

## **Ready, Set, Wear It!**

(your Life Jacket)

by P/C Harl Porter, SN

This year National Safe Boating Week is 16 to 22 May 2015. Consider wearing your Life Jacket to work on Friday 15 May; and when asked, talk about Boating Safety in your office. Also take a photo of you in your Life Jacket at work and post it to **facebook.com/ReadySetWearIt** (also e-mail me a copy at [107Harl@sc.rr.com](mailto:107Harl@sc.rr.com)).

2013 was the best year ever for Boating Safety (Statistics for 2014 are NOT available yet). In 2013 there were 560 Boating Fatalities (in 1991 there were 924; the trend is down from 758 in 2011 and 651 in 2012). There were 398 Deaths from drowning in 2013; 328 of the drowning deaths were NOT WEARING a Life Jacket. Over half of the Boating Fatalities in 2013 could have been prevented if the victims had been wearing their life jacket: however 61 of the drowning victim were wearing a Life Jacket (type unknown).

Which boaters are at the highest risk for drowning? Boaters in Open Motor Boats accounted for 189 of the drownings in 2013. Then Canoes had 48 drownings followed by Kayaks with 25 and then rowboats with 23. The boaters at risk are in small, open boats. There were only 19 drownings from Cabin Motorboats and Auxiliary Sailboats. The small boat operators are the ones we need to talk Boating Safety to; and lots of them do not consider themselves to be boaters (they are fishermen and hunters).

There is no breakout of drownings by age. Hopefully boat operators have life jackets for and require that all children on their boat, under the age of 12 (South Carolina law), wear a Life Jacket. This author required his grandkids to wear a Life Jacket until age of 16 (Captain's requirement). On 18 April I manned the Charleston Sail and Power Squadron Booth at the in water Boat Show at Bristol Marina. Sea Tow (the Yellow Tow Boats) had loaner Child Life Jackets, just before going on the pier, for children going out to see the in water boats. Well done Sea Tow!

The next cause of Death on boats was from Trauma (think boat collisions). Over half of the 91 Trauma deaths (50) were not wearing a life jacket. Perhaps wearing a life jacket also makes you a safer boat operator.

Please talk up wearing Life Jackets, especially during Safe Boating week 16 to 22 May this year. Talk Boating Safety and Life Jackets to the small open boaters you see at the launch ramps. Lets make 2015 even a better year for Boating Safety.