

ADIRONDACK OUTDOORS

New Navigation Law will target boaters, hunters and cold water paddlers

The New York State Legislature, despite its recent malfunctions, has managed to pass a new navigation law. It slipped through with very little fanfare or opposition and now awaits the governors signature.

The new boating law will require the mandatory use of a personal floatation device by anyone aboard a pleasure vessel of 21 feet and under. A pleasure vessel is defined as essentially anything under 21 feet in length that floats such as a canoe, rowboat, speedboat or even a raft.

Similar to the enforcement of New York's much maligned, mandatory seatbelt law, the new navigation law is an effort by the state to force residents to protect themselves. It has even been described as a "seat belt law for boaters."

The new law will take affect beginning on Nov. 1, 2009 and enforcement will continue until April 1, 2010 and every year thereafter. No longer can boaters simply stow a life jacket under the seat. You can't just sit on it, as with a safety cushion. A Coast Guard approved, Type III lifejacket must be worn.

Hunters will be affected

Hunters traveling by motorboat or canoe will be the initial user group most affected by the new law, although late season anglers should also take notice. The legislation is intended to target boaters that are on the water during the cold water months.

Hunters will likely be the predominate, cold weather boating crowd. Waterfowl hunters and deer hunters accessing their camps via motorboat as well as kayakers, canoeists and other boaters will be affected.

The purpose of the law has been explained as an effort to "clarify legal requirements concerning the use of PFD's and decrease boating-related injuries and fatalities by requiring the use of PFDs on small vessels during the months of the year when water temperatures are at their coldest."

by the US Coast Guard indicates that the cold water drowning are the major cause of hunter fatalities. Each year, more hunters die from drowning and the effects of hypothermia than from gunshot wounds, falls from a treestand or other accidents.

Furthermore, statistics reveal that the majority of capsizing and falls overboard occur with boats less than 20 feet in length.

Many drownings occur when a hunter, dressed in heavy clothes for the weather, stands in a boat to take a pee at sea and in water temperatures between 32 and 40 degrees, a person can a person can become unconscious in less than 15 minutes.

Since fewer people are engaged in water-based activities during the off-season, the likelihood of prompt rescues efforts occurring during the cold-water months is greatly reduced.

Under cold water conditions, a person's best chance of survival is to wear a securely fastened PFD which helps to conserve energy, prevents submersion, and allows more time for rescue.

I expect there will be an increased demand for the new style of lightweight, inflatable PFD's that can be worn under a jacket. These Coast Guard approved PFD's are available as either a vest or suspenders. Although they are lightweight and can fit under clothing, they will instantly inflate when submerged in water.

Hunters using boats should be familiar with their water craft and un-

The rationale is explained as "over the past decade there has been an upward trend in recreational boating fatalities. Nearly 20 percent of these boating fatalities occurred during the winter/early spring months involving small boats. In 90 percent of these cases, the victim was not wearing a PFD."

Indeed, research conducted

derstand its load capacity. Hunters often use smaller, more portable boats such as jonboats, duckboats or canoes which are more prone to capsizing.

As a user group, hunters often go out in the foul, fall and spring weather. Usually they are with other companions and sometimes with dogs or a heavy load of decoys or other gear.

Hunters should avoid crossing large, open bodies of water and never stand in a boat. In event of a capsizing, stay with the boat if you can't get to shore.

As with any motor vehicle, whether a truck, ATV or a snowmobile, it is illegal to carry a loaded firearm or discharge a firearm in a boat while under power.

However, it is legal to shoot from a motorboat, rowboat or canoe, even during the big game season, provided the motor is not running.

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Lightweight, inflatable Type III PFD's, such as these Suspenders brand worn by Chris Williamson of Jones Outfitters in Lake Placid will be a popular choice with hunters when NYS begins enforcing a new Navigation Law requiring the mandatory use of a personal floatation device (PFD) on November 1, 2009.



Scott Farnsworth of Mineville caught this 24-pound channel catfish over Fourth of July weekend. It was 35 1/4 inches long and he hauled in the monster while fishing near lake champlain bridge.