

National Standards for Safe Boating

About a dozen years ago, when he was appointed chair of the National Boating Safety Advisory Council (NBSAC), Jim Muldoon recognized the need for more onboard training for recreational boaters. "As a country, we are going more toward some form of required proof of boating skill. The sailing community understood the need for on-water training long ago, but generally the rest of the boating community has only had classroom training."

Now, as the recipient of a U.S. Coast Guard grant, U.S. Sailing has assembled a team of experts to develop national on-water instruction standards for recreational boat operators. The standards will represent a minimum level of instruction required for the safe operation of a recreational boat (power, sail, or human-powered), where the primary approach of delivery is experiential, hands-on, and on-water.

Muldoon continues, "So now we're determining, 'what does a safe boater have to know? What should be in a safe

boating course?' The Coast Guard gave us an assignment, by way of the grant, to set those norms. In my opinion, it's going to save lives."

Recently, the team of experts, including Muldoon, Jonathan Meyers from U.S. Sailing, Chris Edmonston from BoatU.S., and others gathered at the Annapolis Sailing School to evaluate 38 different maneuvers that have been proposed as the criteria for the national standards for powerboats, including close quarters maneuvers and open water operation. Similar testing will take place at seven venues around the country, and the process will be repeated for sail and human-powered boats. The test subjects (who play the roles of students in a boating class) will vary in age and skill, but in this particular venue they were students from Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Marine Repair Class at the Center for Applied Technology-South.

"We believe this work toward on-water standards, in conjunction with the development of the national



- Annapolis-area students recently helped experts determine the appropriate maneuvers to be included in a national standard for the safe operation of a boat.

system of standards for recreational boat operation, is a very important project for our nation's recreational boaters," says Brian Dorval, grant facilitator. Meyers adds, "We are in a position to achieve a huge amount of growth because of this program. It will allow us to train so many more people. In this region alone, we have classes every weekend for boater safety and for boating instructors."