

Boaters: Be Prepared For Cold Water

by Michael Anderson

(NewsUSA) - Balmy spring temperatures lure avid boaters and anglers back to local lakes and streams. Early-season boating, however, introduces a risk that isn't as prominent during the summer months: perilously cold water.

"Spring is a great time of year to enjoy the outdoors as long as you go prepared," says Bob Gonsalves of the recreation boating Web site www.familyfunonthewater.com. "While the air temperatures may be mild, boaters should keep in mind that water temperatures are still cold."

When water temperatures are 50 degrees or less, and air temperatures are as high as 60 to 70 degrees, hypothermia is possible.

Cold water takes heat away from the body 25 times faster than cold air. Normal body functions slow down, thinking is impaired and speech becomes confused. Reflexes are slowed and muscles become stiff.

By being prepared, early-season boating can be safely enjoyed. Familyfunonthewater.com offers these cold-water boating tips:

Always wear a life jacket. Wear layers of warm clothing, but avoid cotton fabrics. Wool and polypropylene clothing worn inside a waterproof jacket offers excellent protection. Personal watercraft riders should also wear a cold-water long john wetsuit, a wetsuit jacket, boots and gloves. Carry a fully charged cell phone. Stay alert to weather conditions. Let a responsible person know what time you plan to begin and return from your boating trip. Make sure all required safety equipment is aboard your craft.

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