$42 million dollars of damage to property attributed to those accidents. The fatality rate was 5.3 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels, representing a 1.9% increase from last year's fatality rate of 5.2 deaths. Compared to 2014, the number of accidents increased 2.3%, number of deaths increased 2.6%, and injuries decreased 2.4%.

Annual registration data counted 11,867,049 recreational vessels registered by the states in 2015, a 0.5% increase from last year when 11,804,002 recreational vessels were registered.

## Consider Judging Innovations at October IBEX or 2017 Miami Shows

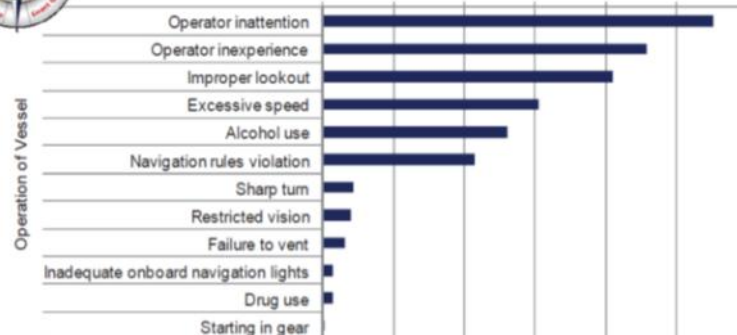
Take your mind off the election and help BWI select winners of Innovation at this year's IBEX in Tampa, FL. Judges need to arrive late on Saturday, October 1 with judging taking place the following two days. Major expenses are paid.

Open to Active and in good standing (means dues are paid) members, new judges are blended with experienced pros to make the process of reviewing upwards of 100 new products, stimulating and well organized.

Be the first to see what will influence the market over the next two years and have access to the engineers and inventors onsite to explain the innovation. Submit a brief bio with contact information by June 15 to BWI Past President Alan Wendt ([alan@wendtpro.com](mailto:alan@wendtpro.com)) who is the lead judge in Tampa; or to be considered for the Miami Boat Show in February '17, to lead judge Zuzana Prochazka ([totemgroup@msn.com](mailto:totemgroup@msn.com)).



Figure 3 PRIMARY CONTRIBUTING FACTOR OF ACCIDENTS 2015



Significant details called out in the executive summary of the report included:

Where cause of death was known, 76% of fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those drowning victims with reported life jacket usage, 85% were not wearing a life jacket.

Where instruction was known, 71% of deaths occurred on boats where the operator did not receive boating safety instruction. Only 15% percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received a nationally-approved boating safety education certificate.

There were 158 accidents in which at least one person was struck by a propeller. Collectively, these accidents resulted in 27 deaths and 150 injuries.

Eight out of every ten boaters who drowned were using vessels less than 21 feet in length.

Operator inattention, operator inexperience, improper lookout, machinery failure, and excessive speed were the top five primary factors in accidents.

Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; where the primary cause was known, it was listed as the leading factor in 17% of deaths.

Twenty-two children under age thirteen lost their lives while boating in 2015. Twelve children (55%) died from drowning. Two children (17%) of those who drowned were wearing a life jacket; half of the remaining ten children who were not wearing a life jacket were not required to do so under state law.

Where data was known, the most common types of vessels involved in reported accidents were open motorboats (45%), personal watercraft (19%), and cabin motorboats (17%).

Where data was known, the vessel types with the highest percentage of deaths were open motorboats (46%), kayaks (12%), and canoes (11%).

To view the complete report, go to <http://uscgboating.org/library/accident-statistics/Recreational-Boating-Statistics-2015.pdf>.

# Financial View of Top Boating Cities

According to SmartAsset, a financial technology company that says it provides transparent, automated, and accurate advice on big personal finance decisions, Brownsville, TX is the top city for boat owners. While some might argue the choice, the firm looked at data on

sales taxes, weather and water access in the largest 200 U.S. cities to develop their rankings. Rounding out the top 10 are: St. Petersburg, FL; Corpus Christi, TX; Tampa, FL; Cape Coral, FL; Jacksonville, FL; Miami, FL; Newport News, VA; Mobile, AL; and Hampton, VA.

SmartAsset's analysis of the



top spots for boat owners looked at five metrics:

- Sales tax rate on boats. In states with special sales tax caps, calculated was the effective sales tax rate on a boat costing \$50,000. For example, in North Carolina, where the cap is \$1,500, the effective rate would be 3%. (The full North Carolina

sales tax rate is 4.75%).

- Median annual housing costs. This reflects the city's overall cost of living, and includes mortgage payments, property taxes and utilities.

- Total water area. The number of square miles of in-city open water.

- Water area per 100,000 residents.

- Number of warm weather days; average number of days per year when maximum temperature exceeds 50 degrees. This puts the northern tier at a distinct disadvantage.

For a longer list and more detail on the rankings, go to <https://smartasset.com/personal-loans/the-best-cities-for-boat-owners>.

## BUI Caution Focus of States' Effort

Statistics indicate that alcohol use remains the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents, where a primary cause was known.

To help draw public attention to the dangers of boating under the influence of alcohol and drugs, in 2009, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators launched, in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, Operation Dry Water – the nation's boating under the influence awareness and enforcement campaign.

Annually, the effort facilitates a three-day heightened enforcement weekend, targeting operators who choose to boat under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This

year's weekend is June 24-26.

This campaign takes place nationally and is made possible through the efforts of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

To help organizations raise awareness about the dangers of drinking while boating, marketing and outreach resources are available at

[www.operationdrywater.org](http://www.operationdrywater.org).

To raise awareness among recreational boaters about the dangers and consequences of boating under the influence the campaign stresses:

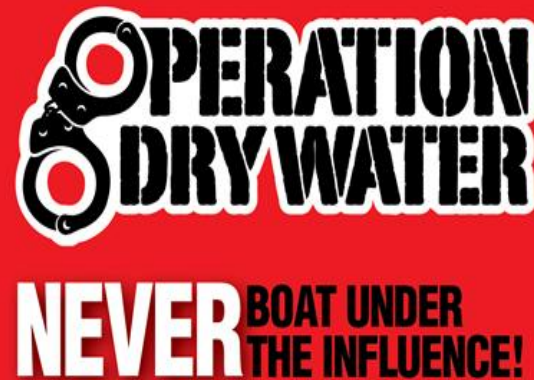
- Alcohol use can impair a boater's judgment, balance, vision and reaction time. It can increase fatigue and susceptibility to the effects of

cold-water immersion.

- Sun, wind, noise, vibration and motion —“stressors” common to the boating environment – intensify the effects of alcohol, drugs, and some medications.

- Alcohol is dangerous for passengers, too. Intoxication can cause slips, falls over board, and other dangerous accidents.

Boaters can take the pledge and find information about BUI at the link above. For additional details, contact Kimberly Jenkins, [editor@nasbla.org](mailto:editor@nasbla.org).



# Active & Associate Member News

## DC Boating Congress Has BWI Participation

Long-time BWI Director Michael Sciulla, a marketing and political columnist for *Soundings Trade Only*, recently attended the American Boating Congress in Washington, DC.

Sciulla and Congressman Don Young (R-AK) shared a hearty laugh during a Congressional reception at the event. Notes Sciulla, "Young has been at the forefront of the fight against unfair federal taxes and fees that single out boaters and anglers. Most recently,

he is the original sponsor of legislation to strengthen and reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act — the primary law governing fisheries resources, and is an opponent of ethanol-blended fuels which can be so corrosive to boat engines." Sciulla served as senior vice president of Government and Public Affairs for BoatU.S. and publisher and editor of *BoatU.S.* Magazine until 2008. He and his wife, Carol, had their first date at a Young fundraiser 30 years ago.

**Representative Don Young (I.) with Michael Sciulla in Washington.**



## New Market Group To Offer Video Training

The Recreational Boating Leadership Council's New Markets Task Force is planning a new industry-wide multicultural educational training module, projected for a debut in time for the fall boat show season. It will incorporate updated demographic and eco-

nomie trends data on the Hispanic, African American and Asian markets, and "best practices" videos spotlighting businesses that have engaged new markets. Task Force chairperson is BWI member Wanda Kenton Smith and Supporting members Freedom Boat Club and West Marine will be featured in the Hispanic modules. \$10,000 in seed money has been advanced by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation while a total of \$25,000 was raised from others including NMMA, Discover Boating and Freedom Boat Club. For details, contact Kenton Smith, [wanda@freedomboatclub.com](mailto:wanda@freedomboatclub.com).

## Armstrong Moving to BoatUS Magazine

After nearly two decades at *Soundings* and *Soundings Trade Only*, managing editor Rich



**Armstrong**

Armstrong is moving from Essex, CT to become managing editor of *BoatUS* magazine, based in

Alexandria, VA, it was reported by *Trade Only Today*. "After nearly 18 years it's difficult to leave *Soundings*, which has been my second home ... But the timing of this new and exciting opportunity feels right for my career and my family, so we are

diving in. We are ready for our next adventure." "I'm going to miss working with Rich," said Bill Sisson, the editor-in-chief of *Trade Only* and *Anglers Journal* (both AIM Marine Group magazines). "He is fast, dependable and has a great work ethic. And he was fun to have in the office." Armstrong and his wife, Rhiannon, will move to Alexandria later this year.

## D'Antonio Will Lead Boat Service Webinar

Marine writer and technical consultant Steve D'Antonio will lead a MyTaskit webinar,



"Top Tips for Increasing Customer Service & Loyalty" on June 1 at 1 p.m. EDT. It's part of the firm's Knowledge-Sharing webinar series, and free to those who register (at <https://join.onstreammedia.com/register/fastlaneco/mytaskit>). Moderated by MyTaskit CEO Kevin Hutchinson, the webinar will teach customer service and loyalty best practices, cover how participants can improve communications and collaboration in today's mobile world, and offer tips to train staff to improve attention to detail. D'Antonio runs SDM Consulting, advising boat buyers, owners and industry professionals, and writes the "Marine Systems Excellence eZine" posted on <http://stevedmarineconsulting.com>.

# Supporting Member News

## New Webasto CEO Sets Growth Plan

Webasto has announced a strategy for growth in the North America Thermo & Comfort Division, led by new president and CEO, Mark Denny. Most recently president and CEO of the company's convertible roof division, he established a plan that will realize a growth in sales for the future. The strategy includes utilizing the firm's global resources and knowledge of heating, cooling and ventilation solutions to expand reach and the product portfolio in North America. Work has already begun in the automotive, commercial vehicle and off-highway markets. Visit [www.webasto-marine.com](http://www.webasto-marine.com).

## Mercury Again Adds Production Capacity

Mercury Marine is adding a 53,000 square foot expansion to its global headquarters in Fond du Lac, WI. It will consist of 45,000 square feet of manufacturing capacity and an additional 8,000 square feet of offices to be completed in January, 2017. In addition, investments in state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment are being made to better streamline the manufacturing process and meet the growing demands in the market. Since 2009, the company has invested more than \$730MM into capacity, technology and product development. This Fond du Lac expansion follows another last May to add 45,000 square feet to its electro-deposition paint system.

Contact Lee Gordon, [Lee.gordon@mercmarine.com](mailto:Lee.gordon@mercmarine.com).

## Whale's Safety Award

Whale, the supplier of water and heating systems, has been announced as winner of Brunswick Corporation's Chairman's Safety Award. The purpose of the program is to recognize and reward employees and facilities that have achieved outstanding safety and health performance through promoting and practicing safety awareness, ultimately minimizing workplace incidents and injuries. The company employs 170 people in Bangor, Northern Ireland. Whale was one of three facilities who won the award and will receive \$10,000 to be donated to a local charity of their choice. Contact Claire McCrea, [clairemcc@whalepumps.com](mailto:clairemcc@whalepumps.com).

## Fish Fund Donations Made by Bush #41

With the help of President George H.W. Bush, Bass Pro Shops and representatives of the States of Texas and Florida, the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation and the George H.W. Bush Vamos a Pescar Education Fund recently announced the first grant donations of \$50,000 to organizations bringing conservation, education and fishing and boating experiences to Hispanic families. The Bush Education Fund was founded by RBFF in 2014, with an initial \$125,000 donation by Bass Pro Shops founder and CEO Johnny Morris, to honor President Bush's



90th birthday. The mission of the Education Fund is to bring hands-on fishing and boating experiences, along with conservation activities, to Hispanic families across the United States. Contact Bruna Carincotte, [bcarincotte@rbff.org](mailto:bcarincotte@rbff.org).

**President Bush (r.) accepts a trophy lure from RBFF president Frank Peterson (l.) and Bass Pro's Johnny Morris.**

## Sea Tow Opens 31 New Lifevest Stands

The Sea Tow Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting boater safety and education, has selected 31 nonprofit organizations and boating agencies to host new Life Jacket Loaner Stands this spring. These new stands, located in 19 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands, will join the more than 290 others already established around the country by the Foundation. The stands, located in popular boating areas such as boating ramps, marinas, and parks, let boaters who need a life jacket borrow one or more free of charge for the day. A map showing all of the locations of the stands, is at [www.boating-safety.com](http://www.boating-safety.com). Contact Michael Wesolowski, [mwesolowski@seatow.com](mailto:mwesolowski@seatow.com).

# Calendar & Events



Future "Go-Fasters" at a recent Marine Industry Day.

## Marine Industry Day In Lauderdale, June 18

The Marine Industries Association of South Florida is hosting the 3rd annual Marine Industry Day on June 18 to educate the community, celebrate the industry and build awareness of the challenges it faces. MIASF represents a dedicated community of marine-related businesses that generate \$11.5 billion in annual revenue and more than 136,000 jobs in South Florida. The event is a free social gathering of 1,500-2,000 industry workers, family members and the community at Esplanade Park in downtown Fort Laud-

erdale that showcases the diverse talents, community involvement and economic impact these businesses and jobs represent. A limited number of sponsorship opportunities are offered. Contact Sharon Abramson, [sharon@miasf.org](mailto:sharon@miasf.org).

## NMEA Offers New Advanced Training

This summer the National Marine Electronics Association will offer the first training class in a new Advanced NMEA 2000® course that focuses on installations, setup, and troubleshooting. The course debuts in Fort Lauderdale on July 29 and will be

repeated later in other locations around the country. This full-day training course will feature a half-day Power-Point presentation and hands-on sessions with students split into small groups at classroom work stations equipped with complex NMEA 2000 networks. The hands-on portion allows the ability to design, build, configure, evaluate, backup network files, and troubleshoot. For more information or to register, visit [www.nmea.org](http://www.nmea.org).

## Powerboat Confab In Annapolis in June

Registration is open for the Fifth Chesapeake Powerboat Symposium, June 14 -15 at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. Presented by SNAME, it will feature presentations on all aspects of power boat design and construction including: Hull Design and Analysis; Materials and Fabrication; Modeling and Simulation; Software, Electronics and Systems; Propulsion Systems and more. Eighteen technical papers will be presented by experts in design, construction, testing and evaluation. Details at [www.sname.org](http://www.sname.org).

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Membership in BWI is open to anyone involved in the recreational boating industry. Active members are generally writers, editors, photographers and broadcasters. Associate members are generally P.R. or communications firms. Supporting members are usually manufacturers or ad agencies.