

Written by Rep. Mike Smiddy
Friday, 24 May 2013 07:31

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PORT BYRON, IL – State Rep. Mike Smiddy (D-Hillsdale) encourages local residents to practice safe boating habits in recognition of Safe Boating Week.

“Enjoying the outdoors and spending recreational time with friends and family is a part of the summer culture for many families in our area,” Smiddy said. “We should all take the necessary precautions to ensure that everyone using our waters this summer remains safe.”

Continuing efforts to increase boating safety, the legislature recently unanimously approved a proposal aimed at preventing dangerous and avoidable accidents caused by boaters operating a boat under the influence of alcohol. Under Senate Bill 1479, boat operators involved in an accident causing injury or death would be required to complete a blood alcohol level test, similar to implied consent to a chemical test for drivers involved in motor vehicle accidents.

Several other states passed or are considering similar measures.

“Boating can be dangerous activity when inexperienced operators, rough waters, and quickly changing conditions are brought together,” said Smiddy. “This initiative will help keep children, families, and friends safe by further discouraging boat operators from boating recklessly.”

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reported 101 boating-related accidents in 2012, including 17 deaths and 77 injuries. Wearing life vests, completing boating safety courses, and avoiding alcohol while operating a motorized boat help protect boaters from accidents and injury. IDNR offers free instructor-led safety education classes throughout the year in addition to online education programs. Information on these programs can be found at www.dnr.state.il.us/safety or by calling IDNR toll-free at (800) 832-2599.

For more information, contact Smiddy’s office at RepSmiddy@gmail.com, (309) 848-9098, or toll free at (855) 243-4988.

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