



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

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Safety Alert 06-25

BOW SEATING EJECTION HAZARD

This Safety Alert addresses the dangers identified for passengers seated at the bow of bow rider style vessels, while the vessels are on plane or in rough sea conditions. A 23-foot Cobalt bow rider style recreational vessel was underway with 12 passengers onboard on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway when it encountered a large wake created by another vessel ahead. The wake caused the Cobalt to roll severely and pitch forward, swamping the bow. Nine of the occupants were ejected. The passenger seated at the forwardmost bow seat was subsequently struck by the vessel's propeller and killed. A similar fatal accident occurred in July of 2022, when an overloaded 24-foot boat capsized while traveling at high speeds in the Hudson River off Manhattan with passengers seated in the bow area.



Swamping of the bow can happen quickly and without warning, even when a boat is loaded in compliance with the manufacturer's capacity plate, as in the scenario described above. The operator's judgment is crucial in considering securing access to the bow area when the vessel is operating in less than ideal sea conditions. The likelihood of the vessel experiencing unstable or erratic motion will increase with greater sea state, speed, and vessel loading conditions with passengers and gear at the bow. These circumstances, as well as individual passenger capabilities, should be considered when determining if the closure of the bow area is necessary.

The U.S. Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that operators of bow rider style vessels adhere to manufacturer's recommended occupant positions as applicable. If no manufacturer recommendations are available, operators should relocate passengers from the bow seating area to aft seats while their vessels are operating on plane, above 5 mph, or in rough conditions.

The U.S. Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that manufacturers of bow rider style vessels take the following measures:

- Designate occupant positions and weight allowances for vessels operating on plane, above 5 mph, or in rough conditions. The occupant positions should be illustrated on a label aboard the boats, as well as in the owner's manual. Placards and updated owner's manuals should be distributed to existing boats.

- Establish an advisory of the hazards of using bow seats while the vessel is on plane, above 5 mph, or in rough conditions. This advisory should be posted on a label aboard the boats, as well as in the owner's manual. Placards and updated owner's manuals should be distributed to existing boats.

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