



December 2024

Newsletter

WHAT A YEAR

it has been for the Safer Boating Forum.

As we approach the end of the year, it's a good time to reflect on 2024 and our achievements. The work we do across our 30 organisations is crucial in preventing harm and saving lives while encouraging and educating recreational craft users to enjoy the water safely.

Tragically, 17 recreational craft users have lost their lives in 2024, as at the date of writing. Their absence will make this Christmas, and many to come, particularly difficult for their families. These fatalities remind us that our job is far from complete. We must ensure every craft user wears a properly fitted life jacket, carries two waterproof means of calling for help, and checks the marine weather forecast before and during their trip.

Encouraging these safety practices is challenging, especially with reduced resources. The current financial climate is expected to persist for the next 12-18 months, bringing uncertainty. However, as a well-connected and experienced sector, it's time to strengthen our relationships. I urge you to coordinate and work closely to avoid duplication, ensuring our efforts and resources are maximised and impactful.

Despite these challenges, there have been highlights. Although I was unable to attend the Safer Boating Week launch, I thank Canoe Racing New Zealand for their contribution. Providing three high-performance athletes helped gain the media attention needed to share our safety messages. The "Come Home Safe Deals" campaign resulted in over 8,000 conversations about the right safety behaviours.

Another highlight was the Wellington hui, where the Forum's collective knowledge and dedication were evident during the Hive Mind session. Perhaps the most impactful achievement of 2024 is the analysis of close-to-shore fatalities and the conversations and alignment of approach that resulted. Most recreational craft fatalities occur within 400 meters from the shore, and integrating this knowledge into our programmes will be a key focus for the future.

While others are winding down, many of you will be preparing for a busy summer season. While this takes time away from our own families, hold close to your heart that all of our efforts are focused on helping other people to return home safe to their families – we are making a difference.

On behalf of the Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group, I wish you and your whānau a safe and enjoyable Christmas break.

Ngā mihi nui,

Sharyn Forsyth
Chair - Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group (SBFLG)

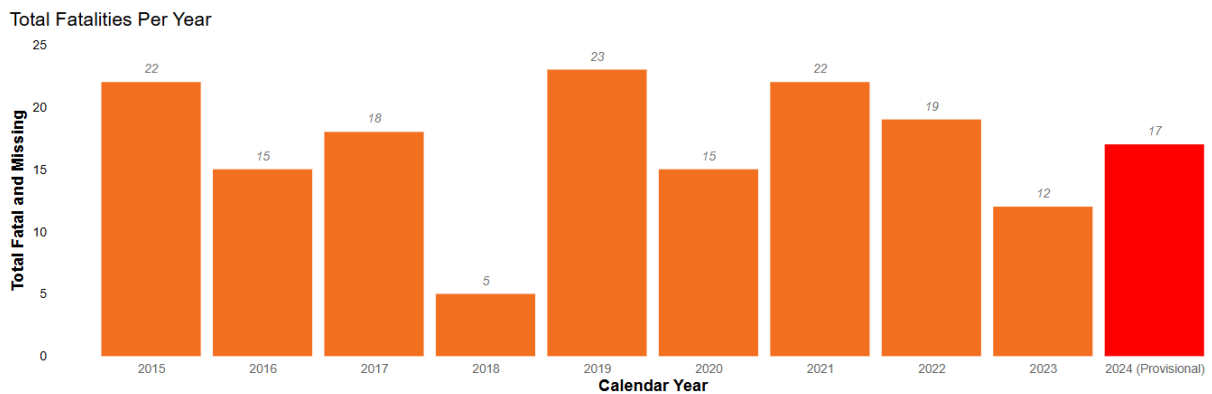


Recreational Craft fatal accidents annual overview

This year has seen the number of recreational craft users return to pre-COVID numbers, with approximately 1.7 million recreational craft users across the motu. As of 10 December, there have been 17 recreational craft fatalities in 2024. On average, there are 18 fatalities per year. With the year not yet over, the number of fatalities is unfortunately likely to increase this year.



Recreational Craft Fatal Accidents Annual Overview



At the Safer Boating Forum in October, a focus on close-to-shore fatalities informed us that approximately 70% of recreational craft fatalities occurred within 1 nautical mile, and of those fatalities, 40% occurred within 400 metres from shore.

Research from Drowning Prevention Auckland showed people overestimated the length of time they could float and the distance they could swim. Only 2% of participants in the study were able to float for more than 5 minutes in a pool, 94% were unable to swim 100 metres in a pool within 5 minutes and 98% were also unable to swim more than 100 metres in open water within 5 minutes.

If a person unexpectedly finds themselves in the water without a life jacket and is unable to call for help, attempts to float for an extended period of time or swim any distance to safety is likely to be futile. This research supports the importance of wearing a life jacket at all times so it enables a person to float and carry two forms of waterproof communication so help can be contacted if required.

Perhaps a reason why people choose not to wear a life jacket is that they report feeling safer close to the shore, and these trips occur with little preparation in contrast to trips further afield. This lack of accurate risk perception does not take into account that close to shore is the area where craft are more likely to get capsized or swamped.

The fatalities data shows that in 40% of recreational craft fatalities, a life jacket was not worn, while in 43% of fatalities, a life jacket was worn but it was found to be improperly fitted, failed to inflate, or in situations where a life jacket could not have saved the person, such as being pinned underwater. This further supports the need to make sure recreational craft users maintain their life jackets and know how to correctly wear them.

SBFLG updates

SBF Position Statement on the wearing of PFDs

Work is underway on re-writing the position statement on the wearing of PFD for recreational vessels of 6 meters or less in length. The working group has had a successful first meeting, with a draft position statement due to be reviewed by the group over the coming months.



Terms of Reference - feedback

At the last Safer Boating Forum, a revised Terms of Reference was sent out in the pre-reading and the main changes were talked through at the Forum. A short discussion was held, and the Forum agreed that a time frame of two weeks would be given to the Forum to provide feedback on the draft Terms of Reference. So far no feedback received. If you would like to give feedback, please do so by the end of January 2025.

Survey participation reminder

The first phase of the stocktake survey for the Recreational Craft Strategy was sent out in October. So far 16 organisations have returned the initial survey.

This survey will enable the Forum to plan for the years ahead, and your responses enable this. If you could please take the time to fill out and return the survey that would be appreciated - even if you answer no to any questions it is better for the analysis team to understand this.





(L to R) Tara Vaughan and Olivia Brett – Paris Olympic gold medallists along with Dame Lisa Carrington & Alicia Hoskin in the K4; and Danielle Mackenzie – 5X NZ surf lifesaving iron women champion

Safer Boating Week 2024

Labour weekend marked the start of the recreational boating season, and Safer Boating Week is our way of highlighting safety as many people prepare to head back to the water. This year's theme, *Come Home Safe*, is especially relevant due to recent tragedies on the water.

Now in its 11th year, Safer Boating Week kicked off with a [launch event](#) in Auckland, where SBF partners gathered to promote *Come Home Safe* and introduce *Come Home Safe Deals*. This campaign, which ended recently, encouraged individuals to pledge certain actions if people they care about follow key safety rules. For example, "If you check the marine weather forecast, I'll cook your favourite dinner". By the end of the campaign, we had over 4000 people complete a deal to support a recreational craft person they care about. In reality, this initiative reached over 8,000 people, as each deal involved two individuals.

A highlight of the launch was a paddle craft safety Q&A featuring special guest speakers Tara Vaughan and Olivia Brett – newly-crowned Paris Olympic champions – alongside five-time New Zealand surf lifesaving iron woman champion, Danielle Mackenzie. We also had an on-the-water practical session which was a lot of fun, thanks to Canoe Racing NZ and Waka Ama NZ.

This year's Safer Boating Week received strong media coverage across print, radio and digital platforms, including segments on TVNZ's 6pm news on Monday and Breakfast TV on Tuesday.

Throughout the week, SBF partners and communities shared Safer Boating Week messages via their own networks and events, such as Yachting NZ with the Coastal Classic race and Coastguard NZ with a Bar Crossing seminar. Every bit of support helped make the week an overall success.

Thank you to everyone who supported Safer Boating Week, but as we all know 'Safer boating isn't just a week-long focus - it's a year-round commitment.' As we move into summer, we look forward to continued engagement from our partners and communities to keep people safe on the water.





A spotlight on....

KayakSafe - a community grants programme recipient

Maritime NZ's Jayshree Ranchhod (Investment Advisor - Harm Prevention and Engagement) recently attended a KayakSafe workshop, and shares her experience below.

The Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (KASK) recently kicked off their community grant programme on Saturday the 23rd of November, with two free KayakSafe NZ paddling safety workshops. One was online and the other was held in the Wellington region at the Ngāti Toa Domain in Porirua. The in-person workshops are a mix of a morning classroom session and an afternoon practical class on the water and presented by experienced kayakers.

The Porirua workshop was led by Lucas Waterworth with support from Chris Henshaw, Noel Pepperell, and three other very experienced kayakers. There was great collaboration with our SBF members. Grant Nalder (the Harbourmaster at GWRC) attended the event and explained all the local bylaws. Presentation content was also provided by NZ SUP. There was a good turnout and those that were there learnt about safety while kayaking and SUP. The SBF's three key safety messages were continuously reiterated (wearing a correctly fitted PFD, always taking 2 waterproof forms of communications and checking the marine forecast).

The on-water session in the afternoon was a success. Everybody had smiles when they got back on the beach. The participants all learnt something about safety, enjoyed themselves, developed skills and confidence and overcame (or reduced) their fears.

To see when and where future KayakSafe NZ workshops are happening, please visit [here](#).



Kia marutau ki te wai - Day skipper course in Rotorua

Jules Taylor (Maritime Officer II, Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana) shares some reflections from a recent day skipper course in Rotorua.

The second of 3 great Maritime NZ funded Coastguard Day Skipper courses for Iwi took place in Rotorua in late November.

Nine students from around our Rotorua rohe spent two days in the classroom learning all things boating, from how to navigate their waka, what to do in an emergency, the speed, towing and rules on the water, knot tying and how to read the weather and tides to ensure we keep all our whānau safe on our moana and return home after every trip.

Each student received a PFD on successful completion of the course to support their future journeys.

The final course for this season is booked in for Ōpōtiki.



Jet Boating NZ safety videos

Jet Boating NZ have released the first of their jet boating safety videos, *JET SMART #1 - There's More to Jet Boating than Buying a Boat.*

These were made with the support of safer boating community grant funding and Maritime NZ. They are designed to help a new or prospective jet boater with understanding the process of buying a jet boat and the road (or more specifically the river) ahead.



You can check out the video by clicking [here](#).



Coastguard - Old4New and Summer Lottery

This year has been one of New Zealand's worst for boating-related drownings. Coastguard is urging Kiwis to take one simple step before heading out this summer - wear a lifejacket.

Coastguard Head of Operations Rob McCaw stresses the urgency: "Lifejackets save lives. Too many tragedies could have been prevented if people wore them." Over the past 12 months, Coastguard reported that in incidents where people required assistance - whether non-urgent or an emergency - only 67% of those involved were wearing lifejackets. An additional 29% had lifejackets available but were not wearing them.

To support local communities, Coastguard's Old4New Lifejacket Upgrade campaign will again hit the road from November 30, visiting 74 summer hotspots where Kiwis can swap old lifejackets for discounted, brand-new Hutchwilco lifejackets. The Old4New team will also offer lifejacket fitting, servicing advice, boating safety tips, and information on education courses. Visit old4new.nz for details.

Coastguard is also highlighting the benefits of having a Membership. For just \$150 a year, members receive 24/7 coverage for non-urgent assistance, such as mechanical breakdowns, flat batteries, fuel issues, and more. For non-members, such assistance could cost up to \$350 an hour.

Lastly, the famous Summer Lottery is back, with each ticket purchased supporting Coastguard's vital lifesaving mahi. This year, prizes include two Extreme fishing boats and a \$17,000 travel prize. Local volunteers will be out in their communities selling from mid-November, or tickets can be purchased online [here](#).



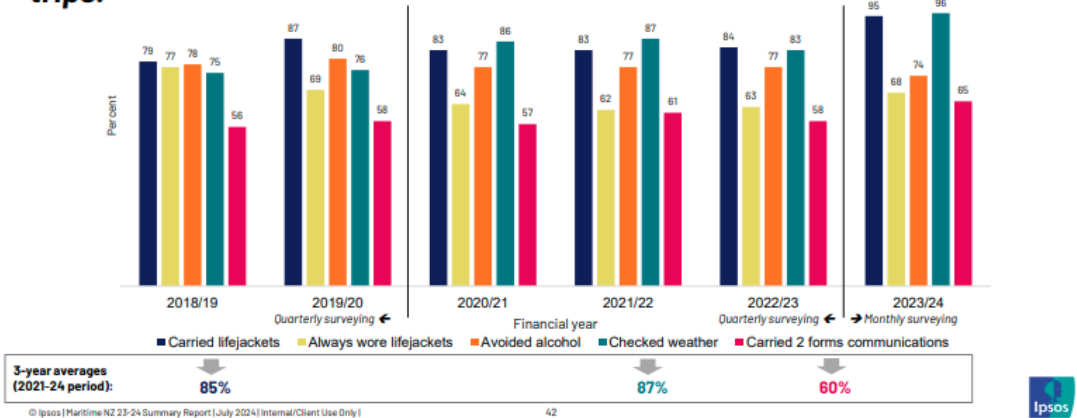
Ipsos survey changes - recreational craft data

Changes to the recreational boating monitor support assessment of near to shore risk

Changes to the Ipsos survey have improved accuracy by asking questions about the most recent trip in more detail, instead of asking about average trips.

Participation has returned to pre-COVID levels and safety behaviour appears broadly consistent over the last five years, there have been gradual improvements in weather-checking and in lifejacket wearing. The other three safety behaviours we monitor (always wearing lifejackets, avoiding alcohol and carrying two forms of communication) have been relatively stable.

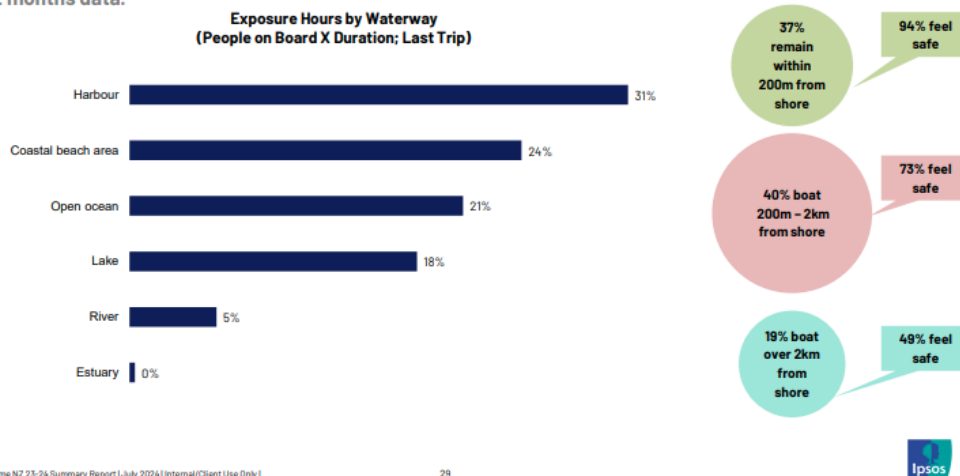
Tracking key safety behaviours over time indicates a gradual improvement in weather-checking and lifejacket carriage. 23/24 data reflects responses based on behaviour on their most recent trip, and before that the responses reflect behaviour on their usual trips.



The new data on latest trips formed part of a recent SBF presentation, looking at how risk can be associated with distance from shore. In summary, it shows that the majority of trips are close to shore, and more likely to be spontaneous, with limited planning. Crucially, most people feel safer the closer to land they are, despite the risks of bars, reefs, and breaking waves – all more widespread in shallower water and close to shore environments.

In terms of Exposure Hours, just over half the boating being done is around harbours or coastal beaches; most boaties feel safe.

Last 12 months data.



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This builds on [Maritime NZ's work on fatal accidents](#), which shows that most deaths have occurred within 400m of shore in the last few years.

The new set up allows for a calculation called exposure hours. Put simply, this is an indicator combining estimated number of people going out on trips, and the length of time the trip takes. It's early days, but these figures will give us a clearer view of what the scale of risk looks like, and enable deeper analysis. You can see some of the data on the [Maritime NZ website](#).



Community grants programmes

Some of the community grants funded recreational craft safety programmes have already started this summer. Below is a table of the community grant recipients and their safety programmes - head to the link of their websites to find out when their programmes are happening to check them out.

It was great to see some of the community grant funded recipients kick off on safer boating week. Bill Dawes from NZ Stand Up Paddleboarding (NZ SUP) ran two online SUP safety seminars about buoyancy aids, leashes and other safety equipment for SUP. Matt Wood attended a Surfers Recue 24/7 course fund by Surfing NZ at Kilbirnie pool in Wellington. It was a two hour course aimed to encourage and develop water rescue techniques and basic CPR skills for surfers of all skill levels. We look forward to seeing how these safety programmes continue to reduce harm and support the outcomes of the Recreational Craft Strategy.

Organisation	Programme	Website(s)
Bay of Plenty Regional Council	Kia marutau ki te wai	www.boprc.govt.nz/living-in-the-bay/boating-in-the-bay/
Bay of Plenty Regional Council	Safety is our Wai	www.boprc.govt.nz
Buller District Council	Understand, Monitor, Inform	www.westportharbour.co.nz
Canoe Racing New Zealand	Try, Learn, Explore	www.canoeracing.org.nz/ www.paddler.nz/
Coastguard New Zealand Tau-tiaki Moana Aotearoa	Old4New Lifejacket Upgrade Campaign	www.Coastguard.nz
Coastguard New Zealand Tau-tiaki Moana Aotearoa	Ko Tangata Moana	https://www.boatingeducation.org.nz
Environment Canterbury	Canterbury Safe Boating Programme	www.ecan.govt.nz
Environment Southland	Environment Southland Boating Safety Program	www.es.govt.nz
Gisborne District Council	Tairāwhiti Haumarū Moana	www.gdc.govt.nz
Greater Wellington Regional Council	Be Responsibility (for actions/for safety)	www.gw.govt.nz
Hawke's Bay Regional Council	Hawke's Bay Safer Boating Programme	www.Hbrc.govt.nz/harbour-master
Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (KASK)	KayakSafe NZ	http://kask.co.nz

Marlborough District Council	Marlborough Boating Safety Workshop	www.marlborough.govt.nz
Nelson City Council	Maritime Safety Internship	www.nelson.govt.nz/environment/harbours/
Nelson City Council/Tasman District Council	Sup Water Safety Course	www.nelson.govt.nz/environment/harbours/
New Zealand Stand Up Paddling Inc. (NZSUP)	SUP SAFE	www.nzsup.org
New Zealand Sport Fishing Council Inc.	Coasters and Conversations	www.nzsportfishing.org.nz
New Zealand Underwater Association	Fly the Flag	www.nzunderwater.org.nz/
Northland Regional Council	Nobody's stronger than Tangaroa	www.nrc.govt.nz
Otago Regional Council	Otago Recreational Safer Boating Campaign	www.orc.govt.nz/managing-our-environment/harbour-master
Queenstown Lakes District Council	QLDC Waterways Skipper Responsibility Campaign	www.qldc.govt.nz
Surfing New Zealand	Surfers Rescue 24/7	www.surfingnz.co.nz
Tasman District Council	Summer Student 2024/2025	www.tasman.govt.nz
Tasman District Council	Iwi Launch Warden	www.tasman.govt.nz
Waikato Regional Council	Operation Neptune	www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/services/maritime-services/ www.facebook.com/WRCHarbourmaster/
Waka Ama NZ	Building a culture of water safety for Waka Ama NZ	www.wakaama.co.nz
Watersafe Auckland Inc. (Drowning Prevention Auckland)	WaiWise for Safer Boating for Pacific Peoples, and Asian Communities	www.dpanz.org.nz
Watersafe Auckland Inc. (Drowning Prevention Auckland)	Expansion of Lifejacket Hubs	www.dpanz.org.nz
Yachting New Zealand	Yachting New Zealand Coastal Personal Safety Course	www.yachtingnz.org.nz





MERI
Kirihimete

MERRY
Christmas

To you and your whānau. Stay safe over the summer season, and we look forward to working with you all in 2025.





Do you have something you'd like to share with the Forum?

Are there things you'd like to see in the Forum newsletter?

Please feel free to get in touch with any feedback or suggestions - we'd love to hear from you.

Alternatively, if you have an article or information you'd like to feature in the next edition of the newsletter, please get in touch and we will provide the requirements (word count, image resolutions etc).

Email saferboating@maritimenz.govt.nz and we will be in touch.

