



SOBER SKIPPER CAMPAIGN RESOURCE KIT



HEADING TO ZERO

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SOBER SKIPPER CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

In 2014, the U.S. Coast Guard reported that there were 277 boating accidents, 108 deaths and 248 injuries due to Boating Under the Influence (BUI). The Sea Tow Foundation launched the Sober Skipper Campaign the next year in 2015. The U.S. Coast Guard's most recently-released statistics in 2021 reveal that the number of boating deaths and injuries hit their lowest levels in the last two decades with 86 and 186 respectively. Alcohol use continues to be the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents, so our Sober Skipper Campaign efforts are helping achieve the goal of **"Heading to Zero."**

The "heading" on a boat is the term for the compass direction in which the boat is traveling and "zero degrees" is the compass bearing for true north. Therefore, using the term "Heading to Zero" has nautical meaning with a real-world goal of getting to zero boating accidents, deaths and injuries caused by alcohol. BUI is 100% preventable and the Sea Tow Foundation believes that BUI should never be the reason someone doesn't come home from a day on the water.

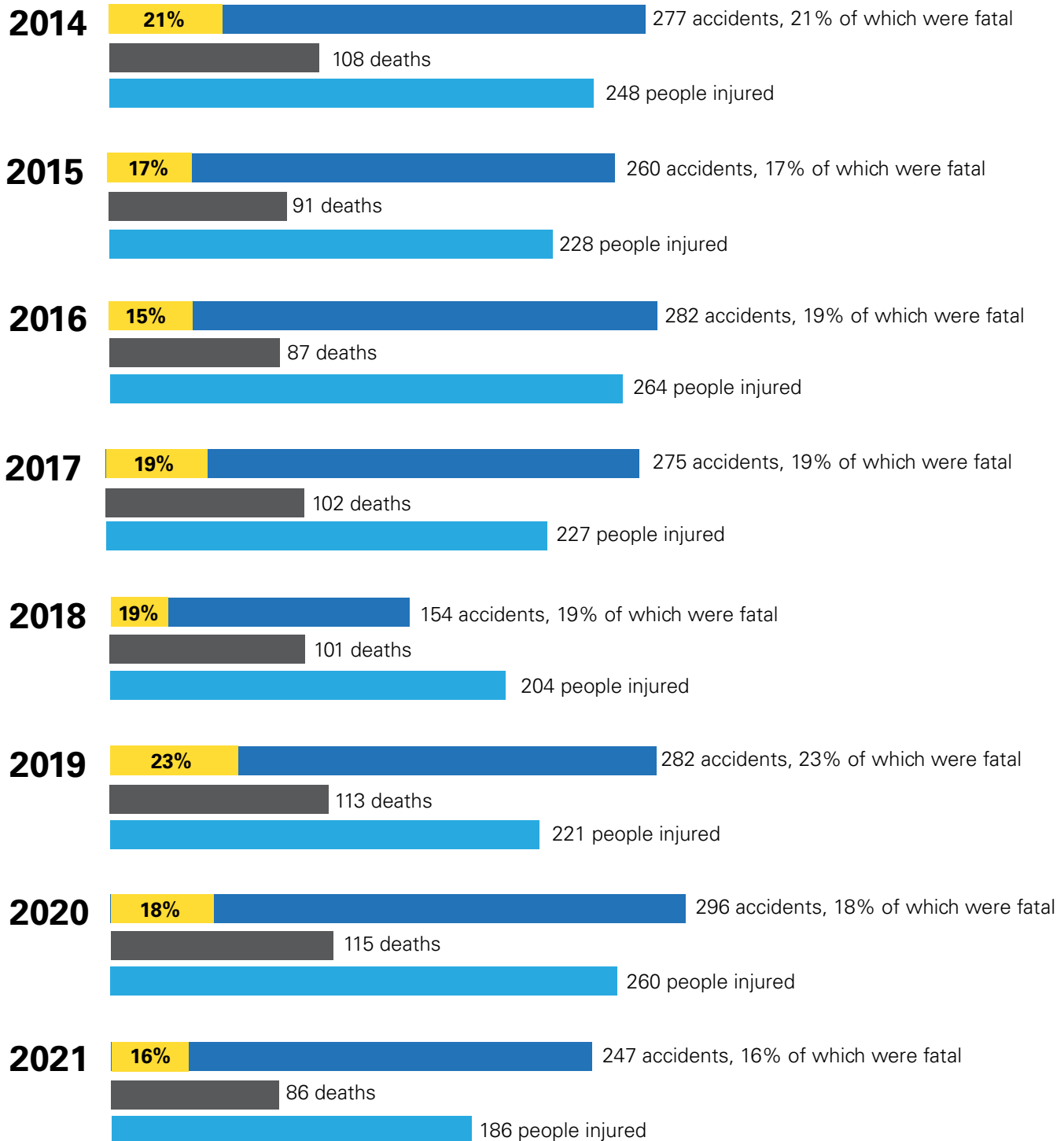
The Sober Skipper's target audience is made up of the most-frequent BUI offender- a male between the ages of 24-56 who uses a trailered open motorboat that is between 14-26 feet in length and boats primarily on the weekends. The main goal is to convince this demographic not to consume alcohol or drugs while operating a boat. It will take many voices to ensure that this audience hears and sees this message, and agrees to always have a Sober Skipper at the helm when boating. The Sea Tow Foundation developed and produced their [Sober Skipper PSA video](#) so it can be used and shared by anyone to help spread the message at no charge.



HEADING TO ZERO

Since the start of the Sober Skipper Campaign, more than 131,000 boaters have taken the Sober Skipper pledge and BUI accidents have fallen from 21% of fatal boating accidents in 2014 to just 16% in 2021. But there is still work to be done as we continue **"Heading to Zero."** Our goal is getting to zero boating accidents, deaths and injuries caused by BUI accidents.

This chart shows how many total boating accidents occurred each year, how many people were injured or died, and what the overall percentage of fatal boating accidents were each year. To print [click here](#).



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE KIT

To amplify our national campaign, this toolkit is designed to help you promote the Sober Skipper message on a local level, both through media relations, customizable social media and newsletter communications, and with resources available through the Sea Tow Foundation.

Here's what you'll find in this resource kit:

Key Messages and Talking Points

- The three main messages

Media Relations Tools

All you need to do is simply copy and paste each template into a new document and then plug your information into the highlighted fields to customize it for your location, business and event.

- Sample press release
- Sample media alert (if you are hosting a boating safety event)
- Sample pitch about the Sober Skipper Campaign
- How to create a media list
- How to send follow up emails

Customizable Communications Tools

- Sample social media posts, and best practices for posting on social media
- Sample email newsletter to distribute
- Sample blog post
- Photo image library to use to create your own messages

Resources through the Sea Tow Foundation

- Free promotional items to spread awareness
- Items to purchase through the online store
- PSA videos created by the Sea Tow Foundation to share
- Blogs and Webinars created by the Sea Tow Foundation to share
- Access to photos and graphics in a public image library

KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

Key messages

It is important to have key messages about the Sober Skipper Campaign in mind whether you are talking to individuals or groups, doing an interview or speaking with the press. The following three messages are great to keep in mind as the top messages you want to deliver. You can use the bullet points as additional talking points to support each of the three main messages.

1. Always pledge to be or designate a Sober Skipper before leaving the dock.

- A Sober Skipper should not consume any alcohol or drugs.
- A Sober Skipper is responsible for the safe operation of the boat and the safety of all of the passengers in the boat.
- Sober Skippers should stay hydrated with water, sports drinks or other non-alcoholic beverages. They should never consume alcohol.

2. The only way to eliminate Boating Under the Influence accidents is to have a Sober Skipper behind the helm.

- The average BUI (Boating under the Influence) offender is a male between the ages of 24-56 who uses a trailered open motorboat that is between 14-26 feet in length and boats primarily on the weekends.
- In 2021, 86 people died on the water because of BUI. This number is the second lowest number of BUI deaths in a year that we've seen over the last two decades, but if everyone has a Sober Skipper that number could be zero.
- In 2021, 247 accidents happened on the water because of BUI, that's two out of every three days.
- Boat operators who drink alcohol or take medications often become drivers of vehicles once on land. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) notes that driving drunk kills 30 people every day or one person every 48 minutes on the road and a person is injured due to drunk driving every 2 minutes.

3. Boating Under the Influence has been the leading cause of all fatal boating accidents for over two decades, and these kinds of accidents are 100% preventable.

- BUI is against the law in every state and territory.
- Boating involves stressors such as wind, noise, sun and the motion of the boat, which can all make it hard to concentrate and maintain your balance. Alcohol intensifies these effects and impairs your judgment.
- BUI laws apply to all motorized boats regardless of size or type and they also apply to non-motorized boats such as canoes, kayaks, rafts and SUPs.
- Wearing a life jacket while boating is the single best way to prevent drowning. In 2020, 75% of all fatal boating accident victims drowned and 86% of them were not wearing life jackets.

To download a printable version of this page [click here](#).

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

Sample press release

This sample press release is designed to help you promote the Sober Skipper Campaign surrounding a popular boating holiday (July 4th, Memorial Day, Labor Day, beginning of summer, etc.) or event (community festival, local event, boating event, anytime when you anticipate a lot of boaters will be out on the water).

Copy and paste this template into a new document and then adjust the yellow highlighted sections to customize for your location, business, and to fit the current holiday or event.



PREVENT FATAL BOATING ACCIDENTS THIS HOLIDAY/EVENT

CITY, STATE (Month Day, Year) – The Sea Tow Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to promoting boating safety education and resources, is using its Sober Skipper Campaign to address the leading cause of fatal boating accidents– alcohol. HOLIDAY/EVENT is right around the corner, which many people enjoy on the water. The Sea Tow Foundation is urging boaters to join them in Heading to Zero BUI accidents by pledging to always have a Sober Skipper behind the helm.

“We all know about the dangers of drinking and driving – calling Ubers and assigning designated drivers is second nature – but when it comes to the water, boaters often forget that these same rules apply,” says NAME, TITLE. “We want to ensure more people make fun and lasting memories on the water with their families and friends, and safe and responsible boating is essential in making that happen. Having fun and being safe while boating do not have to be mutually exclusive.”

View a [PSA video](#) from the Sober Skipper Campaign.

BUSINESS NAME wants to help keep the LOCATION community safe on the water, and is encouraging boaters to take the pledge to always have a Sober Skipper behind the helm. To date, over 131,000 boaters have taken the pledge, and the results are showing on the water – there were 108 deaths and 248 injuries reported in 2014 and those dropped to 86 and 186, respectively in 2021.

The Sea Tow Foundation and BUSINESS NAME are providing top three tips boaters can use to stay safe on the water:

1. [Take the Pledge](#) to be or designate a Sober Skipper before leaving the dock for every boating trip.
2. Know the rules of the water. Take a boating safety class before you leave the dock. [Find one here.](#)
3. Make sure there are enough life jackets on board and that all passengers know where to find them. Every passenger should have a life jacket that fits them properly and children under 13 years of age should wear them when the boat is in motion. Find a [Life Jacket Loaner Station here.](#)

BUI is illegal in every state, and it is 100% preventable. Take the pledge, follow safe boating practices, and keep the water a fun place to be this HOLIDAY/EVENT.

ABOUT SEA TOW FOUNDATION

The Sea Tow Foundation – a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization - was started in 2007 by Captain Joe Frohnhoefer, founder of Sea Tow Services International, after he witnessed too many preventable accidents and fatalities on the water. Through its flagship programs which include the Life Jacket Loaner Program, Sober Skipper Campaign, and the National Boating Industry Safety Awards, the Sea Tow Foundation strives towards its vision of a world where boaters are safe and responsible. To learn more, visit boatingsafety.com.

ABOUT BUSINESS

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MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

Sample media alert

If you're hosting an event centered around boating safety, you can send out this media alert to local reporters to get news coverage. We recommend sending this out the week of the event.



MEDIA ALERT

BUSINESS NAME HOSTS **NAME OF EVENT** ON **DATE**

WHO: **Business name** and the Sea Tow Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting boater safety.

WHAT: Will be promoting boating safety by **include a description of the event.**

WHEN: **DATE/TIME**

WHERE: **LOCATION ADDRESS**

WHY: **BUSINESS NAME** and the Sea Tow Foundation are urging **CITY NAME** boaters to be safe on the water through their Sober Skipper Campaign. The campaign's goal is to eliminate boating under the influence (BUI) and alcohol-related accidents on the water while keeping boating fun for everyone. Boaters can take the pledge to always have a Sober Skipper behind the helm. Upon signing, sober skippers pledge to respect the legal drinking age, be responsible for the vessel and passengers, and be or designate a sober skipper.

VISUALS: **Explain what reporters, photographers or TV stations will be able to film. Include anyone who will be available for interviews**

CONTACT: **NAME & PHONE & EMAIL**

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

General Pitch about Sober Skipper Campaign

If there isn't a specific event or holiday occurring, but you want to spread the Sober Skipper message, you can use this general pitch. Adjust the language and tone to fit your voice, and feel free to include a few sentences about the work your business has done to promote boating safety in the community.

Hi **REPORTER NAME,**

Drinking and driving is a topic we all take very seriously, assigning designated drivers and taking Ubers without a second thought. But when it comes to the water, it's too often a different story.

In **CITY NAME**, many people spend time out on the water, which is why it's important to discuss the leading cause of fatal boating accidents – alcohol. **BUSINESS NAME** and the Sea Tow Foundation want to raise awareness about the importance of having a Sober Skipper, and practicing safe boating to help eliminate preventable boating accidents.

Boating Under the Influence is illegal in every state, and is 100% preventable. To date, over 131,000 boaters have taken the Sober Skipper pledge, and the results are showing on the water – there were 108 deaths and 248 injuries reported in 2014 and those dropped to 86 and 186, respectively in 2021.

I'm happy to provide expert quotes, interviews, resources and more for your use. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

YOUR NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION

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How to Create a Media List

Create a list of reporters to send the press release, media alert or pitch to. You'll want to target reporters in your city who write about boating or transportation, local/regional news, safety tips (parents or family magazines) or have covered boating accidents in the past. You can look for contacts at local newspapers (digital and print), blogs, TV stations and radio stations in your area. We recommend creating a spreadsheet with the outlet's name, reporter's name, email/phone numbers and any notes to help you keep track of your outreach.

Here's how to find contact information:

- Search on the outlet's website for an About or Contact page, or find specific authors and see if their email is listed
- Call the outlet to get more information (ask for the editorial department, newsroom or the specific reporter you are trying to get in touch with)
- Google search the reporter's name and look to see if they have a website or LinkedIn profile that lists their contact information

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

How to Send a Follow Up Email

You may not hear a response from the reporter on the first try. We recommend sending 1-2 follow up emails, checking in with the reporter to see if they received your email and to see if they have any questions.

Check first to see if the reporter or outlet has covered your story already before following up. If they haven't, you're in the clear to send a follow up. If the email outreach is regarding the press release or pitch, we recommend reaching out a few days after the initial email, and then once more around a week after the first follow up. If the email outreach is regarding the media alert (which is more timely), we recommend reaching out 24 hours after the initial email, and then once more before the event's date.

It's best to keep follow up emails short and sweet! Here is a sample you can use:

Press release follow up:

Hi REPORTER NAME,

I wanted to follow up on the press release I sent to you about BUSINESS NAME and their initiative to eliminate fatal boating accidents this HOLIDAY/EVENT. The best way to do that? Encouraging everyone to have a Sober Skipper behind the helm.

Let me know if you need anything from our end– I'm happy to provide expert quotes, PSA videos, interviews and more.

Best,

YOUR NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION

Media alert follow up:

Hi REPORTER NAME,

I wanted to follow up on the media alert I sent to you about NAME OF EVENT. Alcohol is the leading cause of fatal boating accidents, and NAME OF EVENT aims at encouraging CITY NAME boaters to take the pledge to always have a Sober Skipper behind the helm.

Happy to speak with you about the event. I included a copy of the media alert below. Look forward to hearing from you, and hope to see you there!

Best,

YOUR NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION

Sober Skipper general pitch follow up:

Hi REPORTER NAME,

I wanted to follow up on the pitch I sent to you about BUSINESS NAME and their initiative to eliminate fatal boating accidents in the CITY NAME community. The best way to do that? Encouraging everyone to have a Sober Skipper behind the helm.

Let me know if you need anything from our end – I'm happy to provide expert quotes, PSA videos, interviews and more.

Best,

YOUR NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

Media Interview Best Practices

Media interviews are a great opportunity to build awareness for the brand and we encourage you to share the enthusiasm you have for the Sober Skipper Campaign with reporters. But before you go “on the record,” here are a few things to consider:

- Everything you say is “on the record” and can be used by the reporter. Be friendly, but always be aware of what you say.
- Know the types of questions the reporter is going to ask and/or the story angle in advance.
- If you’re unfamiliar with the reporter, research the type of stories he or she typically covers, also known as their “beat.”
- Think through the key points you want to make in the interview and consider writing them down beforehand. Keep key facts and messages in front of you and refer to them when appropriate.
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so. Don’t feel like you need to make something up and please do not provide false information. It’s better to say, “I don’t have the answer to that question, but I will put you in touch with the appropriate person at the Sea Tow Foundation for the answer.” Get the reporter’s contact information and let them know you, or the appropriate contact, will call/email them with an answer to their question.
- Be concise, but avoid one-word answers. Be simple and concrete. Use short sentences, active verbs and simple language.
- Do not share internal, confidential or proprietary information. Be honest and don’t be evasive.
- Do not feel you have to fill an embarrassing silence; that is the interviewer’s job. Once you have answered the question, stop and wait for the next question.
- Stay on your toes — literally! More than 95 percent of all media interviews are over the telephone. Stand up while doing the interview by phone. This makes you more conscious that you are talking to a reporter — not a business colleague or friend.
- For on camera interviews, focus on the interviewer – not the camera.
- Dress for the audience. Patterns tend to distract on camera, so stick to solid colored clothing. You are encouraged to wear a logo or branded shirt, if available.
- Anytime you are onboard a boat, be sure you and all members of your team are wearing their life jackets and have one available for the reporter(s) to wear as well.

CUSTOMIZABLE COMMUNICATIONS

Using Social Media

Social media is becoming an increasingly important part of messaging, marketing and public relations. Through social media, you can not only spread the Sober Skipper message in a timely and efficient manner, but you have the ability to engage your community in the conversation. Since social media is an effective tool for extending the reach of your communication efforts, we have created some sample social media posts for your use. Feel free to adjust the posts to best fit your voice. You can use the images from our media library or use your own. Or share any that we post on our social media channels.

Best tips and practices for social media:

- Post when your followers are most active (you can check this out in the analytics section of your account on each platform). In general, we recommend posting around work hours (before 9:00 AM or after 5:00 PM) and/or during lunch breaks
- Include hashtags to optimize your post's reach
- Include graphics or pictures to stand out in your followers' feed
- Include questions to connect with your followers and prompt comments
- While you want to deliver your message quickly and concisely on all social channels, Facebook and Instagram posts give you room for more copy. For Twitter, you need to leave 23 characters for a URL of any length, so keep those posts under 257 characters.

Other copy/phrases to include (through social media posts, stories, etc.):

- "Share this post with your favorite boating buddy!"
- "Send us a screenshot of your completed pledge to be featured on our page"
- "Explain the reason why you took the Sober Skipper pledge"
- "Comment why you feel boating safety is important"
- "Tag someone you're lucky to spend time with on the water"

Suggested hashtags to use:

#BoatingSafety
#SoberSkipper
#TakeThePledge
#HeadingtoZero
#SafeFunStartsHere
#SeaTowFoundation

Public Image library:

Free images and graphics to use to create your own communications to spread the Sober Skipper message. [Image library.](#)

Sea Tow Foundation Channels:

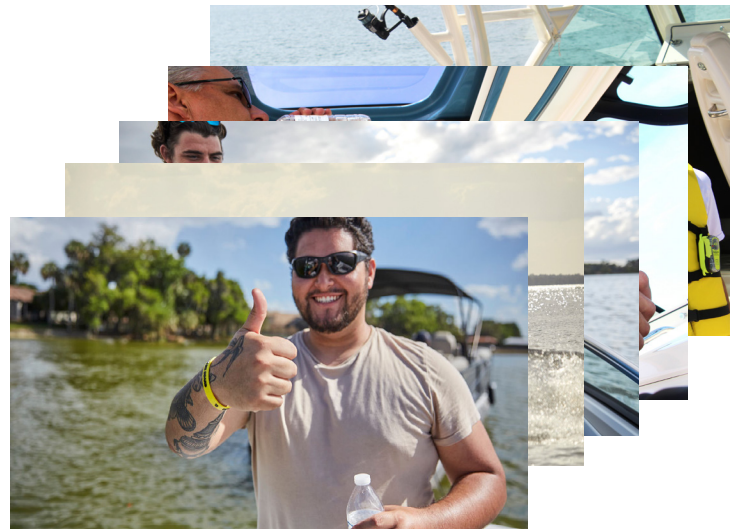
[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[YouTube](#)



Sample Social Media Posts

We all know about the dangers of drinking and driving, which is why we assign designated drivers and don't get in the car when an intoxicated person is behind the wheel. Well, the same rules apply to the water, too. Boating Under the Influence is the leading cause of fatal boating accidents, but it's 100% preventable.

Take the pledge to always have a Sober Skipper at the helm, so Boating Under the Influence accidents can be eliminated.

<https://www.boatingsafety.com/page/take-the-sober-skipper-pledge>



#DYK that alcohol is the leading cause of fatal boating accidents? Boating Under the Influence is not only illegal in every state, but 100% preventable. Take the pledge to always have a Sober Skipper behind the wheel so we can keep the water a safe and fun place to be. Tag your favorite boating buddy below and encourage them to take the pledge with you! Take the pledge to help eliminate Boating Under the Influence.

<https://www.boatingsafety.com/page/take-the-sober-skipper-pledge>



Let's work together to keep the (insert City name) community safe, and prevent alcohol related boating accidents! Boating Under the Influence is the leading cause of fatal boating accidents, and it's 100% preventable. Like a designated driver, make sure to always be or have a Sober Skipper behind the helm. Comment below to share when you've taken the Sober Skipper Pledge.

<https://www.boatingsafety.com/page/sober-skipper-program>



Raise your hand if you love the water! Us, too. Which is why we want to keep it a safe and fun place to be. (insert Business name) is encouraging YOU to take the pledge to always have a Sober Skipper behind the helm so we can eliminate alcohol related boating accidents in the (insert City name) community. Sober Skippers can mean the difference between a great day on the water, and a fatal boating accident.

<https://www.boatingsafety.com/page/sober-skipper-program>



Sample Social Media Posts

The Sea Tow Foundation is urging boaters to join them in Heading to Zero BUI accidents by pledging to always have a Sober Skipper behind the helm. BUI is illegal in every state, and is 100% preventable.

Take the pledge, and help eliminate BUI accidents.

<https://www.boatingsafety.com/page/sober-skipper-program>



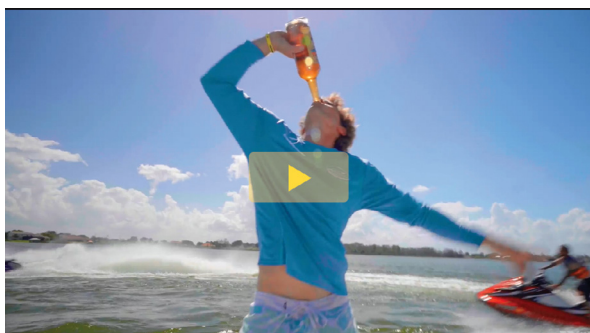
Your next day out on the water can be fun and safe by taking the Sober Skipper pledge. Pledge to keep you and your family safe by always having a Sober Skipper behind the helm.

<https://www.boatingsafety.com/page/sober-skipper-program>



Share this PSA video with your favorite boating buddy to spread awareness about the dangers of Boating Under the Influence. Take the Sober Skipper Pledge, and keep the water a safe and fun place for everyone.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3C7486AQWo>



Think nothing can take you down? This video from the Sea Tow Foundation might just tell you otherwise. Keep the water a fun and safe place for all, take the Sober Skipper Pledge.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3C7486AQWo>



RESOURCES FROM THE SEA TOW FOUNDATION

Promote Sober Skipper with these Tools

Promote the Sober Skipper Campaign to boaters in your area using the following free tools. These can help you talk about Boating Under the Influence (BUI) and how it's the largest contributing factor for recreational boating injuries and deaths. Sober Skipper is centered around the idea that boaters need to make the choice to be or to designate a sober skipper before leaving the dock. And that the Sober Skipper is in charge of the safe operation of their boat and the safety of all of the passengers in the boat. Working together, we can help eliminate BUI nationwide.

Order Sober Skipper materials from the [Online Store](#) to display and distribute

FREE Display Box with 100 Yellow Sober Skipper Wristbands

FREE Refill set of 100 Wristbands

FREE set of 25 Sober Skipper Floating Key Chains

Sober Skipper Clean Graffiti Stencil

Sober Skipper Aluminum Sign

Sober Skipper Display Banner

Take the Pledge Flyer

Heading to Zero Chart

Talking Points Flyer



Share Sober Skipper PSA Videos, Blog Posts, Informational Webinars and Images:

[Think Nothing Can Take You Down?](#) - Sober Skipper PSA

Created by the Sea Tow Foundation designed to resonate with the key audience most likely to be involved in BUI incidents

[Designated Sober Skipper](#) - Friends Video

[Designated Sober Skipper](#) - Family Video

[Sober Skipper Campaign is Saving Lives](#) Blog Post

[Keep Your Passengers Safe](#) Blog Post

[Make This the Summer of the Yellow Wristband](#) Blog Post

[How to Use the Clean Graffiti Stencil](#) Webinar

[Public Image Library](#)

RESOURCES FROM THE SEA TOW FOUNDATION

Ways to Use Safe Boating Materials

Whether you are hosting an event, own a business, or have any opportunity to share the Sober Skipper message, you can use the tools and resources from the [Sea Tow Foundation](https://www.boatingsafety.com) to spread more awareness.



LINKS TO ALL RESOURCES

[Sea Tow Foundation website www.boatingsafety.com](http://www.boatingsafety.com)

[Public Image Library](#)

[Take the Sober Skipper Pledge](#)

[Sober Skipper Heading to Zero Chart](#)

[Online store for free promotional materials and items to purchase](#)

[Boating Safety Classes through ilearntoboat](#)

[Life Jacket Loaner Station Map](#)

[How to Use the Clean Graffiti Stencil Webinar](#)

[Think Nothing Can Take You Down? - Sober Skipper PSA](#)

[Designated Sober Skipper - Friends Video](#)

[Designated Sober Skipper - Family Video](#)

[Sober Skipper Campaign is Saving Lives Blog Post](#)

[Keep Your Passengers Safe Blog Post](#)

[Make This the Summer of the Yellow Wristband Blog Post](#)

[Sea Tow Foundation Instagram](#)

[Sea Tow Foundation Facebook](#)

[Sea Tow Foundation Twitter](#)

[Sea Tow Foundation LinkedIn](#)

[Sea Tow Foundation YouTube](#)

