

NASBLA Warns Against Unattended Children On PWC

Would you leave a child behind the wheel of car with the engine running?

Unfortunately some adults do something similar to this with personal watercraft.

Analysis by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) reveals that over the past 10 years a number of adults have carelessly left children unattended on personal watercraft (PWCs).

This act of carelessness has often resulted in the child's starting the engine and taking off, leading to injury or even death. Ron Jendro, boating law administrator for Montana and chair of NASBLA's Boats & Associated Equipment Committee said, "Apparently parents and guardians do not realize the risks involved with leaving a very young child on an unattended PWC.

This is especially hazardous because the lanyard for the engine cut-off switch is generally left attached to the vessel, making it easy for the child to push the start button and take off on the PWC."

Statistics gathered through the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Accident Report Database (BARD) show that during the past 10 years, 36 accidents involving young children on PWCs have occurred, causing more than 30 injuries and three fatalities.

Jendro added, "Besides not leaving a young child on an unattended PWC, adults should remove the lanyard from the engine cut-off switch when the PWC is docked, beached or otherwise unattended."

NASBLA also recommends that no passenger should be permitted to ride aboard a PWC unless he or she is able to securely hold on to the person in front of them or to the handholds, and can also keep both feet on the deck so as to maintain balance during operation.

"Some awareness and common sense can go a long way to prevent turning an enjoyable day on the water with family and friends into a tragedy," Jendro said.

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators is a non-profit organization comprised of state and territorial recreational boating authorities.

NASBLA fosters partnerships among the states, the Coast Guard and others, crafts model boating laws, maintains national education and training standards, assists in the homeland security challenges on our waterways, and advocates the needs of the state boating programs before Congress and federal agencies.