



National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Policy Position on PFD Wear for Paddlesports Participants

Date: September 10, 2007
Committee: Paddlesports

Background

Outlined below is the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) policy position on PFD Wear for paddlesports participants. Paddling is the fastest-growing type of boating activity, with kayaking leading the way. While this means more and more people are discovering the pleasures of water-based outdoor recreation, it also means there are more inexperienced paddlers and statistics show they are much more likely than a skilled paddler to be involved in an accident or fatality.¹ One reason is that paddlecraft are prone to capsize. Inexperience with loading, boat handling, and water hazards can increase this risk. Once in the water, a novice paddler may find self-rescue difficult. Eighty-six percent of those who perished in an accident involving a canoe, kayak or rowboat in 2005 drowned.² A majority of those deaths could have been prevented if the paddlers had been wearing a U.S. Coast Guard-approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD). In the interest of improving boater safety among the most rapidly increasing population of recreational boaters, NASBLA has developed the policy position stated below.

¹ American Canoe Association, *Critical Judgment II: Understanding and Preventing Canoe and Kayak Fatalities 1996-2002*, p.6.

² United States Coast Guard, *Boating Statistics 2005*, p. 21.

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Policy

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, meeting on September 10, 2007, endorses the efforts by its member states to require persons participating in paddlesports to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD). NASBLA will support the efforts of its member states to draft and submit bills to their state legislatures for this purpose.

Policy References

United States Coast Guard Boating Statistics (2001 to 2005)

NASBLA Boating Education Standards

NASBLA Resolutions on the topic from 1972, 1975, 1993

Policy Letters

July 13, 2007 letter from Paddlesports Committee to NASBLA Executive Board