

May 2025

Newsletter

KIA ORA

and welcome to the first Safer Boating newsletter for 2025.

I hope you all managed to take some time off during the summer holidays and were lucky enough to find some sun. For many of us, the summer period was a little disappointing. It warmed up somewhat after I returned to work, which I have to say was a little difficult to watch sitting in the office.

The start of the year has been busy with two Safer Boating Forum (SBF) Leadership Group meetings, discussing a large range of issues, such as the impact the changing operating context might have on the recreational craft sector, the directive from the Government for organisations to focus on core roles and responsibilities, and the impact the economic downturn might have on recreational craft users' behaviours. We've also been planning the upcoming Forum in Wellington on 27 May and also focusing on progressing key projects in the recreational craft strategy.

There is much to think about and plan for the year ahead, but for now, I'm happy to leave you to read about some of the great work that the Forum has achieved. It's wonderful to see organisations working together. Enjoy the read, and I look forward to seeing you at the Forum at the end of this month.



Sharyn Forsyth

Chair - Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group (SBFLG)



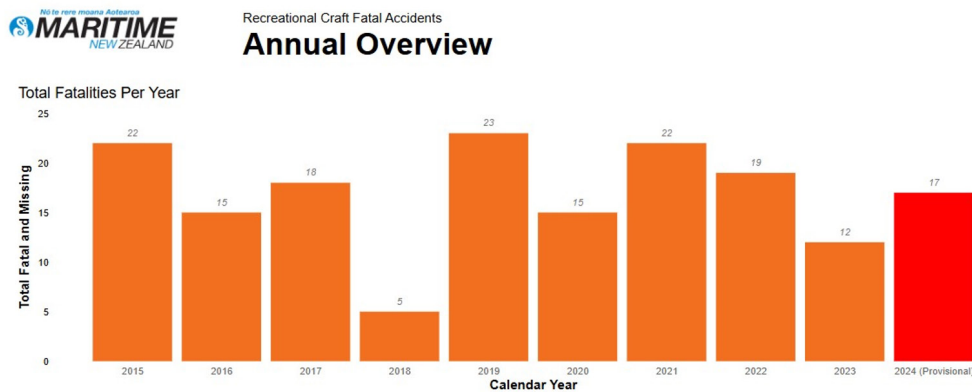
Summer 2024-25 summary

While this is very similar to the 10-year average of 16.8 fatalities, it was great to see that there were no fatalities over the traditional summer holiday period for 2024/25. While a zero-fatality rate during this period is a positive outcome, it should be viewed with caution as shortly after there were several recreational boating deaths.

Several factors contributed to the low fatality rate over the summer holiday period. The cool and wet summer reduced the frequency and duration of water activities, likely lowering the chances of people getting into danger. Additionally, tighter economic conditions may have limited spending on recreational craft and petrol, decreasing impromptu trips on the water and the frequency of fishing trips. The intervention of rescue services also probably prevented several serious harm incidents and/or fatalities.

The low summer fatality rate for recreational craft coincided with Water Safety NZ's fifth lowest annual fatality rate for drowning. Water Safety NZ (WSNZ) believes it is making progress in reducing fatalities through investment in water skills for life at a young age and focusing on high-risk areas.

Recreational craft fatalities over 10 years



Kayaking safety: essential tips and successful partnerships

Over the past 10 years, 28 kayakers have tragically lost their lives, with half of these incidents involving sit-on-top kayaks and the other half, sit-in kayaks. To help paddlers stay prepared, Maritime New Zealand ('Maritime NZ'), ACC and KASK (Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers) partnered to create a short series of social media videos featuring essential safety tips. These videos highlight three simple but vital actions that can make all the difference in the water.

Working in partnership with our Forum members is a key outcome of a high-performing sector, and an important way our prevention messages can influence a wider range of recreational craft users. ACC promoted the videos on TikTok and had combined views of 752,000, over 6,000 likes and 175 saves. These figures highlight the importance of working in partnership with Forum members who can create new and interesting safety content for a range of recreational craft users.

The three videos focus on key safety messages:

- **Preparation is key:** Safe kayaking starts before you even hit the water
- **Practice getting back on your craft:** Re-entering your kayak is a crucial skill if you fall out
- **Use a spray skirt:** A spray skirt helps keep water out of your kayak.

These simple actions can help you stay safe and enjoy your time on the water.

For more kayak safety tips, visit Maritime NZ's [website](#) and the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayaker's [website](#).

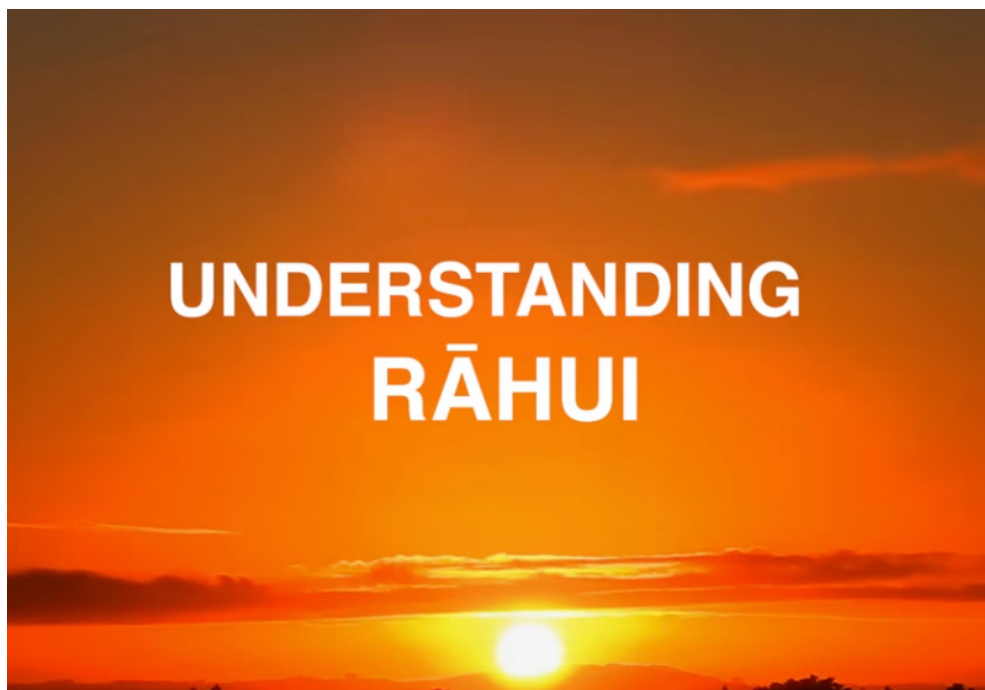
Rāhui videos

A key focus area in the Recreational Craft Strategy 2023-2025 is the Te Ao Māori work-stream. One of the projects from the first year of the strategy was to hold a Kaihautū and CE Hui that focused on discussing Māori aspirations within the water safety sector. The hui was held in 2023 in Te Whanganui a Tara (Wellington) and focused on a range of different topics. One topic was increasing the understanding of rāhui, as it was reported that there was a lot of misunderstanding and fear about the role of rāhui and its importance.

To address this, three videos will be produced in partnership with Tātai Heke Māori. Tātai Heke Māori consists of Kaihautū from different organisations across the Search and Rescue sector. The videos will explain the importance of rāhui and viewers will learn that rāhui reflects a profound respect for the interconnectedness of land, sea, and people, embodying principles of sustainability and guardianship passed down through generations. It is a time to bring a location back into balance and heal – allowing time to protect the mauri of an environ-

ment following the tapu of death and looking after the wairua of the people involved. This is an important step forward to support a Te Ao Māori perspective on water safety, as it shows that organisations are supporting and gaining a better understanding of Māori culture, which will aid in strengthening relationships.

The first video for internal use only was sent to all Forum members in March 2025. The second video for the general public is in the process of being developed.



Access the first rāhui video by clicking [here](#).

Gisborne District Council launches lifejacket libraries

Gisborne District Council is proud to announce the launch of two new lifejacket libraries on the East Coast, funded by ACC. These libraries aim to make the waters safer for families and communities by providing lifejackets free of charge.

If you're on the coast and need to borrow a lifejacket, you can find them at:

- Tokomaru Bay United Sports Club
- Manaaki Matakaoa Community Centre in Te Araroa.

If you're in Gisborne and need to borrow a lifejacket, you can find them at:

- The Māori wardens stationed at the boat ramp from 10am-8pm daily during summer
- Council reception.

The libraries operate on a simple borrow-and-return system, ensuring everyone can access the life-saving gear they need while enjoying the water.

“We’re stoked the lifejacket library makes it easier for people to have a ‘hmmm moment’ then do the right thing before heading into the sea,” said ACC Injury Prevention leader, James Whitaker.



Pictured (left to right): Sheena Like, Tihi Luke, and Harbourmaster Peter Buell


**Safer
Boating**
Forum

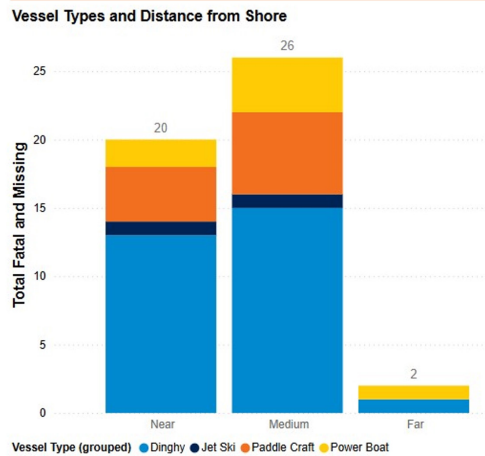
Close to shore fatalities

At the October 2024 Forum a presentation showed that 70% of recreational craft fatalities occur within one nautical mile from shore (1,800 meters). A follow-up question was asked about the size of craft involved in fatalities within one nautical mile.

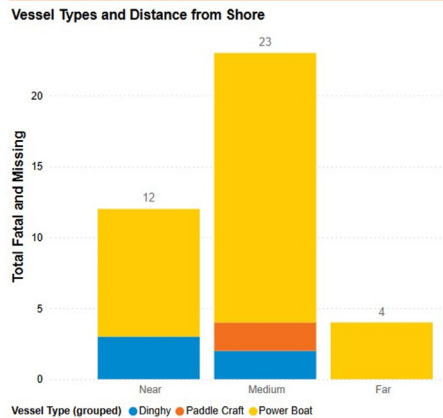
The graphs below show the division between craft types. Graph 1 shows vessel types 4 metres and under by distance from shore and Graph 2 shows vessel types for the 4 - 6 metres by distance from shore. Graph 1 shows that dinghies and paddle craft are the most prominent craft type, while in Graph 2 powerboats are the most prevalent craft type.

The scale is (a) Near shore to 200m (b) Medium 200m – 1,800m (c) Far 1,800m plus.

Vessel types 4 metres and under by distance from shore



Vessel types 4-6 metres and under by distance from shore



Winter Kia Mataara campaign

As the weather changes, it's time to plan for a winter approach for recreational craft safety. Our goal is to align efforts across earned media, social media, and paid behaviour change campaigns.

Last winter, 11 people lost their lives in recreational boating incidents - the highest number ever recorded in a season. These tragedies included two triple fatalities - three recreational fisherman off the Gisborne coast and another three people whose vessel capsized.

Contrary to common belief, boating participation, attitudes, and behaviours remain steady year-round. With climate change bringing warmer conditions, more people are likely to take their craft out in winter.

Winter presents the same risks as summer, but the colder water, shorter daylight hours, and fewer people around to help, make survival chances lower if something goes wrong. Met-ocean conditions, such as wind speed, air and water temperature, and wave height, also vary more in winter.

Those heading out are likely experienced boaties, but they may underestimate winter's impact. While they may feel confident handling unexpected situations, they might not fully consider the effects of cold water shock or harsher winter conditions.

The Kia Mataara campaign's three core safety messages remain critical:

1. Always wear a correctly fitted lifejacket.
2. Carry two waterproof ways to call for help.
3. Check and understand the marine weather forecast for your craft type before heading out.

We want people to understand that winter conditions amplify risks, so preparation, both for yourself and your vessel, is essential.

This campaign is in its early stages, so stay tuned for more details.



Harm prevention across Aotearoa

Here's some of the Recreational Craft Safety programmes funded by the Community Grants this summer.

Old4New

Coastguard's Old4New lifejacket campaign is now in its tenth year. Jayshree Ranchhod, Harm Prevention Investment Advisor at Maritime NZ, checked out the Old4New van when it parked up along the Petone foreshore on Sunday, 5 January (*pictured below*).

"It was wet and cold, but that didn't stop people from dropping by to stock up on lifejackets," Jayshree says. "While I was there, one boatie bought two lifejackets and Alex from Greater Wellington Regional Council chatted to visitors about boating safety and local conditions."

An average of 18 recreational craft users die every year, a significant number of which aren't wearing lifejackets, so it's great to see Coastguard lead this change in culture.



Maritime safety internship

Nelson City Council was another funding recipient. On a recent trip to Nelson, Jayshree observed some of the work it's doing to support and encourage compliance monitoring across the region.



"They've taken on an intern, Charlotte (*pictured*), which means they can have two people on board their harbourmaster boat," Jayshree says. "Having one person observe and engage with the public while the other drives the boat makes it easier to ensure that recreational craft users are sticking to the rules of the waterways."

SUP water safety course

Jayshree was also impressed with the joint stand-up paddle boarding (SUP) safety programme run by both Nelson City and Tasman District councils and involving several free SUP safety sessions in the Nelson/Tasman regions. The one she attended was at Tāhunanui Beach.

“The sessions have had a great uptake. They teach people practical skills, like what to do if they fall off their SUP, lose their paddle, or need to assist someone else (help get them on their SUP and tow them back to land)”.

The on-land session covered safety gear and how to read the local conditions. “It’s awesome to see courses that promote safety for recreational craft users by having the correct skills, knowledge and behaviours before and after going on the water,” Jayshree says.



Wendy Kitchener (*below*) attended this course (early December 2024 in Māpua), which was presented by Toby and Jo (*above*) from Moana Paddle. Wendy was soon able to put her new safety skills to the test. Here’s what she had to say:

“The course covered what kit and safety equipment you need, legislation, environmental considerations, decision making, paddling in wind, and rescues, all at no cost to me. The course was excellent and boosted my confidence in reading and managing conditions, as well as in rescuing myself and others. After the course, I bought additional safety equipment like a tow line and a whistle. From my work background, I know that things can change quickly and I want to be prepared to help if needed.



“A few weeks later, I organised a paddle with family members who were new to paddling. Some of them ended up in the water, and I was able to use my new skills to help them get back on their boards efficiently. Before the course, I wouldn’t have known how to do this, and both the person in trouble and the rescuer would have wasted a lot of energy.

“Although it wasn’t an emergency, I’m glad I now have the skills, confidence, and ability to assist if needed. I highly recommend attending such a course, especially those who are regularly out on the water.”

Kia marutau ki te wai

Bay of Plenty Regional Council teamed up with Safer Boating Forum members Drowning Prevention Auckland to deliver a water competency / in water survival course for recreational craft users. In addition, Coastguard Ōpōtiki provided a training room for free and gave up their time to give support.

The course participants spent the weekend building water competency and getting more familiar with being in, on and around the different bodies of water in the region.

The training successfully improved participants' practical water skills, confidence, and awareness of water hazards. The instructors were widely praised for their expertise, and the programme effectively balanced theoretical and hands-on learning. The training influenced long-term attitudes and behaviours, ensuring participants are better equipped to keep themselves and others safe.



Wai Wise programme

Supported by Maritime NZ, Drowning Prevention Auckland delivered its Wai Wise programme between November 2024 and February 2025.

This proactive programme is working to change water safety culture within high-risk Asian and Pacific ethnic communities. Nearly 150 participants gained practical knowledge and skills through theory, pool, and then open water training at Vector Wero Whitewater Park. This programme involved the knowledge and experience of 'Float first' as one of the 15 Water Competencies for Drowning Prevention. Participants also gained understanding of the Water Safety Code, the Boating Safety Code, and how to wear a well-fitted lifejacket.

Nancy Lu, Member of Parliament, participated in this programme and highlighted its impact on her own perceptions:

“This experience challenged my ingrained beliefs about water safety. I now understand the

absolute necessity of lifejackets and respect the power of the water. In my Asian communities, there is a clear demand for this kind of education, especially for those who are new to New Zealand. This programme is essential for fostering a culture of water safety, and I am thankful to have been a part of it.”

Ngā Tai e Whā o Taranaki

The Taranaki Outrigger Canoe Club (TOCC) enjoyed a successful race day on 8 March. The event was in remembrance of Dan Fraser, a true legend in the surfing and Waka Ama community. Set against the stunning backdrop of Ngāmotu Beach, this event brought paddlers together to honour his legacy and celebrate the sport he loved.

The event had “excellent processes in place, including multiple safety boats out on the water keeping an eye on all the paddlers,” says the club’s Mary Brewster. “Our west coast weather presented us with reasonable swells and winds in the early morning, and they grew stronger during the day, so all the teams had a challenging race, especially the crews in the 22 km course.”



Mary was happy to report that the event ran smoothly and without incident. “The paddlers were thrilled to receive spot prizes. The lifejackets, in particular, were very sought after! We really do appreciate your support, your generosity and assistance in keeping our paddlers safe.”

Special thanks to David Lee (TOCC member) for capturing these moments!



Sneak peek! Better boating forecasts

In early 2025, MetService, in partnership with Maritime NZ, will make several key changes to the spot boating forecast pages on MetService.com, focused on increasing safe behaviour and decision-making in the boating community.

These changes are:

- to provide more frequent (three hourly) time steps for boating data to better track the variability in conditions during a day
- to make clearer which warnings are in force for the recreational marine area, or if the area is not covered by a recreational marine forecast, the nearby coastal forecast region.

Coastguard, Maritime NZ, and MetService are working together to develop bar crossing messages for key harbours. These will be displayed on the marine forecast page of the MetService website. The content will point to Coastguard information online that educates viewers on the correct process and contact points for crossing a bar.

This work is based on research conducted in 2024 by Maritime NZ and MetService into bar crossing behaviour and marine warning usage, with over 2000 respondents providing feedback. Maritime NZ and MetService are continuing our efforts to drive awareness of the need to check an appropriate forecast before heading out, and promoting behaviours and attitudes that are synonymous with safe boating decision-making.

The screenshot displays the MetService website interface for a boating forecast. At the top, there is a navigation menu with options like National, Towns & Cities, Rural, Marine, Mountains & Parks, Maps & Radar, Warnings, and Contact Us. Below the navigation is a search bar containing 'Manukau Harbour Entrance - Boating' and a location indicator for 'Wellington Central 16.7°'. A prominent orange banner at the top of the main content area reads 'Strong Wind Advisory'. The main content is divided into several sections: 'Bar Information' with a sample warning, 'Manukau Harbour Entrance' with a forecast table, 'Sea Temperature' showing 19°C, 'UV' with a 'Dangerous today from 10:30-12:30pm' warning, and 'Manukau Harbour Tides' with a graph showing tide levels from 3:53am to 3:53pm. The bottom of the page features a footer with the MetService logo, navigation links, social media icons, and a copyright notice for the MetService website.

| | TODAY 10 OCT | MON 11 OCT | TUE 12 OCT | WED 13 OCT | THU 14 OCT | FRI 15 OCT | SAT 16 OCT |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Rating | 1 - Bad | 4 - OK | 7 - Good | 7 - Good | 8 - Good | | |
| Wind (kts) | 29 SW | 28 SW | 15 NE | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gusts (kts) | N/A | 31 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sea | 3.5m NE | 2m NE | 1m SW | 0.5m SW | 0.5m SW | | |
| Chop Height | 2.4m | 2.4m | 1m | 0.5m | 0.5m | | |
| Swell | 0.6m | 0.6m | N/A | 0.1m | 0.1m | | |
| Period | 9sec | 8sec | N/A | 7sec | 7sec | | |

Coastguard's busy summer!

Coastguard has wrapped up a busy summer on the water and reflected on its prevention and education initiatives. Here's a snapshot of Coastguard's summer.

From 1 Dec to 28 Feb:

- Coastguard volunteers responded to 1,232 incidents and brought 3,210 people home safely. The busiest day was 8 Feb with 42 call outs! The most common call outs included mechanical or equipment failures, overdue boaties, swimmers and kayakers in difficulty, as well as boats capsizing, drifting or running aground.
- Boaties logged 113,487 trip reports with Coastguard to share their plans before heading out. A daily record was set on 1 February, with 4,330 reports logged.
- Bar crossings remain one of the most dangerous activities for boaties, and Coastguard's Bar Watch service played a crucial role in providing an essential safety net. Boaties logged 10,402 bar crossings, with the busiest day on 7 February, when 753 bar crossing trip reports were recorded, the highest number ever.

Prevention remained a major focus for Coastguard, ensuring boaties were equipped with essential safety knowledge and gear.

- 2,175 boaties attended Coastguard's free Bar Awareness seminars that equip them with life-saving knowledge to better understand the risks their local bars pose.
- 1,185 worn-out lifejackets were traded in for new through the Old4New initiative. Water Safety New Zealand's 2024 drowning data underscored the importance of this work, revealing a concerning statistic - 16 out of 18 watercraft fatalities involved people not wearing lifejackets. Old4New continues to tackle this issue by providing lifejacket advice, local boating safety tips, and information on education courses.

Alongside responding to call outs, Coastguard was involved in several major search and rescue efforts with volunteers dedicating hundreds of hours to missions.



Lifejacket manual inflator product safety recall

Halkey-Roberts has launched an international product safety recall for its 3F single point manual inflators. These inflators are found in five types of lifejackets sold in New Zealand, these include:

- Line 7 170N Velcro Inflatable Lifejacket
- Hutchwilco Classic 170N Manual Inflatable Lifejacket
- Hutchwilco Super Comfort 170N Manual Inflatable Lifejacket
- Response Manual Inflatable 150N Adult Lifejacket
- Response Storm Rider Soft Shell Inflatable Lifejacket (150N)

The recalls are being led by the companies involved, overseen by MBIE and supported by Maritime NZ. Further details are available on the Product Safety Website.

If you have any queries please contact Matt Wood, Principal Advisor Recreational Craft (matt.wood@maritimenz.govt.nz).

Keeping kids safe, one lifejacket at a time

Maritime Officer Steve Hainstock recently spent a weekend on West Coast waterways, doing safety checks on recreational craft users before they headed out on the water.

Steve checked over 20 boats and jetskis at Lake Brunner and was happy to find that almost all were well-prepared and following the Safer Boating Code.

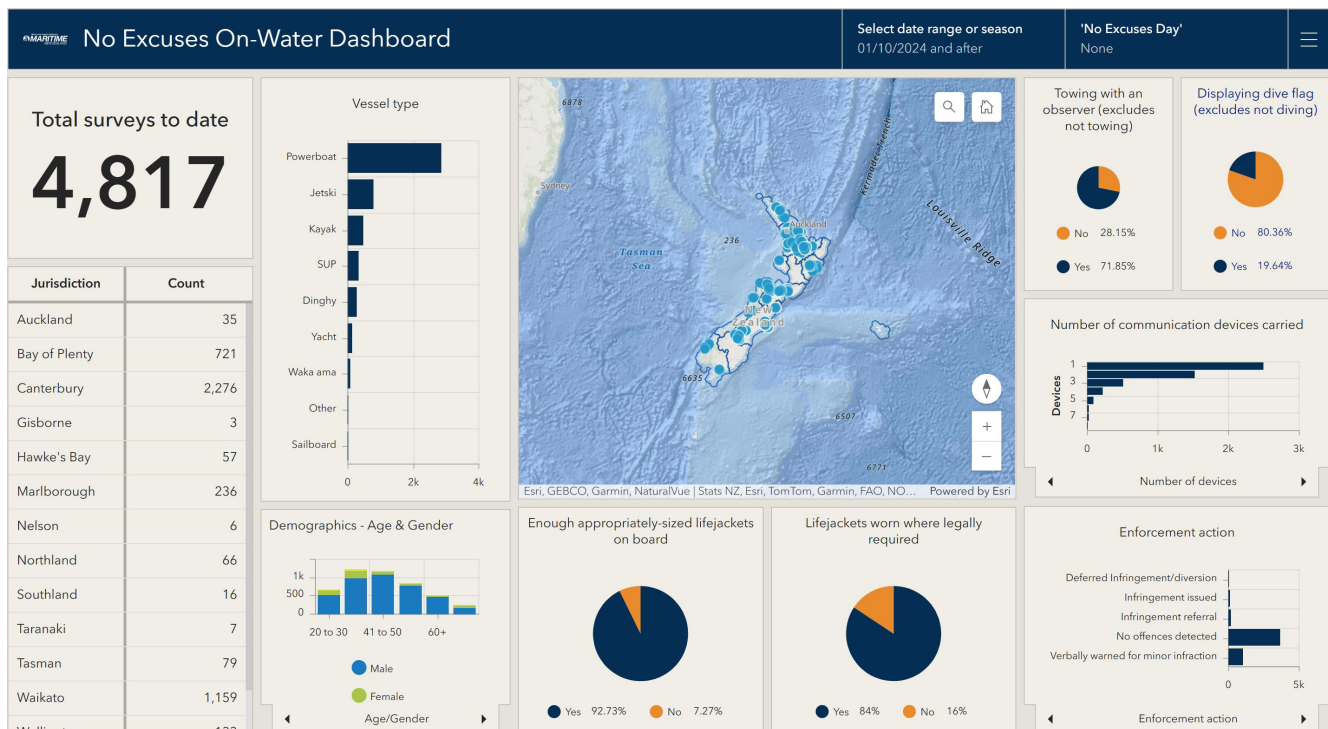
But as one group was wrapping up its day, Steve experienced a “Goldilocks moment” – three boys with lifejackets that weren’t quite right. “One lifejacket had a broken buckle, one was a bit small, and the other was a hand-me-down that was too big. None of them were just right,” Steve said.

Thanks to Safer Boating funding, Steve was able to provide the boys with properly-fitted life-jackets. This meant that the group was ready to safely go out again the next day, and be safe in the water for at least another year or two. It’s fairy tale endings like this that make Steve’s job so worthwhile!

No Excuses on the water for the past nine years!

The national compliance campaign “No Excuses” has entered it’s 9th year out on the water! The work is funded through community grants, and sees Maritime NZ support Regional Council harbourmasters to complete five days on the water, where a “No Excuses” approach is taken with the boaties who expose themselves and others to the highest risk of harm.

This season’s campaign started in October 2024, and ran through to 31 March 2025. There were 4,817 interactions recorded using survey123, and are displayed on a live ARC Gis dashboard.



The 'No Excuses on-water' dashboard

Provisional data indicates that over 1000 offences were observed, with 180 infringements issued. Other non-compliance interventions include warnings and diversions.

This year Environment Canterbury partnered with the New Zealand Defence Force to conduct patrols along the rugged coastline of Kaikoura. According to Environment Canterbury Harbourmaster Gordon McKay, “this demonstrated the Defence Force’s commitment to support government agencies to protect the New Zealand public. The three-day deployment saw two harbourmaster’s and five Defence personnel travel to Kaikoura with a Navy J3 RHIB.”



Some No Excuses images of various recreational boaties out enjoying the water safely.





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 email us at safer-boating@maritimenz.govt.nz.

