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Life jackets save lives, wear it!
Chalecos Salvavidas Salvan Vidas, Usalos!

The State Parks Division urges safety first due to higher water levels across New Mexico
Sign Up for a FREE Boater Education Class

Santa Fe, NM – Temperatures are rising in New Mexico and record amounts of runoff from melting snow is filling our lakes, rivers, streams, and reservoirs, which can be dangerous if you are swimming or boating and not wearing a life jacket. It's an important reminder that an educated and prepared boater is a safe boater.

The State Parks Division (State Parks) of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department and its partners across the state, including the Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department, urge residents and visitors to take precautions and put safety first, especially on the busy Rio Grande. One of the first steps is to take a free Boater Education course from your State Parks.

Each year State Parks collaborates with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and state, federal, and nonprofit organizations to encourage boaters to enroll in a boating education course to help make their time on the water safe and more enjoyable.

Over the last five years, more than 84% of boating deaths in New Mexico occurred in situations where the boat operator had never taken a safety course. Last year, boating accidents caused tens of thousands of dollars of property damage, serious injuries, and death.

“All motorboat, personal watercraft, and sailboat operators born on or after January 1, 1989, are required by law to complete a boating safety course to operate on New Mexico waters,” said Scott Chalmers, Boating Safety and Education Program Coordinator. “Whether you’re new to boating or have captained a watercraft for years, education is key to becoming and remaining a safer, more knowledgeable boater.”

State Parks provide free 8-hour boating education classes online and in-person across the state. Students must score 80 percent on the closed-book exam to receive a Boater Education Card and have it on-board their vessel during its operation. The card is valid for life and meets the requirements for recreational boating education in many other states. Last year more than 800 people successfully completed a New Mexico boating safety education class.

The following safety tips are just some of the topics you will learn.

- **Life jackets save lives.** Make sure everyone wears a properly fitted life jacket, and the right kind of life jacket for the activity.
- **Never drink alcohol and go boating.** Alcohol is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents.
- **Keep a proper lookout.** Operator inattention is one of the top five contributing factors in boating accidents.
- **Maintain a safe speed.** A boat going too fast for conditions can easily lose control. Follow all boating safety and navigational rules.
- **Check the weather forecast.** The weather and water conditions can change rapidly. Know before you go and be prepared for it to change without notice.
- **File a float plan.** Always tell a friend or family member where you’re going and when you’ll be back. That way, the proper officials can be notified if you don’t return when expected.

Boater education classes are already underway. Signing up is easy! Go to our website at www.emnrd.nm.gov, click on the State Parks tab, and choose Boating in New Mexico for more information. For more information in Spanish go to Navegando América.

¡Vámanos! Let’s Go New Mexico!



High water flows on the Rio Grande.
Photo: Scott Chalmers, NM State Parks Boating Education Coordinator.



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The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and resource development services to the public and other state agencies. Learn more at https://www.emnrd.nm.gov.

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators is a national nonprofit organization that works to develop public policy for recreational boating safety. NASBLA represents the recreational boating authorities of all 50 states and the U.S. territories. The association offers a variety of resources, including training, model acts, education standards and publications. Through a national network of thousands of professional educators, law enforcement officers and volunteers, NASBLA affects the lives of over 73.5 million American boaters.