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Boaters beware: Law enforcement beefing up for holiday weekend

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Taking to the lake on your pontoon or jet ski for the holiday weekend has all the makings of a great time.

But Lt. Robert McCullough from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources warns everyone to be extra attentive on the water.

"The Fourth of July, especially when it falls on a weekend, is the crescendo of the summer," he said. "Tons of people head to our area lakes for a fun weekend on the water."

But more people means less room for mistakes, he added.

"There are going to be more people swimming in the open water from their boats and more water crafts on the lakes," he said. "If you look away for a second, anything can happen."

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> — Lt. Robert McCullough, S.C. DNR

McCullough urges boat owners and beachgoers to properly fit themselves with personal floatation devices or life jackets.

"Try them out before you head out," he said. "Sizes can vary significantly, and a life jacket that doesn't fit properly will serve no purpose."

And because the holiday weekend means busy lakes, all hands will be on deck, he said.

"There will be extra law enforcement out on the water, you can count on that," he added.

Don't be caught without life jackets for everyone on board, pack away the fire extinguisher (even on a sea doo), make sure you have a whistle for those who like to tool around on personal water crafts and always make sure to have a designated driver.

"Just because you can drink a few beers on a Saturday night doesn't mean that amount will affect you the same when you're on a boat," he said. "A mix of dehydration and the sun can really do a number on your reaction skills. There are no brakes in the water, so it's best to not drink at all."