REMINDER: BOATER EDUCATION CARD REQUIRED TO OPERATE A MOTORBOAT THIS BOATING SEASON

Take a boater safety education course and get the Boater Education Card: It's the law and it helps keep boaters safe. Washington boaters are required by law to pass an approved boater education course and have their boater card while operating a motorboat of 15 horsepower or more on Washington waters. In 2011, the boater card is mandatory for boaters ages 12 to 35 years. The card requirement for other age groups will be phased in through 2014. Boaters born before 1955 are exempt from this law but many choose to get the card.

The majority of in-person classes are offered in the fall and spring. That is the best time for boaters to prepare for a safe and fun boating season. Boaters who have had safety training are less likely to have an accident on the water. Course topics include basic boat handling, safety equipment, navigational rules and how to handle boating emergencies. To meet the new education requirement, boaters can take an approved course in a classroom, online or at home. Once the course is completed and test passed, boaters need to send a completed application for their card and pay $10.The card is good for a lifetime. Information is available online at www.boatered.org or call (360) 902-8555.

Optional addition:
The law is being phased in by operator age over several years as shown in the timeline below:

- 2011: 35 years and younger
- 2012: 40 years and younger
- 2013: 50 years and younger
- 2014: 59 years and younger