

# Officials emphasize nighttime boat

# safety

THE JOURNAL STAFF

SENECA — Law enforcement officials on the water have noticed some dangerous trends lately and will be patrolling area lakes this week to emphasize boater safety.

The Oconee County Sheriff's Office marine unit patrols the waters of Lake Keowee, Lake Hartwell and Lake Jocassee on a regular basis and will be partnering with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources through Saturday to remind all area boaters of the safest — and legal — procedures for operation and enjoyment on the lakes.

"Some of the observations that were made that will be of major importance to the marine unit and SCDNR were issues that were observed during dusk or during the nighttime hours," OCSO spokesman Jimmy Watt said. "Observations have been made of boats with no lights on, boats pulling skiers and tubes past the legal time in which they are allowed to do so, as well as a couple of kayakers who were barely visible as a boat came close to them as it traveled around a point."

All watercraft — including non-motorized kayaks, canoes and paddleboards — require an appropriately fitting personal flotation device (PFD) for each person on board, and those longer

(this week) while also continuing to educate our citizens and visitors on how to stay safe while enjoying the lakes and waterways of Oconee County."

The Oconee County Sheriff's Office reminds boaters with vessels shorter than 39.4 feet of the following nighttime safety measures:

- Non-motorized boats must have at least a flashlight while operating
- Motorized boats re-



SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

**The Oconee County Sheriff's Office is partnering with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources this week to emphasize boater safety, especially in the evening hours when vessels are harder to see. Patrols from now through Saturday will focus on prevention and education, according to the sheriff's office.**

than 16 feet must have a readily accessible throwable flotation device, according to an OCSO news release.

Any boat with flammable or combustible materials in an enclosed space must carry a Type B fire extinguisher, and those shorter than 65.5 feet long — including non-motorized — require a "device that produces sufficient sound to announce intentions and positioning" on board, the release said.

Children under the age of 12 must wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times on watercraft shorter than 16 feet long.

"Boating and water recreation is an important part of our economy, tourism and our life here in Oconee County," Sheriff Mike Crenshaw said.

"Oconee County is almost an island in regard to that fact that you have to travel across a body of water in many cases as you enter and exit the county. We want our citizens and visitors to enjoy their time boating on the lakes of Oconee County. However, we want our citizens and visitors to enjoy water recreation on our lakes safely, and our marine unit stands ready to make sure that continues to be the case."

Sunset boating and nighttime water adventures have caused a few problems in recent weeks as well.

"We have also received reports regarding camping and campfires on the islands of Lake Keowee, in particular," Watt said. "The marine unit, along with our partners with the Department of Natural Resources, will be focusing on these issues

quire sidelights with red indicating a vessel's port (left) side and green for the starboard (right) side AND

- All-round white light that can be seen by others from all directions
- Skiing/wakeboarding is illegal between sunset and sunrise, and participants must wear Coast Guard-approved PFD
- A towing vessel must have an additional person or wide-angle mirror to observe the person(s) being towed

- People 16 years or older may operate any boat or personal watercraft without restrictions

- Drivers 16 or younger must have someone 18 or older on board OR have completed a SCDNR boating safety course