

Harbourmaster Operational Plan Recreational Boating

2024-2025



Otago
Regional
Council

Harbourmaster

Aim

The aim is to reduce the number of recreational boating injuries, incidents, and fatalities over the summer period. This will be achieved through an on-water educational and enforcement campaign delivered by the Otago Regional Council Harbourmaster department.

This document outlines the planned safety campaign for the 2024-2025 financial year. The campaign aims to educate on boating safety and take enforcement actions where appropriate when rules and bylaws relating to navigational safety have been breached.

Situation

Recreational boating is a popular pastime of many New Zealanders, and it is estimated that there are currently over 1.6 million New Zealand recreational boaties. There are, however, several fatalities each year associated with this activity. Research identifies noncompliance with the Safer Boating Code as the greatest risk of injury or death.

Minimising the number of on-water incidents resulting in loss of life, personal injury, property damage and environmental impact associated with recreational boating is a common goal for Maritime New Zealand as the regulator and regional councils. To maximise safe use and enjoyment of the Otago marine environment by the public, Otago Regional Council regulates and provides education for recreational boating.

Under the Resource Management Act 1991 and Local Government Act 2002, regional councils (RCs) and territorial authorities (TAs) have the statutory function to promote social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing in their regions, which includes navigational safety.

This operational plan for recreational boating outlines the planned engagement with boaters, the safety campaign and key messages. As well as supporting boaters to use Otago's waterways safely, it supports delivery of the level of service target in Council's Long-Term Plan of having a plan.

The Safer Boating campaign

The Harbourmasters on-water safety campaign complements the educational engagement opportunities during the Summer Boating Campaign and is intended to ensure boaties know, understand, and follow the applicable maritime rules.

The campaign will run over the summer period from 10 October **2024 to 31 March 2025**. Otago Regional Council Harbourmaster will schedule days on which to undertake on-water engagement. Days will be planned to account for poor weather or unavailability of vessels or staff on the planned days. Regional councils may invite local Maritime New Zealand staff to accompany them.

Dates and times will be dynamic and spread across the region (except QLDC, which is responsible for the maritime function in that area).

Enforcement

An "education first" approach will be taken with boaties found to be in breach of regulations relating to all areas of boating safety and navigational bylaws. Enforcement will be used where there are continued breaches.

Communications and media strategy: Recreational boating safety campaign

August 2024

Overview

The safer boating campaign provides a unique opportunity to promote good news stories and lessons learned directly from the water.

The communication approach sets out how we can work together to help support and promote the campaign.

Communications strategy

The strategy uses three strands:

- Close coordination and planning across the council between the harbourmaster and communication teams.
- Public communication using news media and social media, along with sector magazines and newsletters.
- Sharing of information with other boating organisations and their communities.

Media and social media

Along with the promotion of safer boating messages that will be pushed through the on-water compliance activity, media and social media will help drive coverage of the campaign and the key safety messages. These channels can help raise awareness and educate recreational boaties about the need to prioritise safety every time they go on the water and bring further coverage to the campaign itself.

Key messages

The key messages for this year's campaign are:

- The Otago Regional Council Harbourmaster safer boating campaign runs again this summer with the aim of reducing recreational boating fatalities by promoting boating safety in the community and region.
- Safe vessel operators follow the applicable maritime rules and local bylaws. The intention is to educate on safer behaviours to make sure everyone prioritises boating safety each time they go out.
- It is a requirement of the Maritime Transport Act to carry an appropriate personal flotation device (PFD) for everyone on board the vessel. Not doing this, let alone not wearing the PFD, is one of the biggest risks and contributors to recreational boating injuries and deaths.
- Wearing your PFD is the single most important thing you can do to avoid drowning if you unexpectedly end up in the water. Up to two-thirds of recreational vessel drownings may have been prevented if the appropriate PFD had been worn.
- All vessels must travel at a safe speed and consider boat traffic, weather, and visibility. There is a five-knot speed limit when you are near the shore, swimmers, divers, and other vessels. Speeding is dangerous and can cause injuries.
- The skipper is always responsible for the safety of the vessel and all people on board — remember to prep your boat, check your gear, and know the rules and local bylaws. It is the skipper's responsibility to ensure everyone on board their vessel gets home safely.

Announcements and calendar of activity

The sequence of announcements and communications activity is linked to the key campaign dates and milestones.

Key campaign dates and milestones	Announcements and communications activity	Number to be held
Saturday 10 October 2024	Official Safer Boating campaign start date	
On the Safer Boating days	Provide updates showing the harbourmasters at work on the water –	At least 10 days on the water throughout the season

	<p>share via council, Safer Boating and harbourmaster social media posts.</p> <p>Note: The actual days on which No Excuses will run will generally not be publicised in advance.</p>	Attend at least 4 public events to promote boating safety throughout the season.
Ongoing during the Safer Boating campaign period	Articles in magazines and sector newsletters along with reminder social media posts	
W/c 16 December 2024 - exact date tbc	ORC and HM Media issues “take care over the holidays” messages, including safer boating via media release and social media.	
31 March 2024	ORC/HM issues media release and a social media post on the Summer Campaign coming to an end.	

Social media guidelines for harbourmasters

Promoting a range of situations that harbourmasters and maritime officers come across during the Safer Boating on-water days provides an opportunity to get our key safety messaging out on social media and bring further attention to this campaign to educate recreational boaties.

In order for us to tell these stories on social media, we need three key things:

- pictures or a short video clip
- a brief rundown of the story/situation
- willing participants (people need to agree that we can tell the story – get a signed release or make a note in your notebook).

Survey123 App

A survey app will be used for data collection.

Data will be collected by the app by either button select or free text field and will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Reason for interaction, i.e. was it random or targeted
- Compliance areas (aligned to legislation)
- Enforcement undertaken

To manage consistency of information and the quality of the data gathered, the app will have limited free text fields, favouring button selection where possible.

Administration and support

Roles and responsibilities

Participant(s)	Role	Responsibilities
Harbormaster's Enforcement Officers	Compliance programme delivery	Perform on-water enforcement of navigational safety bylaws, support media and social media coverage of the campaign, gather survey data

Maritime Officers	Enforcement support when aboard	Support on-water enforcement of navigational safety bylaws, perform on-water enforcement of maritime rules, support media and social media coverage of the campaign, gather survey data
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Survey Method

Vessel iPad, laptops and phones all have Arc123 GIS capability for quick tap survey.

Vessels

Harbourmaster vessels Kaitiaki and Āwhina will be used throughout the campaign as required.