

DON'T GET STRANDED

Ensure that you and your boat are prepared for a day on the water

It's a beautiful day; the sun is shining and you've just launched your boat for the start of another season on the water. And the thoughts of that tough winter just past are quickly forgotten. Everyone's on board, excited about the day ahead, so off you go.

The day unfolds as you had hoped it would. Until a problem leaves your boat dead in the water.

It could be that you've run out of gas or you've had a mechanical breakdown of some kind. What to do? Likely what you did not do is check your boat thoroughly before heading out. And unfortunately, you are not alone.

www.smartboater.ca was created by the Canadian Safe Boating Council in partnership with the National Search and Rescue Secretariat to remind Canadians during Safe Boating Awareness Week, which runs from May 21st – 27th, and throughout the entire boating season to review their safe boating check list before heading out onto the water.

Scott Miller, a Maritime Search and Rescue Coordinator with the Canadian Coast Guard says: "75 to 80% of calls for help to the Coast Guard are non-distress calls; the most common ones deal with boats that have broken down, run aground or have just run out of gas which is far and away the most common call to the Coast Guard, and these are all situations that are entirely preventable by the boat operator."

Mechanical failures can strike any boater, any time. That's just part of boating. And it's not necessarily an indication that the boater has simply failed to properly look after the boat. Stuff happens !

But many calls for help are predictable and preventable. Have a proper check list for your boat and follow it before you head out, each and every time. Make sure that your boat is mechanically sound and that you have enough gas for your intended voyage with some in reserve. And file a sail plan or itinerary to help Search and Rescue find you in the event of a real emergency. A few simple steps will save you the embarrassment of making an unnecessary call for help and diverting search and rescue resources from areas where they might be needed more.

Review your check list BEFORE your leave – Be Prepared! Whether you use a power boat, sail boat, personal watercraft, canoe, kayak or fishing boat, find more information on a variety of boating safety tips by visiting www.SmartBoater.ca.