



Riding the wake on Lake Washington are cousins Jessica Suver and Sean O'Brien as flag-waving Michael O'Brien keeps watch. Below, two "thunderboats" that raced in last year's Tastin' n Racin' festival on Lake Sammamish.

BETTY UDESEN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

## splashing & dashing

Boating safety is the focus at Tastin' n Racin' festival at Lake Sammamish

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Time to get out on the water! Summer has almost arrived, and none too soon for those who love good water-skiing and power-boating conditions.

Water and boating safety is being emphasized at the Tastin' n Racin' festival at Lake Sammamish State Park in Issaquah this weekend.

It's a water-focused festival of hydroplane and boat racing, with lots of shoreside family entertainment, boats to test-drive or ride in, food, music and a carnival.

The hydros are "thunderboats," smaller and noisier boats than Seafair's big turbine-powered hydros. They'll be on display when they're not racing, along with the Unlimited Hydroplane Museum's original Atlas Van Lines and other big hydros.

There's also a children's area both days with games, family entertainers and booths.

One of those booths focuses on water safety. Visit with Gretchen Hurter and members of the Bellevue Power Squadron, who have taught hundreds of Boating Safety Classes for Kids in area schools. They know "do this" and "don't do that" can be dull, so they emphasize the "wow factor."

Try their 15-minute water test: Kids (and adults) plunge their arms into 50-degree water and see how long it takes before their fingers are too numb to snap life vest buckles. It's usually far less than 15 minutes. From there it's easy for people to understand that after 15 minutes in cold water, hypothermia sets in.

Fifty degrees, they'll tell you, is the average temperature of Puget Sound year-round, and about the temperature of Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish right now, though the lakes get warmer in the summer.

Don't think that's cold? Take a cold shower at home. Tap water is about 50 degrees — BRRRRRR!

The Power Squadron teaches the 50-50-50 Rule: A person has only a 50-50 chance of swimming 50 yards in 50-degree water, and less of a chance if he's not wearing a life vest.

### THIS WEEKEND

**Tastin' n Racin' at Lake Sammamish**, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and tomorrow at Lake Sammamish State Park, Issaquah. Exit 15 off I-90. Admission and parking free.

**On the water today:** Kayak polo match, noon. 1/2-scale Unlimited hydroplanes, 2 p.m. Celebrity kayak race with unlimited hydro drivers and others, 4 p.m.

**Races tomorrow:** Noon to 4 p.m., 12 classes of limited hydros, runabouts and tunnel boat racing. Driver autographs, 2:30 p.m.

**Family fun:** Carnival rides, 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. both days. Also flight simulator, gyrottron, kids' inflatable rides, face painters, clowns, toy and craft booths.

**Entertainment:** Two stages of music and fun, noon to 7 p.m. both days, including country-western, rhythm and blues, retro rock and family entertainers.

That leads to the "gasp factor."

"When you hit cold water unexpectedly, you gasp," says Hurter. "Your mouth opens, you swallow a lot of water and you sink. If you're not wearing a life vest, what's going to bring you back to the surface?"

Kids don't always go boating with parents, she adds. "We want kids telling adults, 'I NEED a life vest.'"

Also promoting safety, along with being a friendly patrolling influence at the festival this weekend, is the King County Marine Patrol. They'll be on the water, as they are most of the summer on Lake Sammamish and in parts of Lake Washington. They'll be making routine boat inspections and handing out coupons for free ice cream cones — to kids who are "caught" wearing life vests.

Marine patrols, which are also found on Lake Washington, Lake Union and in Puget Sound, make sure boats don't speed, drivers aren't drinking alcohol, boats aren't overloaded and that there are adequate life vests for the people in the boat.

When there are not enough life vests, they can cite the driver, and insist excess passengers go ashore, says Seattle Police Lt. Steve Brown. "When we have boating accidents and drownings, it's too often folks who aren't wearing life vests or overloaded boats."



### SAFETY TIPS

**Never leave kids unattended** in or near the water or on a boat.

**Designate at least one adult** to constantly watch kids in or near water.

**Inflatable toys, air mattresses and foam floats** will not keep kids safe.

**Coast Guard-**

**approved life vests** — personal flotation devices (PFD) — are the only reliable flotation aids.

**By law** there must be a properly sized PFD for each person in a boat. But PFDs work only when worn. All kids and adults should wear them in boats. (Have kids try jumping in the water wearing their PFD so they won't panic if they fall in.)

**Never overload a boat.** All commercially made boats are rated for weight and passenger loads and have limit plaques.

**Swim only when** lifeguards are on duty or if an experienced swimmer is supervising.

**Boat, pool and waterfront owners** should take lifesaving or at least cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) classes and have a cellular or poolside phone for emergencies.

**Carry a cellular phone onboard:** #CG or \*CG calls the Coast Guard on most cellular services.

**Teach children water** and boating safety rules. Free or low-cost adult and teen boating safety classes are offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadron. Call 800-982-8813, Ext. 6, or 800-336-2628.

**Start kids' swim lessons** as soon as they are ready.

**Free Parents' Water Safety** packet is available by calling Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, 206-526-2070.