

Supervisor Romaine and Suffolk County PD Marine Bureau Promote Safe Boating and Warn Against Boating While Intoxicated

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Farmingville, NY - On June 4, Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine, Councilman Neil Foley and Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD) Marine Bureau Deputy Inspector Ed Vitale, held a press conference at the Town's Sandspit Marina in Patchogue to promote safe boating and warn against boating while intoxicated. Pictured left to right are Brookhaven Town Bay Constable Grant Mentzel, Deputy Suffolk County Executive for Public Safety Tim Sini, Supervisor Romaine, Councilman Foley and Deputy Inspector Vitale.

A recent incident that underscores the importance of safe boating occurred on the night of May 24 at the mouth of the Patchogue River only yards from where the Supervisor and Deputy Inspector spoke. A woman was injured as a boat she was riding in slammed into the west jetty of the river. The driver of the boat, who fled the scene, was later arrested and charged with leaving the scene of a boating accident involving injury. A similar accident occurred in May of 2014, when two men were badly injured after their boat slammed into a jetty in Blue Point just west of the Patchogue River.

The busiest boating months on the waters off Long Island are June and July, and there are more than 270 square miles of navigable waterways in the Town of Brookhaven. In 2013, the US Coast Guard reported over 4,000 boating accidents with 560 deaths and 2,620 injuries. Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents and the leading factor in 16% of all deaths on the waterways.

Supervisor Romaine said, "The recent incident at the Patchogue jetty is a grim reminder of the danger of unsafe boating. I urge all passengers to wear life preservers and if you are operating a boat, please refrain from drinking alcohol. Boating while intoxicated is a serious crime, and if you are caught, you will be arrested. If everyone follows safe boating procedures, most accidents can be prevented. I wish everyone a happy and safe season on the water."

Councilman Foley said, "The best way to enjoy boating is to use common sense, follow all the safety precautions and don't drink and drive. Boat traffic on our waterways will peak in the next two months, so I encourage everyone to be make boating safety priority number one and have a fun-filled summer on the water."

"Boating and drinking can be a deadly combination and is easily avoidable," Deputy Inspector Edward Vitale said. "In

addition to refraining from drinking, boat operators are urged to take safety precautions including ensuring there are life jackets on board for all occupants and boats are operated in a safe manner. Officers from the Suffolk County Police Marine Bureau will be patrolling the waters this summer to help keep people safe and remove intoxicated boaters from Suffolk County waterways."

Supervisor Romaine and Deputy Inspector Vitale outlined a number of safety precautions that people should take when boating:

- Always check the local weather. Storms can come up pretty fast.
- Follow a pre-departure check-list. Check flotation devices, navigation lights, sound-proofing devices and distress signals.
- Always operate at safe speeds.
- Designate an assistant skipper in case you are injured or otherwise unable to assume command of the vessel.
- Avoid alcohol while boating
- Take a swimming and first-aid course.
- Take a boating course approved by the U.S. Coast Guard
- Consider a free vessel safety check by a local power squadron or marine patrol.

To learn more about safe boating, go to the U.S. Coast Guard's website at www.uscgboating.org.

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