



## **Communications Plan**

Prepared for:  
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators  
[www.springaboard.org](http://www.springaboard.org)

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# Welcome

Dear Boating Safety Partner,

Join us as we encourage boaters to Spring Aboard by taking a safe boating course. Spring Aboard is a national public information and education campaign to reduce boating injuries and fatalities by encouraging the boating public to take a boating safety course. The campaign combines the efforts of boating education course providers, recreational boating safety organizations, and state and local entities involved in recreational boating regulation.

The Spring Aboard campaign is designed to serve as an umbrella message for the recreational boating safety community across the country.

The campaign is enlisting a wide variety of organizations to provide information and resources that will extend the reach of the Spring Aboard campaign now and in the future.

This Communications Plan is intended to provide you with everything you need to implement the Spring Aboard campaign. The Plan includes Resources, including customizable press releases and logos; Strategies and Tips to effectively implement the campaign; and recommendations on how to leverage the Spring Aboard message to both the media and boaters.

Please take a moment to review the Communications Plan and the Spring Aboard website, [www.springaboard.org](http://www.springaboard.org). If you have questions or can't find what you need, contact us at 859-225-9487 or send an email to [info@nasbla.org](mailto:info@nasbla.org).

We wish you a happy – and safe – boating season!

Regards,

John Johnson, CAE  
CEO  
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)



# Partner Benefits

The Spring Aboard campaign welcomes the involvement of partner organizations, agencies and individuals that are dedicated to promoting boating education at one of three levels of engagement.

Why should you get involved? Your participation in the Spring Aboard campaign shows your commitment to safer boating. By implementing the campaign in your state, region, or local community, you're doing your part to address the need for boaters to take a safe boating course.

In 2016, the Coast Guard reported 4,463 accidents that involved 701 deaths, 2,903 injuries and approximately \$49 million dollars of damage to property as a result of recreational boating accidents. The Spring Aboard campaign is designed to address these casualties through proactive education and instruction. Where instruction was known, 77% of deaths occurred on boats where the operator did not receive boating safety instruction. Only 13% percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received a nationally-approved boating safety education certificate.

Whether you're a Course Provider, a state agency, a nonprofit, or a community partner, the Spring Aboard Campaign offers you the opportunity to reach out to recreational boaters with this important message.

## Get Involved!

Are you ready to embark on implementing the exciting Spring Aboard campaign? Your first step is to **REGISTER** as a Spring Aboard Campaign Partner. This is a key step because it allows us to communicate directly with you about campaign developments and it also allows us to keep track of who is participating so we can report back to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Registration is FREE to any boating agency, organization, or course provider! There is never a charge or hidden fees for participation! Register at the link at on the Spring Aboard website ([www.springaboard.org](http://www.springaboard.org))!



# Talking Points

- According to the U.S. Coast Guard's 2016 Recreational Boating Safety Statistics, there were 4,463 accidents that involved 701 deaths, 2,903 injuries and approximately \$49 million dollars of damage to property as a result of recreational boating accidents.
- Where instruction was known, 77% of deaths occurred on boats where the operator did not receive boating safety instruction.
- Only 13% percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received a nationally-approved boating safety education certificate.
- Developed by NASBLA, and produced under a grant administered by the U.S. Coast Guard, the annual Spring Aboard campaign informs and motivates boaters to prepare for the boating season by providing information on how to enroll in a boating knowledge or skills based education course. The campaign emphasizes enrollment in courses verified as meeting the national boating knowledge or skill standard.
- The Spring Aboard campaign provides resources to recreational boating safety professionals. Resources include a general Communications Plan to implement the campaign each spring. It is aimed to deliver comprehensive and consistent messaging to boaters about the importance of taking a safe boating course. Campaign resources can be found at [www.springaboard.org](http://www.springaboard.org).
- Forty-nine (49) states and U.S. territories require proof of completion of a boating education course for operators of some powered vessels. For a summary of your state's regulations and available courses, visit: [www.nasbla.org/education/mandatory-education](http://www.nasbla.org/education/mandatory-education).
- Working in partnership with the states, many course providers will be offering incentives or course discounts for students who enroll in, or complete, a course during the Spring Aboard campaign.
- Course providers and offerings will vary between states, so check with your local course provider or [state boating agency](#) to find out what courses are accepted in your area.
- Many states require completion of a course verified by NASBLA as meeting the national boating education standard for powerboat rental or operation. To ensure a course qualifies, look for the 'NASBLA-Approved' logo.
- NASBLA's mission is to strengthen the ability of the state and territorial boating authorities to reduce death, injury and property damage associated with recreational boating and ensure a safe, secure and enjoyable boating environment. Learn more: [www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org).



# Press Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ‘Spring Aboard’

#### Boaters urged to get educated before boating season

CITY, State (DATE) – [STATE AGENCY] is partnering with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and state, federal and nonprofit partners to encourage boaters to enroll in a boating education course prior to the kickoff of the boating season. During the week of [DATE], Spring Aboard informs and motivates boaters to prepare for the boating season by providing information on how to enroll in a boating knowledge or skills based education course. The campaign emphasizes enrollment in courses verified as meeting the national boating knowledge or skill standard.

U.S. Coast Guard statistics indicate that of the accidents where the level of operator education was known, 77% of boating deaths occurred on boats where the boat operator had never received boating education instruction.

[STATE AGENCY QUOTE]. Suggested: “We know that an educated boater is safer on the water. If a boater has taken a boating safety education course the likelihood of their time spent on the water being a safe and enjoyable experience is much greater for them as well as their passengers,” said [REPRESENTATIVE NAME, TITLE]. “With today’s wide variety of courses available, there’s a course for everyone’s schedule. Boaters have multiple options from classroom courses offered by [STATE AGENCY], the Coast Guard Auxiliary and United States Power Squadrons to online offerings available anytime day or night. There’s no reason to head out on the water without knowing what you’re doing, and spring is the perfect time to take a course before the summer boating season begins.”

Forty-nine (49) states and U.S. territories require proof of completion of a boating education course for operators of some powered vessels. For a summary of [insert state’s name] regulations and available courses, visit: [insert web information].



Working in partnership with the states, many course providers will be offering incentives or course discounts for students who enroll in, or complete, a course during the Spring Aboard campaign. Course providers and offerings will vary between states, so check with your local course provider or [state boating agency](#) to find out what courses are accepted in your area.

Many states require completion of a course verified by NASBLA as meeting the national boating education standard for powerboat rental or operation. To ensure a course qualifies, look for the “NASBLA-Approved” logo.

The Spring Aboard campaign is open to participation by all states, territories, boating education organizations, instructors, and course providers. For more information about the Spring Aboard campaign visit [www.springaboard.org](http://www.springaboard.org).

###

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators is a national nonprofit organization that works to develop public policy for recreational boating safety. NASBLA represents the recreational boating authorities of all 50 states and the U.S. territories. The association offers a variety of resources, including training, model acts, education standards and publications. Through a national network of thousands of professional educators, law enforcement officers and volunteers, NASBLA affects the lives of over 73.5 million American boaters.

[Insert agency/organization description or mission statement]

**Media Contact:**

[Insert local contact information]



# Radio PSAs

## 60 second radio PSA:

Spring Aboard! The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators and partners around the country would like to remind you to take a safe boating course before your first boating trip this season. U.S. Coast Guard statistics indicate that of the accidents where the level of operator education was known, 77% of boating deaths occurred on boats where the boat operator had never received boating education instruction. Taking a safe boating course is a great way to learn more about boating, including how to take care of your boats and make sure that everyone onboard stays safe (and happy) each and every time on the water! This message is brought to you by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. Learn more about the Spring Aboard campaign at [spring aboard dot org](http://springaboard.org).

## 30-second radio PSA:

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators encourages boaters to Spring Aboard by taking a safe boating course before the official start of this year's boating season. U.S. Coast Guard statistics indicate that of the accidents where the level of operator education was known, 77% of boating deaths occurred on boats where the boat operator had never received boating education instruction. This message is brought to you by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. Learn more at [spring aboard dot org](http://springaboard.org).





# Campaign Tips

## Working with the Media

Part of any campaign's success is its coordination with the media: whether on a national, regional or local scale, it's important to develop a relationship with the media and for them to help distribute your message. Here are Tips for Working with the Media:

1. **Develop a Media Target List:** Who do you hope will help distribute your message? Will you reach out to national markets, like The Today Show or Good Morning America? Do you already have relationships with local news, radio or print reporters? This Media Target List will help guide how you will reach out to the media.
2. **Draft your Press Release:** We've provided you with a template in this Communications Plan, but consider this: telling a story in a press release is a great way to get increased pick-up. Do you have a local boater whose life was saved by their life jacket? Or a fisherman that can talk about his own experience in taking a safe boating course? These are the stories you want to tell in your press release, on social media and in interviews with the media.
3. **Distribute your Press Release:** If you have a budget, consider distributing your press release through an online distribution service. If you don't have a budget, don't fret! There are many free press release distribution services and don't forget about posting the press release to your website and social media platform. And don't forget: timing is important. Plan to distribute your press release. Research suggests that Tuesday is the best day to distribute your press release, followed by Thursday. Avoid Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for distribution.
4. **Follow-Up:** After your press release has been distributed, go back to that media target list. A friendly phone call or email just before the kick-off of the Spring Aboard campaign can result in increased exposure of your campaign or an interview to highlight your campaign efforts.
5. **Stay on Message:** Everything from your press release to interviews to your social media efforts should be consistent and simple – the message itself should remain the same and to-the-point and all deliverables should only be customized when the option allows, i.e. – customizable logo with State or type of boat or customizable press release. The logo design should not be changed in any other way: the font and colors should remain consistent.

# Website Messaging

This section is provided to you as a copy and paste option if you plan to promote the Spring Aboard campaign on your website. This helps create consistent messaging among partners and to the media and boaters. In addition, consider adding customizable information such as state regulations and education information or geographical information that the media or boater will identify with.

## For Partners

Refer to the Partner Benefits and Get Involved sections on page 4 of this Communications Plan.

## For Media

Are you looking for a new story to promote this boating season? Are you already planning for National Safe Boating Week in May, but want to draw in boaters in the months leading up to the official kick-off of the boating season?

Spring Aboard! Encourage boaters to take a safe boating course. We offer free resources, information and contacts to help you promote the Spring Aboard campaign. Visit [www.springaboard.org](http://www.springaboard.org) to download resources including a Communications Plan on implementing elements of the campaign, customizable press release and radio public service announcements, and graphics and content ready for Facebook and Twitter.

We're available for interviews year-round! Consider scheduling a ride-along with our marine law enforcement to get a first-hand look at how we talk to boaters about the Spring Aboard campaign and other important boating safety information. Contact our state Education Coordinator at [\[include your contact information\]](#).

## For Boaters

Spring Aboard this boating season by taking a boating safety course! Did you know that – where instruction was known, 77% of deaths occurred on boats where the operator did not receive boating safety instruction and only 13% percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received a nationally-approved boating safety education certificate?

Becoming a better boater means becoming a more educated, safer boater. Taking a safe boating course will give you key knowledge and insights on how to operate your boat safely and keep everyone onboard safe throughout each boating trip.



Ready to take a course? Great! Here's a few things to know:

1. There are a few ways to take a course. You can take a course online or in a classroom setting. Some have fees associated with them and some are offered for free.
2. Make sure the course you choose has been approved by the NASBLA: NASBLA makes sure that courses meet American National Standards for Boating Knowledge. If you don't see the NASBLA logo or any mention of NASBLA in your initial research, choose a different course.
3. A good place to start is with your state agency. Learn more about boating education in your state, visit [www.nasbla.org/education/taking-a-boat-course](http://www.nasbla.org/education/taking-a-boat-course).

Have fun and good luck! You're on a great track to becoming a better educated, safer boater when you Spring Aboard!



# 12 Calendar

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| February 1 – 7         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop Media Target List</li> <li>2. Draft Press Release</li> <li>3. Post to Facebook at least twice</li> </ol>  |
| February 8 – 14        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post to Facebook at least twice</li> </ol>  |
| February 15 – 21       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post to Facebook at least four times</li> </ol>   |
| February 22 – 28       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post to Facebook at least four times</li> </ol>   |
|                        |   |
| March 1 – 7            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post to Facebook at least six times</li> </ol>  |
| March 8 – 14           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post to Facebook at least six times</li> </ol>  |
| March 15               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distribute Press Release</li> </ol>   |
| March 15 – 21          | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post to Facebook daily               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Boost Post(s)</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Reach out to Media Target List</li> <li>3. Conduct Interviews</li> </ol> |
| March 22 – 28          | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post to Facebook daily</li> <li>2. Rach out to Media Target List</li> <li>3. Conduct Interviews</li> </ol>  |
|                        |   |
| March 29 – April 4     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compile Initial Media Analytics               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Press Release</li> <li>b. Social Media</li> </ol> </li> </ol>   |
| No Later Than April 30 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compile Final Social Media Analytics</li> <li>2. Complete the posted Spring Aboard Partner Survey Form to Report Analytics to NASBLA</li> </ol>   |



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

# 13 Checklist

This Checklist is a general guide outlining suggested steps to implement the Spring Aboard campaign beginning in February and lasting through April. Review all Partner recommendations and determine which elements will best fit your campaign needs.

## Are you a Spring Aboard Partner from an Agency or Organization?

- Compile a media target list
- Find local/statewide education course providers
- Get list of incentives/rebates from partners for inclusion into all outreach
- Customize press release to your program
- Tuesday or Wednesday before "Spring Aboard," send out press release
- Reach out to boating public through social media on the Monday of Spring Aboard
- Through the week, send out targeted tweets, updates and other social media
- Following week, contact education partners to assess success

## Are you a Spring Aboard Course Provider Partner?

- Reach out to state, local and non-profit partners
- Develop a list of incentives for students who take boating courses during target week
- Partner with agencies, determine timing of social media outreach and other PR efforts
- Place press release and other collateral on education websites
- Conduct complimentary social media outreach with agency partners
- Measure number of students who take courses / compare with previous years
- Report outcome to partners and assess effectiveness

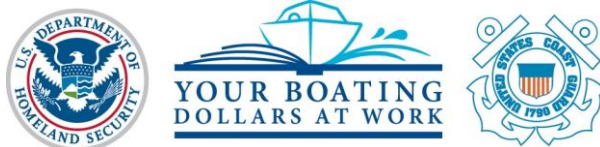
## Are you a Spring Aboard Safety Community Partner?

- Decide how best to incorporate Spring Aboard into ongoing efforts
- Compile a media target list
- List program on web sites and on social media
- Partner with or customize press release to your program
- Work with government partners and course providers to promote program
- Measure effectiveness and clips



Reference in this Communications Plan to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the U.S. Coast Guard.

For more information, visit [www.USCGBoating.org](http://www.USCGBoating.org).



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