



## Small Boats Can Mean Big Danger

In recent years, personal watercrafts (PWCs) have increased in popularity. According to the National Safety Council (NSC) as many as 1 million PWCs will ply the nation's waterways this summer, outnumbering larger pleasure boats on many of them. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that as PWCs become more common, so do PWC accidents. There were 68 fatalities and 1,580 PWC-related injuries in 2000 (most recent U.S. Coast Guard statistics available).

"The National Safety Council and UL want to alert PWC operators to ways that can reduce their risk to injury and harm," says Alan McMillan, National Safety Council president. "PWC riders have to learn how to operate the craft safely. They need to know its limitations."

UL and the Council recommend the following to PWC operators and owners:

- Remember that a PWC is jet propelled. That means if the throttle is released, the driver will lose steering ability. Users who are unfamiliar with the craft may automatically release the throttle when they get into an emergency situation and crash into docks or other boats.
- Take a safe boating class and make sure that anyone who borrows your PWC does, too. Contact your local PWC dealer or state boating office for class information.
- If you plan to rent a PWC and you are unfamiliar with the craft and boating rules, take a safe boating class and use extra caution while operating the craft.
- Do not jump the wake of other boats.
- Stay alert and remember to look in all directions before making any turns.
- Obey your local laws. Some states have age limits, life jacket requirements and other regulations.
- Always wear your life jacket (also known as a personal flotation device or PFD).
- Never drink and operate PWCs.

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>

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