

NMMA issues guidelines for waterskiing safety

In an effort to reduce the risk of danger on the water, the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), through its Boating Industry Risk Management Council, has released guidelines for skiers and boat operators.

"Most accidents on the water involve alcohol, operator inattention, careless and reckless operation, inexperience of the driver or skier, failure to follow the Rules of the Road, and failure to wear life jackets," said NMMA director of engineering standards Tom Marhevko."

Stating that it takes three to waterski — driver, observer and skier. Below are safety procedures that should be taken before, during, and after the skiing is completed, according to NMMA.

The six safety tips to follow before skiing:

- Everyone should wear a US Coast Guard-approved life jacket
- Always boat sober
- Driver and observer should know the skiers' abilities
- Be responsible — watch for other boats, and communicate skier information to the driver
- Observer and skier must know hand signals for communication which are available from USA Waterski at www.usawaterski.org
- Learn the nautical Rules of the Road in a boating safety education course

NMMA also states that, while skiing, participants should make sure they:

- Have an experienced driver and observer on board at all times
- Shut off engine completely and remove key from ignition when picking up/dropping off a skier
- Always keep the skier in sight
- Stay at least 100 feet away from all other objects
- Choose a skiing area away from anglers, swimmers, divers, moorings and other dangers
- Watch ski lines closely so they don't get tangled in the propeller
- Follow approved ski patterns in each skiing area

After skiing, towlines should be inspected for wear, fraying, cuts and unnecessary knots before and after each use.

If you are unsure if your equipment is still safe, bring it by Gunnells Marine and we will be glad to inspect it for free.