

FACT SHEET: ALCOHOL

Boats and alcohol don't mix.

- If you're intoxicated on board a boat, you endanger yourself and needlessly put others at risk.
- It's never safe to operate a boat after drinking. Operating a boat can be as complicated as driving a car and boating accidents can be as lethal as road accidents.
- Avoid alcohol before heading out and while you are on the water. It's better to wait until you're anchored for the day before drinking any alcohol.
- The effects of alcohol are exaggerated on the water, where a momentary lapse that might pass unnoticed on shore can have dangerous consequences. Factors like wind, sun, noise, motion and vibration can magnify its effects and speed up impairment. Drinking alcohol increases the likelihood of you ending up in the water by accident and slows your reaction times – confusion and lack of coordination may prevent you from responding effectively and reduce your chances of survival.

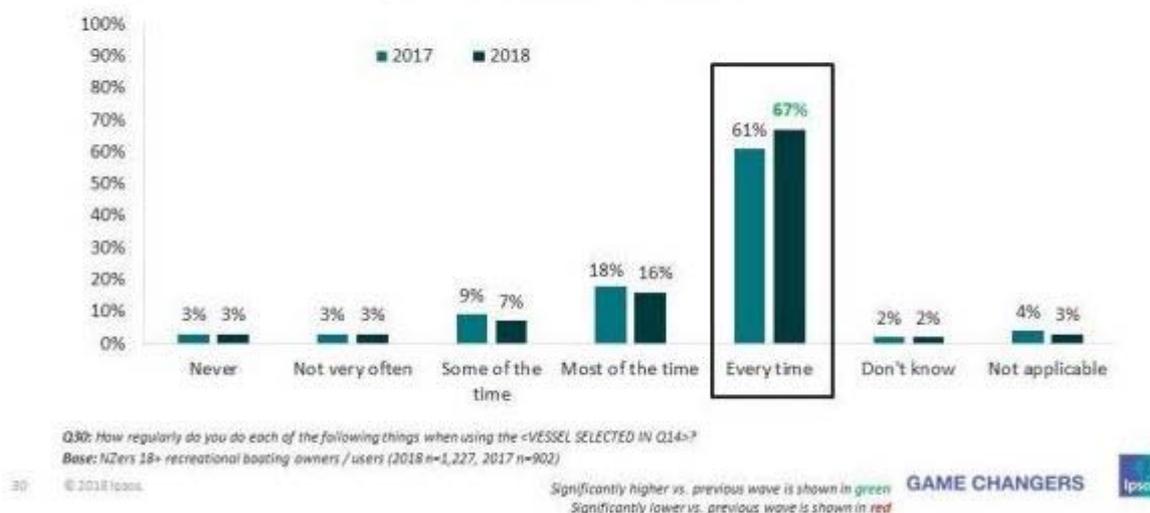
What the law requires

- If you operate a boat in a manner that causes unnecessary danger, including as a result of drinking alcohol, you can be prosecuted under section 65 of the Maritime Transport Act.

What the research shows

- The NZ Safer Boating Forum (formerly the National Pleasure Boat Safety Forum) has identified alcohol as one of the key risk factors in fatal and non-fatal accidents. It is considered to be underreported as a causal factor.
- Maritime NZ figures show 31 people died in recreational boating accidents in New Zealand waters in 2014-15 (June to June), 16 people in both 2015-16 and 2016-17, and 11 people in 2017-18.
- Research commissioned by Maritime NZ shows an increase in the number of people reporting they avoid alcohol before/during a boating outing 'every time' (67% vs 61% in 2017). On the other hand, there has been a slight decrease in the number of those avoiding alcohol before/during a boating outing 'most of the time' (16% vs 18% in 2017). *Source: IPSOS NZ 2018*
- The number of people avoiding alcohol before boating was highest for canoeists (76%) and lowest for users of large power boats (56%) and small power boats and sail boats (both 59%). *Source: IPSOS NZ 2018*
- 60% of survey respondents are concerned with the 'potential for problems to occur when people drink too much alcohol when boating' but 49% agree that it's OK to drink alcohol for the type of boating they usually do. *Source: IPSOS NZ 2018*

Significantly more boaties are avoiding alcohol before or during their boating trips every time



Source: IPSOS NZ 2018

How alcohol affects the body

- Alcohol is absorbed directly into the bloodstream and its effects are usually apparent within minutes. Even in small quantities, it affects coordination and judgement and exaggerates confidence, and even moderate drinking can seriously impair your ability to operate a boat safely.
- Drinking alcohol faster than your body can process it will increase blood alcohol levels.
- Alcohol is burned off at a fairly constant rate – at about one standard drink per hour.
- Consumption of any amount of alcohol may be dangerous, but the higher the resulting blood alcohol level, the greater the danger. Alcohol affects people differently and reactions will vary, depending on factors such as the type of alcohol you have consumed, and your body weight, food consumption, medication, stress and fatigue.
- No matter what the activity, alcohol affects balance, vision, coordination and judgement.

The effects of alcohol on a person in the water

If you've been drinking, the risks escalate the moment you end up in the water. Alcohol can:

- decrease your coordination and ability to perform a simple task, such as putting on a lifejacket
- increase your sense of disorientation
- make it harder for you to stay afloat
- lower the concentrations of blood going to your brain and muscles, contributing to muscle, heat and fluid loss and speeding up the onset of hypothermia
- reduce your ability to hold your breath
- suppress your airway protection reflexes so you are more likely to inhale water
- give you a false sense of your situation, causing you to attempt tasks beyond your abilities; and reduce your awareness of the onset of hypothermia.

Skipper responsibility

- As a skipper, you're responsible for the safety and wellbeing of everyone on board your boat. A responsible skipper will never operate under the influence of alcohol or allow an intoxicated person to operate their boat.

About the NZ Safer Boating Forum

- The NZ Safer Boating Forum is a network of government agencies, local body groups and marine industry associations and publications that promotes recreational boating safety in New Zealand.

For more information, contact Maritime NZ's media line on 04 499 7318 or go to <http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/Recreational-Boating/alcohol/>.