



## **Public Information Release**

June 23, 2009

Captain James Bauman, Public Information Officer

This weekend, the Lake County Sheriff's Marine Patrol Services Unit will be joining 28 other California law enforcement agencies in a national coordinated effort of increased enforcement known as "Operation Dry Water." Operation Dry Water is a joint program of the California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW), the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Marine enforcement agencies will be out in force on California waterways the entire weekend of June 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> looking for boaters operating their vessels while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Specific enforcement tactics will vary from agency to agency but generally, the state-wide effort will include increased patrols, boating under the influence checkpoints, and boater education.

According to the National Transportation and Safety Board, recreational boating accidents are second only to highway accidents in the number of transportation fatalities. A boat operator with a blood-alcohol content of .10 % is estimated to be more than 10 times more likely to die in a boating accident than an operator with no alcohol in their system.

Alcohol obviously impairs a boater's judgment, balance, vision, and reaction time, but it is dangerous for passengers as well. Intoxication can result in slips, falls overboard, and other dangerous accidents. It can not only increase fatigue and susceptibility to the effects of cold-water immersion, but it can also result in inner-ear disturbance which can make it impossible for a person suddenly immersed in water to distinguish up from down.

Under State law, an operator is considered under the influence when they are operating a vessel with a blood-alcohol content of .08 % or above. A person convicted of operating a vessel while under the influence on the first offense can receive up to a \$1,000 fine, six months in jail, or both a fine and jail time. State BUI laws pertain to ALL boats, from canoes and rowboats to even the largest vessels.

This weekend in Lake County, the Sheriff's Marine Patrol will be deploying additional deputies and boats in the afternoon and evening hours from Friday through Sunday on the waters of Clear Lake. Patrol teams will promote boating safety education, BUI awareness and conduct directed and heightened patrols for operators boating under the influence.

There will be a zero tolerance for anyone found operating a boat on the waters of Clear Lake while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. There will be arrests and some boaters will face the consequences of boating under the influence. We want people to be safe and have fun on Clear Lake, but we would much rather make an arrest than to have to tell a family member or friend that someone has been taken from them as the result an alcohol related accident.