According to the Outdoor Foundation’s 2019 Special Report on Paddlesports and Safety, paddlesports continue to grow in popularity – especially kayaking and stand up paddling. Yet only 23% of kayakers and 31% of stand-up paddlers have considered taking formal training to further their skills.

Kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards and other paddlecraft are vessels and subject to federal, state and local recreational boating laws and ordinances.

Paddlers are responsible for knowing the legal requirements.

Legal requirements are minimal and do not maximize chances of being rescued in a timely manner or surviving an accident.

According to national and state recreational boating accident data, paddlecraft are at a higher risk of capsizing and swamping.

Since 2012, close to half of all boating fatalities in Washington state involved paddlecraft.

Nationally, where cause of death was known, 79% of paddle-related fatalities from 2015 to 2017 involved drownings. Of those drowning victims, 74% were not wearing a life jacket.

Accidents can happen to anybody, at any time, and when it’s least expected.

The Paddle Safe Week campaign, July 23-29, 2022, focuses on encouraging people to learn more about safe paddling practices and to stay safe on the water throughout the year. Use the following talking points to help amplify the message!

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Washington State youth learning safe kayaking skills as part of the No Child Left Inside grant.
Federal and state law requires that the following equipment be carried on paddlecraft:

- One properly fitted, serviceable, Coast Guard-approved life jacket per person on board.
- A sounding device: horn, whistle or bell. At least one navigation light, such as a lantern or flashlight.
- On coastal waters, nighttime visual distress signal such as flares.

Get educated, understand how to minimize risks while paddling by:

- Learning how to self-rescue
- Always wearing a life jacket (and leash on a SUP)
- Avoiding boating-under-the-influence
- Packing required and essential gear and being prepared for worst-case scenarios
- Checking weather and water conditions and understanding the impact on ability to control a vessel
- Being visible to other boaters
- Dressing for immersion and cold-water safety
- Filing a float plan

For detailed paddlesport safety tips, visit PaddleSafeWa.org!