



# Safe Angling & Boating

by BEN RAYNOR

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**T**here is much more to safe angling and boating than red, right, return. No matter how long you've been on the water, experience does not always equate safety.

The following are a few simple tips to keep you and your crew safe on the water, whether you're a seasoned fisherman or a weekend warrior.

**The basics; wear a vest,** no matter where your fish from, shore or boat. There are numerous styles of vests now available that won't get in the way of your fun. Integrated fish/life vests are just as comfortable as a standard pocketed fishing vest. If you have a vest it also allows you to make a rescue by swimming or throwing it, if another person goes in the water.

**If it's wet, it's dangerous!** Swell and waves can be deceiving. I have been, and have seen people, swept off jetties and piers when sneaker waves hit them. Whether you slip or get knocked over, drowning can be the result.

No matter how safe a skipper you are; **if you are the person in the water**, or unconscious and no one else knows the safety protocols, what good are they?

**Does your crew/family know** where the electronic beacons are located? Do they know how to make a mayday call? Does your spouse know how to start the boat? If you fall overboard can they pull the anchor, start the boat and maneuver it to rescue you? Does your 14 year old child know where the fire extinguisher is? Can they actually use it?

Make sure anyone who boards your vessel knows these basic skills. Everyone on board should know where the radio

is, what channel to broadcast an emergency on and how to properly initiate a call to the Coast Guard.

If you are on a vessel without a radio, put some thought into how to deal with an emergency before it happens. Always have a float plan, let someone know where you are going and when you are due back, something as simple as a text could save your life.

Consider **pyrotechnic devices**, such as smoke and hand flares for emergencies. Without a radio they are an excellent way to get noticed.

Spend the money for a personal electronic beacon. They can be expensive, but \$150 bucks is a small price to pay in order to save your life.

Regardless of the type of rescue device, know how to use it. The time to understand how to set off a rocket flare isn't when your boat is on fire and you're in the water. A few minutes of instruction on the dock with you and your crew/passengers can save a life.

Also, **everyone on board should know how to use a fire extinguisher**. The concept is basic, PASS-Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep, but much more difficult to perform under the stress of an emergency.

Prevention is the best way to survive a water emergency. No trip, no fish, no amount of money is worth a life.

*Ben Rayner is a former underwater-egress and sea-survival instructor. He is executive director of Water Emergency Training, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives through drowning-prevention education and training. [www.wateremergencytraining.org/](http://www.wateremergencytraining.org/)*

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