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ILLINOIS LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

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Don't Booze and Boat: The Risks of Drinking While Boating

Gordon Lightfoot's song *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* depicts the Midwest's waterways simultaneously as a robust economic and recreational force and a terrifying force of nature. As beautiful as the rivers and lakes of Illinois are, any body of water can become dangerous and deadly when mixing boating and alcohol. Alcohol drastically increases the risks and dangers of boating in Illinois waterways. The Illinois Liquor Control Commission (ILCC) urges boat operators and passengers to be responsible, practice moderation, and understand the threats of drinking and boating.

"Like drinking and driving, Boating Under the Influence (BUI) of alcohol can impair operator and passenger safety. Alcohol can damage operator judgment, reflexes, depth perception, and coordination abilities. No matter how confident a boat operator is while under the influence, the consequences of alcohol on an individual's mental and physical well-being increase the danger of boating," **said Illinois Liquor Control Commission Executive Director Lisa Gardner.**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reported 70 boating accidents and 72 people arrested for BUI in Illinois in 2023. Tragically, IDNR registered two fatalities in BUI incidents in 2023. Due to the deaths and injuries caused by BUIs, boaters must educate themselves on safety on the water. For more information on boating safety, please visit the IDNR webpage on boating safety education: https://dnr.illinois.gov/safety/boatingsafety.html.

In Illinois, it is illegal to operate a boat with a Blood Alcohol Content of 0.08 or higher, or while under the influence of drugs. The ILCC urges Illinoisans to not consume alcohol while operating a boat to lower the risks of bodily harm that can be caused by BUI. Should an individual wish to appreciate Illinois' rivers and lakes while enjoying alcohol, the ILCC recommends designating a sober operator before a boating trip or taking advantage of the many commercial boats and watercraft with professional operators in waterways across the State.

About the Illinois Liquor Control Commission

The Illinois Liquor Control Commission's mission is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the people of Illinois through careful control and regulation of the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcoholic liquors and through the development of strategies to reduce youth access to alcohol products and the provision of training and education on responsible beverage service.

To learn more about the ILCC and its divisions, visit www.ILCC.Illinois.gov. To submit a tip or complaint to the ILCC's Enforcement Division, click here.