



Transport for NSW Media Release

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Be Sure Offshore safety blitz targets northern NSW boaters

After a spate of capsizings across the state, NSW Maritime will run Operation Be Sure Offshore this weekend to remind boaters in the state's north to avoid risks on open water.

The safety blitz will target coastal waters from Newcastle to the Queensland border, an area with more than 86,000 registered vessels, representing more than a third of registered vessels in the state.

NSW Maritime Principal Manager North Sonia McKay said there had been a spike in offences this boating season, with a concerning number of them lifejacket related.

"We're worried boaters are becoming complacent and neglecting basic safety protocols," Ms McKay said.

"With more than 400 lifejacket offences already this boating season in northern NSW and an increase in capsizings across the state we need boaters to be vigilant, especially when it comes to offshore safety.

"The best way to avoid a tragedy on the water is to carry out routine safety checks on your boat and safety equipment, know your limits as a boater, know the limitations of your vessel, monitor the weather and conditions, make sure you don't exceed your load capacity and of course; wear your lifejacket.

"Our officers will be out in force this weekend, checking those on the water have the right safety gear as well as a strong understanding of the risks and requirements of boating in open waters."

Figures from NSW Marine Rescue show boaters in northern NSW are most likely to get into trouble and need saving in open waters.

Ms McKay said being prepared is more than doing what is required to avoid a capsize, it is knowing how to act if the unexpected happens.

"If you do capsize you should stay with your vessel so emergency services can spot you. You should also have emergency equipment where it is easily accessible and use all means to call for help.

"It is a requirement for everyone in a boat to be wearing a lifejacket anytime you are crossing a bar, and there must be a lifejacket on board for every person in the boat. Remember it can only save your life if you're wearing it."

There have been two bar crossing deaths in the last 12 months in northern NSW, with boaters urged to remember the acronym iBAR before attempting to cross a bar:

i - incoming tide only

B - bigger than 2 metre waves - reconsider

A - assess waves patterns before attempting to cross

R - remember a lifejacket

“The best advice remains when in doubt, don’t go out. Boaters should have a Plan B and choose a sheltered enclosed waterway if bar or offshore conditions are too dangerous for their abilities,” Ms McKay said.

NSW Maritime officers have carried out more than 7,000 vessel safety checks resulting in 1,300 offences and 270 penalty notices recorded in the north region this boating season, which are all an increase on this time last year. Statewide there have been around 25,000 safety checks since the start of the boating season on 1 October 2022.

For more information about bar crossings, visit: <https://nsw.gov.au/using-waterways/waterways-and-designated-areas/navigating-coastal-bars/crossing-coastal-bars>.