



**FOCUS TESTING ON BEST PRACTICES IN  
RENTAL BOATING SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS  
- Final Report -**

**Prepared for:  
Transport Canada**

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# Focus Testing on Best Practices in Rental Boating Safety Communications

## Final Report

Prepared for Transport Canada  
Supplier name: Sage Research Corporation  
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This public opinion research report presents the results of web-assisted telephone interviews with 50 rental boat agencies, between October 2 and October 30, 2018.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Mise à l'essai ciblée concernant les pratiques exemplaires de communication en matière de sécurité à bord d'embarcations de location

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## Summary

As part of its mandate to develop and promote boating safety guidance, Transport Canada (TC) is developing a rental boating safety campaign. The campaign's goal is to equip rental agency staff to promote safe boating.

Recreational boaters are not always aware and informed of the risks involved in boating and do not always follow safe boating practices. Occasional and vacationing boaters who follow safety procedures can help reduce the number of boating incidents/accidents that lead to loss of life, injuries and property damage.

Transport Canada's Marine Safety and Security Directorate has been developing and providing tools and information on boating safety to the public and to rental boat agencies through the Canadian Safe Boating Council website. TC is migrating the material to its website and looking to expand its reach.

Qualitative research was conducted with rental boat agencies. The research objectives included:

- Identify the sources of boating safety information and regulatory requirements used to provide safety briefings to clients
- Provide insights into the reasons safety precautions are not always followed by rental boaters
- Help rental boat agencies encourage and motivate safe boating behaviours among Canadian boaters
- Identify opportunities to improve and deliver messaging, tools, and resources to rental boat agencies and rental boaters
- Understand the consumer profile of recreational boaters who rent boats

The results of the research will be used in TC's national rental boating safety communication campaign to help determine the most effective ways to reinforce the safety behaviours of boat renters, and how to better assist rental boating agencies in order to determine the most effective ways to reinforce the safety behaviours of boat renters.

Web-assisted telephone interviews lasting 45 to 75 minutes were conducted with 50 rental boat agencies. Interviews were conducted October 2 to October 30, 2018.

Most participants rented to customers spanning a wide range of experience, from none to a lot although the mix of customers within this wide range varied by business. There are more safety concerns with novice boaters, and most of the safety concerns described in this report apply particularly to novice boaters.

## Sources of Safety Information

Participants felt they know the safety features and required safety equipment for the types of watercraft they rent out. That said, our impression is that there is not a single "go to" authoritative source for safety requirements that is regularly consulted (i.e. at least annually) by everyone. It also

appears that quite a few are not checking for any updates to requirements on an annual basis. The following are sources mentioned by participants.

**Safe Boating Guide:** About one-fifth of participants said they were not familiar with the *Safe Boating Guide*. Of those who said they knew of the *Safe Boating Guide*, the majority said they used it as a reference for safety requirements, although some said they do not use it or haven't looked at it in recent years.

Some participants said they provide – or have provided in the past – copies to customers, either by putting a copy on the boat, or by having them in the rental office for people to look at or pick up. However, a significant limiting factor on use of the *Safe Boating Guide*, particularly to share with customers, is that participants said they have found it difficult or impossible to get hard copies. It was noted that it used to be easier to get hard copies, but now the impression is that it is either only available online and not available in hard copy, or available only in very limited quantities – and with no easy way to get copies.

**Transport Canada:** TC was mentioned as a source of information in three ways: visiting the TC website, meeting with a TC representative, or contacting TC via phone or email:

- *TC website:* Some participants (a minority) said they go to the TC website for information. Of this group, some say they go at least once a year (typically before the rental season starts), while others go less often. When asked about ease of finding the information they were looking for, several said it was easy, while more said it was rather difficult to find the information. Some participants suggested the TC website should have an easy-to-find section devoted specifically to boat rentals that puts in one place everything a boat rental agency might need to know. This would make it easier to find information, and could be a single “go to” source for information. Several also suggested this site should also have a consumer-oriented section – for example, a rental agency could post a link to this on their own website to help educate potential customers.
- *Meeting with a TC representative:* Some participants said they had been to a meeting where a presentation was given by a TC representative, or had been visited at their business by a TC representative. Participants said these sessions were helpful both to make sure they were up to date on the regulations and to learn about resources – for example, some learned about TC's current *Rental Boat Safety Checklist* at one of these sessions.
- *Telephone or email contact with TC:* Several participants said they had called TC or sent in an email request for something. They were usually satisfied with the speed and helpfulness of the response.

**Personal experience:** Quite a few participants said their long experience in boating and the boating industry was at least in part how they knew about the safety features and requirements for the watercraft they were renting out. However, while personal experience was undoubtedly important, this is inherently about what the requirements have been in the past, and may not address new requirements and technologies in the future.

**Manufacturer or vendor:** The manufacturer or vendor was generally not considered to be a significant source of safety information. The main exceptions were manufacturer information on load capacity, and user manuals for large boats or houseboats.

**Industry associations:** Some participants, albeit a minority, mentioned that they rely on an industry association to keep them up to date on regulatory developments. These participants perceived the industry association to be good at keeping them informed and looking after the interests of the industry. They suggested TC could work with industry associations to get information to rental agencies.

## Safety Briefing

The two core components of the safety-related briefing are the paperwork and the on-boat (while docked) orientation:

- *Paperwork:* The basic paperwork consists of the rental agreement, the waiver form and a chart of the water – usually with indications of areas to avoid. The paperwork is usually reviewed and completed first in the rental office, prior to the on-boat orientation. This paperwork can contain some safety-related provisions.
- *On-boat orientation while docked:* The location and purpose of the safety equipment is shown, and instructions are given on operation of the watercraft, such as starting and stopping the engine. There will often be a checklist (which may be part of the rental agreement) to verify the presence of the various pieces of safety equipment and the condition of the watercraft.

Many participants emphasized the importance of the on-boat orientation beyond the basic need to point out the safety equipment and give operation instructions:

- Seeing how the customer deals with on-boat orientation helps in assessing their actual level of comfort and knowledge, which allows adapting the orientation to make sure the customer knows what they need to know about safety and operation of the boat.
- For less experienced boaters, handling the controls and seeing the equipment makes it more real than just reading about it on a form. It helps instill a sense of responsibility for safety of the equipment and the people.
- People who may have not been reading the paperwork thoroughly or listening carefully while in the rental office are more likely to pay attention when at the watercraft.
- The on-boat orientation provides an opportunity to repeat and emphasize key safety points.

There can be two other components of the safety briefing:

- *Preview of boating experience:* Some participants (a minority) required renters to have prior boating experience, particularly those renting large boats or sailboats. As a result there is communication with the customer before they arrive to determine if they have the requisite experience.
- *Test drive:* Quite a few participants said that with novice or less experienced boaters, they will sometimes have the customer do a short test drive. The purpose is to make sure the renter is able to operate the watercraft and to further familiarize them with the controls. The test drive also allows the rental agency to make a final decision as to whether or not to rent the boat:

some commented that there have been instances where they were not satisfied the customer could safely operate the watercraft and declined to rent it to them.

With regard to a rental boat safety checklist, this is of course done with all customers who will drive the boat who do not have a PCOC or other recognized proof of competency.

- Some participants (a minority) use the rental boat safety checklist with all customers, basically to ensure the briefing for everyone covers all the points in the checklist. More often, though, it is only used with customers who do not have a PCOC.
- The rental boat safety checklist may be completed during the paperwork phase or the on-boat orientation. However, several participants suggested it is a best practice to complete it during the on-boat orientation – basically because being physically at the boat makes the content of the checklist more “real” and helps increase attention to the items on the checklist.

### Challenges in Giving an Effective Safety Briefing

**Not paying attention/Not taking it seriously enough:** Participants said that while this is not usually a problem, it is a problem that does occur from time to time. Factors that contribute to this problem include the following:

- *Excitement and impatience to get on the water*
- *Boaters with some prior boating experience:* These people may feel they already know everything and so do not need to really listen.
- *Groups:* When it is a group renting watercraft, interaction among group members during the briefing can cause distractions and lead to divided attention, and therefore less careful attention.
- *Group of younger men:* Many participants said a group of younger men is most likely to be challenging to deal with, as well as most likely to engage in unsafe behaviour once out on the water.
- *Cell phones:* Frequent checking of cell phones can be a problem, and reduce attention to the briefing.
- *Young/inexperienced staff:* If the person giving the briefing is young and less experienced, they might not be comfortable or confident enough to insist on the customer paying close attention.

The following are approaches mentioned by participants for dealing with the challenge of not paying attention during the safety briefing/not taking it seriously enough.

- *Insist on attention:* This was widely mentioned, and the view was that the liability to the business in terms of potential damage to equipment or harm to customers is too great to allow people to get away with not paying attention.
- *“Scare people a little”:* This was another widely mentioned tactic. You want people to have fun and look forward to being on the water, so you don’t want to scare them too much, but scaring them “a little” gets attention and conveys the seriousness of the information. There were two widely mentioned ways of accomplishing this:
  - Emphasizing the damage deposit/liability for damages to the watercraft

-- The presence of enforcement on the water:

- *Isolate the driver(s), or pick one person in a group to focus on*

**Language barrier:** Quite a few participants said there is sometimes a language barrier. This could be with an international customer, but they said more often it happens with some newcomers to Canada.

It was observed that often there is a member of the group who is more fluent and acts as a translator – this is often a younger person, or may even be a child. However, some participants commented that sometimes they are not really comfortable with this, and are not fully confident that the translator is translating fully and properly. In this regard, one participant said they were uncertain what their legal rights were in terms of refusing to rent, and suggested TC issue guidance on the business’s legal rights and obligations in these circumstances.

### **Transport Canada (TC) Rental Boat Safety Checklist**

Participants were shown an example of the current TC rental boat safety checklist, and asked if they had seen a checklist like this, and their overall opinion about it. About one-third of the participants had seen the current TC rental boat safety checklist, and about two-thirds had not.

Among those who had seen it, the majority were using it, although some were using a customized version to include such things as their company name, the telephone number the renter should use to call the business if there is an issue on the water, and customized safety information.

Among the approximately two-thirds who had not seen the current TC rental boat safety checklist, some said they could not clearly remember where they got the form they are using with customers who do not have a PCOC. Otherwise, the most commonly mentioned source was Transport Canada. Some mentioned this as having 15 checkboxes, which appears to be the sample checklist in TC’s document, *Rental Boat Safety Checklist Standard*. Other sources mentioned included study materials for the PCOC exam or their insurance company.

The majority of those not familiar with the current TC rental boat safety checklist said they were interested in using it, perhaps with customization, or using parts of it. In this context, quite a few suggested TC should be proactively sending materials/resources to rental businesses, since otherwise businesses may not know to look for the materials.

### **Safety Concerns**

Although participants were not specifically asked to list instances of customer injury or death, many nonetheless commented that in their time in business, serious injury or death was rare to nonexistent. The more common issue they all faced was risk of damage to the watercraft, albeit recognizing that circumstances resulting in damage can pose a safety risk to the customer. Therefore, the discussion of safety concerns involved both the safety of the customers and safety of the watercraft.



## Customer Types and Safety Concerns

In general, participants have more safety concerns with renters who have little or no prior boating experience. Many of the safety concerns described in the report are particularly applicable to novice boaters.

The following are some more specific types of customers mentioned by at least some participants in connection with safety.

**Rental purpose – Watersports:** Particular concerns included:

- *Hitting the person being towed/in the water:* Less experienced boaters can risk hitting a person in the water they are picking up due to driving the boat too close to the person, and not appreciating the impact of the momentum of the boat and the impact of wind or current. The rental agency will try to address this by giving specific instructions on how to pick up a person in the water.
- *Hitting some other person in the water or another boat:* A driver may tend to keep looking back at the person they are towing rather than focusing on where they are going, and this creates a risk of running into another boat, or even worse into a person in the water. To address this risk, the safety briefing emphasizes the importance of using a spotter.

**Rental purpose – Party:** A group renting a pontoon or houseboat for a party are perceived to be at much higher risk for alcohol consumption, and the problems that can come from drinking and driving. Several participants said they will not rent to party groups.

**Group of young men:** Many participants identified “young men” as being a group more likely be associated with safety concerns – although from their comments it appears to be more accurate to say “a group of young men,” because the group dynamic seems to exacerbate the issues. By young, most participant meant men 20-30 years of age. The issues cited were:

- more likely to be impatient during the safety briefing and less likely to take it seriously;
- more likely to drink alcohol; and
- more likely to drive in a risky fashion (e.g. too fast, or too close to each other if renting multiple watercraft).

Participants speculated the reasons for this were such things as:

- think they’re invincible, want to look cool in front of friends,;
- want to show off for friends; or
- to look like they already know what they’re doing in front of friends.

There were no particular tips for how to deal with this target group, other than being firm and clear in the safety briefing.

**Renters with a combination of language barrier and lack of boating experience:** The issue of dealing with a language barrier in the safety briefing was described earlier. It was also the case that some participants said these renters sometimes seem to behave in riskier fashion on the water. Some attributed this to cultural factors, but some others said they believed it is really more a lack of

full understanding the orientation session due to the language barrier combined with a lack of previous boating experience.

### More Frequently Mentioned Safety Concerns

**Alcohol Consumption:** The majority of participants said that drinking and boating is a concern they have. While they say it is not a frequent problem, there are incidents from time to time. Renters perceived to be a higher risk are groups renting a boat for a party, and groups of younger men. Beyond that, though, it could be anyone. The main reason offered by participants why people might drink on the boat is that they are in a “vacation mode” of thinking, and this can include drinking alcohol. Some other contributing factors sometimes mentioned included:

- Some renters, prior to arriving at the rental facility, are not aware they cannot drink on the boat, and when told they cannot drink alcohol on the boat some nonetheless sneak the alcohol they brought on board. Related to this, some renters may not be aware that, in addition to the driver, passengers cannot drink on the boat either.
- Some people have the mindset that “only a few drinks/beers” will not affect their ability to operate the boat, and several said this is particularly the case when there is not much traffic on the lake.
- A renter may drink on shore at a campsite or cottage, and then drive the boat.

Many participants said that to reinforce the instruction not to drink alcohol on the boat, they make a point of emphasizing that:

- a) there is police enforcement on the lake;
- b) the police will levy fines; and
- c) a drunk driver of the boat will be treated the same as if they were caught drunk while driving a car, including that their driver’s license could be taken away.

The last point is something they say renters are often unaware of, and definitely gets attention and helps discourage drunk driving.

**Hitting Rocks/Debris:** A majority of participants said a concern is the renter hitting submerged rocks or debris. Hitting a rock may not result in any injuries, but it can cause serious damage to the watercraft. The ways mentioned for addressing this risk were:

- The rental agency provides charts to the renter which flag areas to avoid, and they point out some particular problem areas during the briefing. But there can be many problem areas on a large lake, and it’s not possible to point out all of them and not all of them may be marked.
- If there are navigation markers or rock warnings on the water, these are explained. However, it was noted that it is simply not feasible to put rock warnings on all submerged rocks in a large lake.
- During the briefing, the cost to the renter for damages is emphasized, and the bigger and scarier the dollar amounts mentioned, the more effective this tactic is.
- Driving too fast contributes to the risk of hitting things. In this context, several said they suggest the renter drive slowly at first while they are familiarizing themselves with the lake, and in general to “be aware” of what’s around them at all times while moving.

**Lifejackets/PFDs:** Boaters are required by law to have a lifejacket or PFD (Personal Flotation Device) on board for each person on a watercraft, including both powered and human-powered watercraft. The law does not require the lifejackets or PFDs to be worn. Note that participants used “lifejacket” in a general sense to refer to both lifejackets and PFDs, and that term is used in this general sense here. Participants said that, as required by law, they provide a lifejacket that fits for every person on board.

As context for the lifejacket discussion, participants were asked about the potential for hypothermia and swimming ability:

- *Potential for hypothermia:* When asked if hypothermia is an issue for the water used by their renters. A small number answered with an unqualified “yes,” while most either said it is not an issue during the rental season, or is only an issue during their shoulder seasons – i.e. spring and fall.
- *Swimming ability:* Most do not ask about swimming ability. They assume that people will exercise judgement on whether or not to wear a lifejacket based on swimming ability.

The typical stance of the rental agency is that they equip the renters with lifejackets and show them where these are, but they leave it up to the renters to decide whether or not to wear them. There are, though, variations and exceptions across participants:

- There are exceptions to the typical stance, albeit among a minority of participants. If there is an exception, it will be for tiller-steered boats, wheel-steered boats (excluding pontoons, houseboats, large boats), or canoes/kayaks. Some say they explicitly encourage wearing a lifejacket all the time – with a few also commenting that if they tried to tell the renter it is required “they would be laughed at.” A few said a line they use that seems to help is that “if there’s an accident, you can’t put it on after you’re in the water.”
- *Children:* Many participants said they communicate expectations about children wearing lifejackets, but are about equally split in terms of how forcefully the expectation is communicated. Some position this as “required,” while others “encourage” it but do not state it as a requirement.
- *Watersports:* Participants said they require the person in the water to wear a lifejacket.
- *Personal watercraft:* Some participants said they required renters using a personal watercraft to wear a lifejacket, and a few said they believed this is a legal requirement. Generally, participants said that lifejacket usage is very high among PWC users, and they rarely see someone without a lifejacket.
- *Circumstances when it will be recommended the renter wear a lifejacket:* Small numbers of participants mentioned circumstances in which they will proactively recommend the renter wear a lifejacket while in the boat:
  - If the weather is not good or if there is potential for bad weather
  - If the water is cold – e.g. it is a shoulder-season rental
  - If the renter is boating alone

Participants were asked why they thought people might not wear a lifejacket, and various ideas were given:

- Particularly for pontoon boats, houseboats and large boats, there is little perceived risk of falling in – for example because of railings on the boats. As noted earlier, this is quite often a view shared by the participants renting these boats.
- Only a minority of participants will explicitly encourage or require the renter to wear a lifejacket. In the majority of cases, the renter is not under pressure from the rental agency to wear a lifejacket. Indeed, the renter may be told during the safety briefing that they are not required to wear a lifejacket.
- The person has a general attitude that “nothing bad is going to happen.” That is, they are not thinking of, or perceiving, circumstances that might end up with them in the water.
- The lifejacket interferes with ease of movement.
- On a hot day, it’s uncomfortable to wear a lifejacket.
- A lifejacket interferes with sunning or trying to get a suntan.
- The person thinks they are a good swimmer.
- There is no need to wear a lifejacket when the boat is not moving, or only moving very slowly, as the person assumes it would be easy to get back into the boat.
- Among younger people especially, wearing a lifejacket does not look “cool.”
- They see other boaters not wearing a lifejacket.
- Among older people who have boated before, an attitude that “I never wore a lifejacket before, and I never had any problems.”

**Overloading/Adding New People:** A boat has a capacity limit expressed in terms of weight and number of people. Quite a few participants mentioned they had concerns about the boat getting overloaded. The main concern expressed is about renters who pick up other people (without telling the rental agency) after leaving the dock. There are several negative consequences that can happen in these circumstances:

- The boat can become overloaded. This is both dangerous, and can result in a fine if the boater is stopped by police.
- There is a mismatch between the lifejackets provided by the rental agency and the number of people on board the boat.
- One of the new people may drive the boat. This person may not have proof of competency, and even if they do, they have not gone through the rental agency’s safety briefing.

Two other issues were mentioned by some participants in connection with overloading/adding new people:

- *What really matters for boat operation is more the weight, and less so the number of people:* There are two issues here. One is that the average weight of the people renting the boat may exceed the manufacturer’s assumption of people’s average weight. The other issue is that people bring stuff on to the boat, and the weight of that stuff needs to be taken into consideration in addition to the number of people. Several participants said they have a policy of reducing the maximum allowable number of people by one or two to compensate for the weight of the supplies brought on board.

- *Are children people?* Some renters arranging a rental may not include children as counting towards the person limit, and so may be surprised when they show up for the rental. Also, there was some evidence of variability across rental agencies in terms of how children are counted. One participant said they count children as half a person, while another emphasized they count a child as a full person.

**Leaving/Docking:** The main concern is damage to the watercraft and/or to other watercraft. This concern particularly applies to less experienced boaters. However, it can also be an issue with more experienced boaters: a renter may have prior experience on smaller boats, but if they are renting a larger boat – such as a pontoon or houseboat, or a much larger boat – they may not realize that it responds more slowly to controls. Ways of addressing this concern included having boaters do a test drive to get a feel for the controls, or having the agency staff handle these maneuvers.

**Hitting Other Boats:** This can be a problem if the renter driving the boat is focused only on what's ahead of them, and then turns the boat without first looking back. The participants try to stress to the renter to always be aware of what's all around them, and to generally stay away from getting close to other boats.

**Problems Caused by Other Boats:** One way the safety of a renter may be compromised is by the behaviour of other boaters. The main concern mentioned by some participants in this regard is the wake produced by other boats. A large wake may be produced by a boat speeding too close to the renter's boat. Some also said a particular concern is the increasing popularity of wake boats: they said that these can cause large waves from up to 200 to 300 feet away. A large wake can cause a small boat to become unstable, and can cause damage to a larger boat such as a houseboat. There is not much the renter can do in these circumstances. Ideally the renter would turn the boat into the wake. However, they may not have been given instructions about what to do in this situation, or they may not have time to maneuver the boat, or they may not appreciate how far the wake from a wakeboat travels.

**Personal Watercraft:** Among participants who rent out PWCs, most said their biggest concern is renting to a group, and particularly to a group of younger men. The problem is they may drive too fast and too close to each other, causing a risk of collision that will cause damage to the machine and possibly injury to the riders. The perceived contributing factors include:

- a) not understanding the limits on maneuverability including the fact the PWC “slides” a bit when turning, not keeping in mind that the ability to steer is lost when the throttle is released, and not realizing the impact of “there's no brake”;
- b) excitement in being on the water with a bunch of friends;
- c) wanting to spray each other; and
- d) just generally being too close together. And, in the case of a group of younger men, there are the general factors noted earlier that cause them to be associated with higher concerns about safety.

The participants said they try to address this by emphasizing the damage deposit and the cost to the renter. A few tell stories of injuries from PWC collisions – e.g. “you could break your buddy's leg.”

**Canoes/Kayaks:** The safety concerns mentioned particularly for canoes/kayaks included:

- The boats are tippy
- Difficulty getting into the boat after falling out
- Not realizing the impact of wind and the difficulty of paddling against the wind
- The impact of wake produced by passing power boats: because of the small size and tippiness of the boats, they are particularly affected by the wake from other boats

A general instruction participants said they give to paddlers is to stay close to shore, to reduce the risk if there are issues with tipping over or with the wind.

**Houseboats:** The following are safety concerns associated with houseboats:

- *Impact of wind:* Houseboat novices, and even renters with prior experience on smaller boats, may not fully appreciate the effects of wind on a houseboat.
- *A houseboat does not maneuver like smaller boats:* Because of its weight, a houseboat does not respond as quickly to the controls as smaller, lighter boats. A renter with previous experience on smaller boats may not anticipate the difference in handling, which could lead to a risk of collision. Participants said the best way to address this is through a short test drive with the renter in order to give them a feel for the controls.
- *Children:* Because of the size and design of a houseboat, children have some space that can result in them “running around” (e.g. excitement when using the slide). One participant commented they try to “scare” the parents a bit by emphasizing the risk of a child falling overboard if they are “running around.” Several participants said they encourage or require children to wear a lifejacket when outside the cabin.
- *Seniors:* Some participants said they have concerns when renting a houseboat to seniors. This is because of the physical demands of mooring the boat, which requires jumping off the boat and strength to tie the boat down.

## Participant Suggestions for Transport Canada

Participants were encouraged to offer suggestions for things TC should focus on or do in the upcoming rental boat safety campaign. Many participants had to think a bit about this, and some did not have any suggestions. It was also the case that while some types of suggestions were more common than others, the suggestions did not strongly converge on a few particular priorities. Our impression is that this is probably because overall participants felt that they are doing a good job of managing safety risks, and so suggestions for TC’s priorities for the campaign do not always immediately come to mind. Some of the suggestions were as follows.

*Provide a section on the TC website for rental businesses:* This would put everything pertinent to rental businesses in one easy-to-find location in order to provide a single “go to” source for information. It could also have a consumer-oriented section that businesses could point to for people interested in renting a watercraft.

*Make hard copies of the Safe Boating Guide more easily available:* Hard copies of the Guide are difficult to come by, and hard copy can be better as a format for the purpose of sharing with renters.

*Proactively send information to rental agencies on resources developed by TC:* This suggestion was triggered in particular by TC's current Rental Boat Safety Checklist, which quite a few participants had not seen. The larger point is that if TC does not send information on the resources it has developed, rental businesses may not become aware of these resources.

*Address alcohol and boating:* Focus on improving awareness of the rules and of the consequences if caught breaking the rules.

*Address cannabis and boating:* Cannabis became legal in Canada part way through interviewing for this study. When asked if it would be helpful if TC proactively sent information on this topic incorporating both federal and provincial regulations to boat rental agencies, participants said that would be a good thing

*Inform rental businesses of their rights and obligations with respect to cannabis:* Because cannabis was only very recently legalized, most participants have not yet gotten any information on what it means for their business.

*Provide handouts/display materials:* Some version of this was mentioned by quite a few participants. These participants would appreciate having safety-oriented materials in their rental office that customers can see and perhaps pick up. It can be nice to have something to show or give to people when they come in. More importantly, they said it can help to reinforce safety messages because it can add more authority to the message: "it's not just me saying this, the government is saying this also." This is helpful generally, but particularly for messages that may be met with some resistance or skepticism, such as "don't drink alcohol," or "wear a lifejacket." Therefore, it would be important that the materials be clearly branded as being from the government.

*Message to renters – Be aware of what's around you:* A frequent concern of the participants was risks to the watercraft in the environment around the renter: running into shoals, going into water that is too shallow, collision with other boats, people in the water, the impact of the wake produced by other boats. A communication theme of "be aware of what's around you" could encompass all of these types of safety risks.

*Lifejackets:* Some participants suggest the campaign include promotion of wearing lifejackets. It should be noted the majority of participants do not actively encourage renters to wear a lifejacket all the time, but some do, and some encourage it in particular circumstances. Our impression from the interviews is that a lifejacket message should give reasons for wearing a lifejacket, and focus on circumstances where it is particularly important to have one on.

**Contract value:** \$78,252.50 including HST

### **Political Neutrality Certification**

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Sage Research Corporation that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion

Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, and standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.



Rick Robson  
Vice-President  
Sage Research Corporation

## Method

Web-assisted telephone interviews lasting 45 to 75 minutes were conducted with 50 rental boat agencies. Interviews were conducted October 2 to October 30, 2018.

**Sample Source:** The sample frame used for recruiting was a list provided by TC, supplemented by a list purchased from infoCanada. The selection criterion for the infoCanada list was SIC 7999-13 (Boats – Rental and Charter).

**Participant Qualifications:** Qualified businesses were businesses that rented watercraft for recreational purposes, and met the following additional criteria:

- The rental agency does at least some “bareboat” rentals, meaning that the rental agency does not provide a crew or a captain to accompany the rental customer.
- The rentals are not guided, meaning the rental agency does not provide staff on another boat that accompanies the rental customer.
- The rental agency rents one or more of the types of watercraft shown below. The table shows both the minimum quotas set in advance for each type of watercraft, and the number of participating firms in the completed interviews. Rental agencies usually rented more than one type of watercraft.

Type of Watercraft	Minimum Quota Target	Number of Firms Completing Interviews
Tiller-steered and/or wheel-steered	16	41
Personal watercraft	8	28
Houseboats	4	7
Pontoon boats	4	34
Sailboats	4	5
Non-motorized (kayak, canoe, rowboat)	4	28

For reference, the following shows the number of staff employed at the peak of the rental season by the rental agencies participating in the research:



<b>Number of Employees during Peak Season</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
1-2 employees	10
3-5 employees	17
6-9 employees	10
10 or more employees	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

For reference, the following shows how long the participating companies had been in operation. It can be seen that majority have been in business for more 10 years. Also, some of the owners in the business for a shorter time commented that they had been in the business as an employee prior to owning their business.

<b>Time in Business</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
1 year or less	2
2-3 years	6
4-5 years	4
6-10 years	6
More than 10 years	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

The qualified participant in the rental agency was an owner or manager involved in providing boating safety information to rental customers. Of the 50 participants, 43 were owners, and 7 were managers.

**Geographic Distribution:** The following shows the geographic breakdown of the rental agencies in the combined TC and infoCanada lists provided for recruiting, and the number of completed interviews:

<b>Region</b>	<b>% of Sample</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Ontario	33%	20
British Columbia	32%	14
Quebec	12%	4
Rest of Canada	23%	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>

Note that five interviews were completed in French – four in Quebec and one in New Brunswick.

**Interview Administration:** The interviews were conducted as web-assisted telephone interviews. “Web-assisted” meant the participant also logged in to a website. The purpose of this component was to allow showing and discussing an example of one of TC’s Rental Boat Safety Checklists. Most participants were able to view the checklist, but due to internet connectivity issues several were not able to view the checklist.

**Participant Honorarium:** Participants were paid \$150 for completing the interview.

## Type of Waterway Used by Renters

Almost all of the participating rental agencies were on large and/or extensive bodies of water. These included large lakes and/or interconnected lakes, river/canal systems, and tidal water. This was associated with two general safety concerns – renter is out of sight, and weather.

**Renter is out of sight:** The renter is usually out of sight for most of the rental period. This means the business cannot directly monitor whether the renter is following all of the safety instructions – such as safe driving, staying in safe waters, or lifejacket usage. They also cannot see if the renter is experiencing any difficulty.

Strategies for monitoring renters when out of sight included:

- *Cell phone/VHF communication:* It was common practice to exchange cell phone numbers with the renters, or to provide a VHF radio (and required ability to use a VHF radio) on larger boats in tidal waters. Almost all participants said cell phone coverage was reasonably good, although on some lakes it was spotty. This allows the renter to call the business in the event they experience any difficulties, and the business can call the renter if they have any concerns, such as a storm moving in. Many commented they had a boat set aside to go out to a renter needing assistance. Some additional practices, each mentioned by one participant:
  - A company renting kayaks provides a dry bag for the renter’s phone.
  - A participant said they immediately call the renter’s cell phone number to make sure it is on and within earshot.
- *Enforcement:* To varying degrees on different bodies of water, there is some enforcement by police services. This is important, but it is also usually intermittent, and does not cover the entire body of water. A few participants commented that in their experience the police were good at enforcing rules about alcohol and required safety equipment, but tended not to enforce safe driving rules and practices. They suggested TC should work with the police services to encourage enforcement of safe driving rules such as speed limits.
- *Cottagers/Other boaters/Other renters:* Some participants said that over time they have developed contacts with other users of the waterway. These other users will call the business if they see a rental boater doing something unsafe, and indeed some said they encourage other users to contact them in these circumstances.
- *GPS/Tracking system:* Three of the participants rented out large boats (28’ or larger, with most being larger). Two had a GPS and tracking system installed which allowed them to see the boat’s location and speed. This enabled them not only to know where the boat was, but also to see whether it was in a safe area and being driven at an appropriate speed. The third participant (renting large boats in tidal water) said they did not have these systems on the boats, but would like to have them if it could be more affordable. This participant suggested TC provide some financial support to install GPS.

**Weather:** Sudden storms on large lakes or tidal water can generate large waves that are a risk for boaters. If the weather is bad at the time of departure, participants said they will not let the renter go out. However, the concern is more about storms that come in after the renter leaves the dock. Another concern a few had is when multi-day renters choose to go out in bad weather. Several participants said they routinely give instructions on what to do if a storm hits (i.e. get to a sheltered area, and do not worry about trying to get back to the rental dock; how to tie down the boat in the case of a multi-day rental), but our impression is that most do not routinely cover this situation in their safety briefing.

Strategies for dealing with this mentioned by some participants included:

- *Rental agency monitors the weather and contacts the renter by cell phone:* The renter can then be given a warning of a possible storm, and instructions on what to do. Similarly, the renter can call the rental agency if they run into some weather.
- *Renter instructed to use their cell phone to get marine weather forecasts:* This was suggested by a participant who rents boats in tidal water.

## Range of Boating Experience

Most participants rented to customers spanning a wide range of experience, from none to a lot. The mix of customers within this wide range varied by business. For example, the proportion of novice customers was lower among businesses that have a lot of repeat customers, or businesses that focus on renting boats to fishers (who often have prior boating experience, or have their own boat but did not bring it).

There are more safety concerns with novice boaters, and most of the safety concerns described in later sections of the report apply particularly to novice boaters. However, it will also be seen that there are also some concerns associated with boaters who have some prior experience – for example, they may not pay as much attention to the safety briefing as they should.

Some participants required prior boating experience as a precondition to renting:

- *Large boat rentals:* Three participants rented out large boats (28' or larger, with most being larger). These boats are very expensive, more complex, rented for multi-day periods, and are on large bodies of water (tidal water, Great Lakes) where ability to read charts is critical and weather can change suddenly. All of these participants required a “boating resume” in advance as part of deciding whether to rent to a customer. They require prior boating experience on a similar size and type of boat, and boating on similar type of water. One participant also required experience with a similar number of guests on board. The customer’s experience level is assessed again during the on-site briefing, and if there are any concerns either:
  - a) the customer is taken out for a test drive; or
  - b) told they cannot rent the boat.

In the latter case, one participant said they will refer the customer to a certified instructor.

- *Sailboat rentals:* Five participants rented sailboats (this included the three participants doing large boat rentals, who rented both large sailboats and large power boats). All five required

prior experience with sailboats. For example, one who rented smaller sailboats required completion of their sailing course (they also ran a sailing school) or appropriate certifications (including VHF radio).

- *Other*: Two participants renting watercraft on lakes required prior boating experience, and particularly experience using charts, because of submerged rock hazards – which are identified on the charts.

Some participants commented that some renters overstate or overestimate their experience and abilities, at least as it applies to the boat they want to rent. For this reason they said it is important to have a conversation with the renter during the safety briefing to gauge how easily they understand what they're being told and whether they are using the terminology an experienced boater would use.

## Sources of Safety Information

Participants felt they know the safety features and required safety equipment for the types of watercraft they rent out. That said, our impression is that there is not a single “go to” authoritative source for safety requirements that is regularly consulted (i.e. at least annually) by everyone. It also appears that quite a few are not checking for any updates to requirements on an annual basis, although some say this is not necessary because they do not think requirements change very often.

The following are sources mentioned by participants.

***Safe Boating Guide***: About one-fifth of participants said they were not familiar with the *Safe Boating Guide*. Of those who said they knew of the *Safe Boating Guide*, the majority said they used it as a reference for safety requirements, although some said they do not use it or haven't looked at it in recent years.

Some participants said they provide – or have provided in the past – copies to customers, either by putting a copy on the boat, or by having them in the rental office for people to look at or pick up.

However, a significant limiting factor on use of the *Safe Boating Guide*, particularly to share with customers, is that participants said they have found it difficult or impossible to get hard copies. It was noted that it used to be easier to get hard copies, but now the impression is that it is either only available online and not available in hard copy, or available only in very limited quantities – and with no easy way to get copies. Those who said they had recently gotten copies usually said they picked up copies at a local boat show, but then only in limited quantities (e.g. one participant said they take every copy stocked at the booth at the boat show).

Quite a few participants suggested TC should make it easier to get hard copies of the *Safe Boating Guide* for purposes of sharing with customers. Most were not inclined to print a lot of copies from the website. They also said renters are unlikely to go online to look at the guide, either because it is inconvenient for them to do so or due to lack of sufficient interest to motivate them to proactively

go to the site – whereas they might be more likely to pick up a copy if it is in the rental office or on the boat.

Several participants said they also use the *Safe Boating Guide* as part of staff training.

**Small Vessel Regulations:** Only a small minority of participants said they had ever looked at the *Small Vessel Regulations*, and most of those who looked had not done so recently and did not consider this to be source they would go to now. It was our impression that many of the participants had never heard of the *Small Vessel Regulations*, as it was often necessary for the interviewer to explain what was being referred to.

**Transport Canada:** TC was mentioned as a source of information in three ways: visiting the TC website, meeting with a TC representative, or contacting TC via phone or email:

- *TC website:* Some participants (a minority) said they go to the TC website for information. Of this group, some say they go at least once a year (typically before the rental season starts), while others go less often. When asked about ease of finding the information they were looking for, several said it was easy, while more said it was rather difficult to find the information. Some participants suggested the TC website should have an easy-to-find section devoted specifically to boat rentals that puts in one place everything a boat rental agency might need to know. This would make it easier to find information, and could be a single “go to” source for information. Several also suggested this site should also have a consumer-oriented section – for example, a rental agency could post a link to this on their own website to help educate potential customers.
- *Meeting with a TC representative:* Some participants said they had been to a meeting where a presentation was given by a TC representative, or had been visited at their business by a TC representative. These participants were in B.C., and appeared to be in locations where there are multiple boat rental agencies. These sessions have been done across multiple years, although it is not clear exactly how often they have been held. Participants said these sessions were helpful both to make sure they were up to date on the regulations and to learn about resources – for example, some learned about TC’s current *Rental Boat Safety Checklist* at one of these sessions. Note that these sessions were the only instances of proactive contact by TC mentioned by participants – meaning the majority of participants had not received any proactive contact from TC.
- *Telephone or email contact with TC:* Several participants said they had called TC or sent in an email request for something. All but one were satisfied with the speed and helpfulness of the response. The one participant who had difficulty said they called several years ago when setting up the business, and said they were transferred to multiple people at TC because their impression was that no one individual was knowledgeable about everything a new rental business needs to know and do. They suggested there should be a designated contact for rental businesses specifically.

**Personal experience:** Quite a few participants said their long experience in boating and the boating industry was at least in part how they knew about the safety features and requirements for the watercraft they were renting out. Related to this, some participants who had acquired the business from a previous owner said the previous owner was a source of information. We would note,

though, that while personal experience was undoubtedly important, this is inherently about what the requirements have been in the past, and may not address new requirements and technologies in the future.

**Manufacturer or vendor:** The manufacturer or vendor was generally not considered to be a significant source of safety information. The exceptions were:

- The manufacturer information on load capacity (number of people, weight) is important.
- Some participants who rent large boats or houseboats ensure the manufacturer's user manual is kept on the boat as a reference for the customer, if needed.
- Several participants said that as part of their business they also sell watercraft, and as a result they are familiar with the safety features and requirements for the watercraft they sell.
- A few participants who rented one particular brand of personal watercraft said the manufacturer provides useful safety information for the machine, including a safety checklist.

**Industry associations:** Some participants, albeit a minority, mentioned that they rely on an industry association to keep them up to date on regulatory developments. These participants perceived the industry association to be good at keeping them informed and looking after the interests of the industry. They suggested TC could work with industry associations to get information to rental agencies.

**Other sources of information:** The following were each mentioned by one or a few participants:

- Local enforcement officers
- Pleasure Craft Operators Card (PCOC) course materials
- Experience as a boating instructor
- U.S website (specifically, a participant who looked at U.S. regulations for personal watercraft)

## Customers Who Do Not Have a Pleasure Craft Operators Card

People who want to rent and operate a recreational powered watercraft must have proof of competency. The Pleasure Craft Operators Card (PCOC) can be proof of competency. For customers without a PCOC, rental agencies can issue a temporary license that serves as proof of competency for the period of the rental by completing a rental boat safety checklist with the customer.

Most of the participants accepted customers who do not have the PCOC, but a small number required the PCOC. Those who required the PCOC did so because they believed it signifies the renter likely has some knowledge of boating safety. That said, they put much greater weight on prior boating experience than on the PCOC in terms of assessing a customer's readiness level. One said they require it because their insurance company requires it.

Among the participants who accept renters who do not have the PCOC, the percentage of renters who do not have a PCOC varied from a low of less than 5% to a high of 95%. The majority said over half their customers do not have the PCOC.

Note that to varying degrees, participants had some international customers who are unlikely to have a Canadian PCOC. International customers can use a proof of competency from their home jurisdiction. However, several participants said they do not accept this and still require completion of their rental boat safety checklist for either of two reasons:

1. they are not familiar with the renter's proof of competency and want to be sure that the person is aware of Canadian requirements; or
2. they are not sure that the foreign proof of competency will be accepted if the renter is stopped by police, and they want to make sure the customer has no problems.

### Opinions about the PCOC

Most participants said that in their opinion having a PCOC does not by itself necessarily mean much in terms of safety knowledge and attitudes. Having a PCOC usually does not by itself change what is done in the safety briefing because participants have found from experience that the customer may be lacking some basic knowledge.

The key perceived issue with the PCOC is that it does not require any boating experience, because it is issued based solely on passing an online exam. "Book knowledge" of safety topics may not translate into practical knowledge and understanding – in this regard, some participants said the on-boat portion of their safety briefing is particularly important for novices because it makes the material more "real." The exam may have been taken a long time ago and the person may have forgotten some of the material. Some participants said that because the exam is completed online, there is no way to know for sure if the person applying for the PCOC was also the person who wrote the exam. From the boat rental agency's perspective, prior hands-on boating experience is much more meaningful in terms of assessing a person's boating readiness than is possession of a PCOC.

Some participants suggested TC should look at incorporating a driving test as a requirement or an option for the PCOC. One suggested as an alternative to require attending an in-person course and taking an in-person exam.

## Safety Briefing

The two core components of the safety-related briefing are the paperwork and the on-boat (while docked) orientation:

- **Paperwork:** The basic paperwork consists of the rental agreement, the waiver form and a chart of the water – usually with indications of areas to avoid. The paperwork is usually reviewed and completed first in the rental office, prior to the on-boat orientation. This paperwork can contain some safety-related provisions – for example, some commented that they have a provision that no alcohol will be consumed on the boat.

- **On-boat orientation while docked:** This is usually done after the paperwork is completed. The location and purpose of the safety equipment is shown, and instructions are given on operation of the watercraft, such as starting and stopping the engine. There will often be a checklist (which may be part of the rental agreement) to verify the presence of the various pieces of safety equipment and the condition of the watercraft which can then be compared to the equipment and condition at the end of the rental period.

Many participants emphasized the importance of the on-boat orientation beyond the basic need to point out the safety equipment and give operation instructions:

- Seeing how the customer deals with on-boat orientation helps in assessing their actual level of comfort and knowledge, which allows adapting the orientation to make sure the customer knows what they need to know.
- For less experienced boaters, handling the controls and seeing the equipment makes it more real than just reading about it on a form.
- People who may have not been reading the paperwork thoroughly or listening carefully while in the rental office are more likely to pay attention when at the watercraft. The fact that they are responsible for the safe operation and condition of the watercraft may be more salient than when just signing a form.
- The on-boat orientation provides an opportunity to repeat and emphasize key safety points. The on-boat orientation occurs just before the renter drives the boat, so it is a good time to re-state and emphasize key points. Some participants said that for less experienced boaters there can be “information overload” during the paperwork phase, and repetition of key safety points at the boat helps deal with this.

There can be two other components of the safety briefing:

- *Preview of boating experience:* As noted earlier, some participants (a minority) required renters to have prior boating experience, particularly those renting large boats or sailboats. As a result there is communication with the customer before they arrive to determine if they have the requisite experience.
- *Test drive:* Quite a few participants said that with novice or less experienced boaters, they will sometimes have the customer do a short test drive. The purpose is to make sure the renter is able to operate the watercraft and to further familiarize them with the controls. Several commented that sometimes a person with no boating experience will “panic” when actually in the boat on the water, and a test drive helps the customer to deal with this. The test drive also allows the rental agency to make a final decision as to whether or not to rent the boat: some commented that there have been instances where they were not satisfied the customer could safely operate the watercraft and declined to rent it to them.

Note that one of the participants had a “trailer operation” – that is, they were not located on a body of water, but instead would meet and brief the customer at the office, and then supply them with a trailer to take the watercraft themselves to a lake of their choosing (this participant mainly rented PWCs). This participant did both of the main components of a safety briefing – the paperwork and the on-boat briefing – but there was no possibility for a test drive to assess less experienced boaters. They did not flag this as an issue, but another participant who said they used to work in a trailer operation said they would not now be comfortable working in that



type of business because there is no provision for a test drive and it is not possible to observe what the renter is doing in the water.

With regard to a rental boat safety checklist, this is of course done with all customers who will drive the boat who do not have a PCOC or other recognized proof of competency (except for those businesses who require a PCOC for rental). Some additional observations:

- Some participants (a minority) use a rental boat safety checklist with all customers, basically to ensure the briefing for everyone covers all the points in the checklist. More often, though, it is only used with customers who do not have a PCOC.
- A rental boat safety checklist may be completed during the paperwork phase or the on-boat orientation. However, several participants suggested it is a best practice to complete it during the on-boat orientation – basically because being physically at the boat makes the content of the checklist more “real” and helps increase attention to the items on the checklist. For example, one participant said in their experience it helps even with the navigation components of a checklist because one can concretely point to the sides of the boat relative to where other boats might be.

With regard to the use of other materials during the safety briefing:

- Some participants have a printed list of topics to cover, and as noted earlier some use the rental boat safety checklist for this purpose. The purpose is to ensure staff giving a safety briefing cover everything they are supposed to.
- Use of video in the briefing is uncommon: only three participants were using a video of some sort, and one said they planned to at some point make a video using drones of places to avoid on the lake.

Several participants suggested TC develop a video presentation to show to renters that highlights key safety points. They would want the video to be short duration – 5 to at most 10 minutes – in order not to greatly lengthen the time spent on briefing.

- Particularly businesses renting large boats or houseboats will put a manual on the boat. This could be the manufacturer’s user manual, or a custom manual prepared by the business on how to deal with various situations that might arise.

A practice mentioned by some participants – particularly in connection with boats where there is a group of people (pontoon boats, houseboats, large boats) is to ensure there are two people who receive the briefing for driving the boat. This ensures that if something happens to one driver (e.g. they fall overboard or are swimming and are separated from the boat), there is another person who can drive the boat. For example, one participant said that when there is a family with a husband and wife, they said in their experience it would often be the case that the husband would drive. However, the participant said he would insist the wife also be briefed on operating the boat, just in case something happened.

## Challenges in Giving an Effective Safety Briefing

Participants were asked about challenges they have experienced in giving an effective safety briefing. The two most commonly mentioned were people not paying attention or taking the briefing serious enough, and language barriers.

**Not paying attention/Not taking it seriously enough:** Participants said that while this is not usually a problem, it is a problem that does occur from time to time. Factors that contribute to this problem include the following:

- *Excitement and impatience to get on the water:* This is common, and leads to a general impatience and customers wanting to get through the safety briefing as quickly as possible.
- *Boaters with some prior boating experience:* These people may feel they already know everything and so do not need to really listen. This might be true sometimes, but participants said it not uncommon for people to overstate or overestimate what their knowledge and abilities, and so it is important to get them to pay attention. A few participants commented that the highly experienced boaters do pay attention, and it's the ones with somewhat less experience who are more likely to not pay full attention.
- *Groups:* When it is a group renting watercraft, interaction among group members during the briefing can cause distractions and lead to divided attention, and therefore less careful attention.
- *Group of younger men:* This is the same point as above, but many participants said a group of younger men is most likely to be challenging to deal with, as well as most likely to engage in unsafe behaviour once out on the water.
- *Cell phones:* Frequent checking of cell phones can be a problem, and reduce attention to the briefing.
- *Young/inexperienced staff:* If the person giving the briefing is young and less experienced, they might not be comfortable or confident enough to insist on the customer paying close attention.

The following are approaches mentioned by participants for dealing with the challenge of not paying attention during the safety briefing/not taking it seriously enough.

- *Insist on attention:* This was widely mentioned. The view was that the liability to the business in terms of potential damage to equipment or harm to customers is too great to allow people to get away with not paying attention. A polite but firm approach is needed. Some examples mentioned included: interrupt conversations among the customers rather than let them talk on; say "if you don't listen, we won't rent to you"; stop the briefing and say you won't start again until everyone is listening; tell them the briefing doesn't count towards their rental time period; tell people to put the cell phones away; tell people you'll give them a little quiz afterwards.
- *"Scare people a little":* This was another widely mentioned tactic. You want people to have fun and look forward to being on the water, so you don't want to scare them too much, but scaring them "a little" gets attention and conveys the seriousness of the information. There were two widely mentioned ways of accomplishing this:

- *Emphasizing the damage deposit/liability for damages to the watercraft:* Reminding people that if they damage the watercraft they could be liable for hundreds or thousands of dollars in damages is effective in getting attention.

In this regard, a few participants commented that they will not let people buy down their damage liability (i.e. pay an extra amount to cap their maximum liability to a relatively low amount). They feel that offering this sends the wrong message to the customer, in essence implying that the renter does not need to worry much about damaging the equipment. One participant said they were aware of some other rental companies who offer this option to try to make some extra money, but disapproved of this practice.

- *Enforcement on the water:* This particularly pertains to not drinking and driving, and ensuring the safety equipment is on board (the latter can become an issue, for example, in multi-day rentals where the renter takes safety equipment off the boat while on shore). The customer is told they may be stopped by police, and could be subject to fines or even the loss of the driver's license (and several admitted they exaggerate the likelihood of being stopped for a police check). Some participants also tell renters that other boaters and cottagers on the lake will call if they see the renter driving in an unsafe way.

A few participants said they will tell stories of cases where there was costly damage or personal injury. However, this runs the risk of scaring the customer too much, so they use discretion on when they think it necessary to use this approach. That said, one participant said he displays damaged propellers in the rental office along with the cost to repair – which he feels is an effective tactic.

- *Isolate the driver(s), or pick one person in a group to focus on:* When it is a group renting, some participants said they will isolate the driver(s) from the rest of the group in order to ensure they have that person's undivided attention. A few participants said they will keep the person in the group, but impress upon the person that they are responsible for the safety of the group – and this helps motivate that person at least to pay close attention.
- *Young/inexperienced staff:* Some participants will not let such staff do safety briefings because they may not be comfortable or confident enough to be firm with customers. Others only hire only experienced boaters. Otherwise, there is typically a training process where a new staff member observes briefings for a period of time, then does some briefings under supervision, before being allowed to do briefings on their own.

**Language barrier:** Quite a few participants said there is sometimes a language barrier. This could be with an international customer, but they said more often it happens with some newcomers to Canada. The frequency of this issue varies across businesses, and depends on the mix of customers at each particular business. Overall, it is not a regular, frequent problem, but it does arise from time to time. The concern is whether the safety (and other) information is fully understood.

It was observed that often there is a member of the group who is more fluent and acts as a translator – this is often a younger person, or may even be a child. Usually the rental agency relies on this person to translate, and they take extra time to try to make sure that the information is getting through properly.

However, some participants commented that sometimes they are not really comfortable with this, and are not fully confident that the translator is translating fully and properly – although they have

no reliable way to assess this. Several said they have refused rental in cases where they did not feel the information was adequately conveyed and understood. In this regard, one participant said they were uncertain what their legal rights were in terms of refusing to rent, and suggested TC issue guidance on the business's legal rights and obligations in these circumstances.

One participant suggested that TC provide the rental boat safety checklist in some other languages common in Canada. However, several others when asked about this possibility did not feel that it really would solve the problem of them being able to adequately assess the customer's understanding.

## Rental Boat Safety Checklist

Participants were shown an example of the current TC rental boat safety checklist, and asked if they had seen a checklist like this, and their overall opinion about it.

About one-third of the participants had seen the current TC rental boat safety checklist, and about two-thirds had not.

Among those who had seen it, the majority were using it, although some were using a customized version. The types of customization included:

- Company name/address
- Telephone number to use to contact the business if necessary
- Decorative elements – e.g. logo, pictures of the area
- Additional boat-related information (e.g. a participant added docking tips for pontoons)

A few suggested it would be helpful if TC provided the checklist in a format easier to customize.

Some of those familiar with the current TC checklist were not using it. Reasons included:

- Using what they say is an earlier version of a TC checklist.
- Their checklist is customized in various ways – e.g. it has an equipment checklist (presence and condition), and/or has a lot of boat-specific information on it.

As noted, about two-thirds of participants said they had not seen the current TC rental boat safety checklist. With regard to the source of the rental boat safety checklist they were using with renters without a PCOC, some said they could not clearly remember where they got it from. Otherwise, the most commonly mentioned source was Transport Canada. Some mentioned this as having 15 checkboxes, which appears to be the sample checklist in TC's document, *Rental Boat Safety Checklist Standard*. Other sources mentioned included

- Study materials for the PCOC exam
- Insurance company
- Coast Guard

The majority of those not familiar with the current TC rental boat safety checklist said they were interested in using it, perhaps with customization, or using parts of it. In this context, quite a few

suggested TC should be proactively sending materials/resources to rental businesses, since otherwise businesses may not know to look for the materials.

The single most widely mentioned thing participants liked about the current TC rental boat safety checklist is the pictures: those unfamiliar with it were all using checklists that did not have informative pictures such as these.

- Many liked the pictures illustrating navigation rules of the road.
- Adding pictures increases reader interest and understanding.
- The red circles are effective in calling attention to things not to do or to safety risks.

Other things at some participants liked included:

- The text is short and to the point, and so more likely to be read.
- It is well organized into sections.
- It is reasonably comprehensive, although there might be some customization by the rental business.

With the understanding that the rental business might customize the checklist to eliminate sections that are not relevant or add items they feel are important, there were no major dislikes (though, it should be kept in mind participants were not asked to review the example checklist in detail but rather to give their overall impressions). The following were some of the comments, made by one or several participants:

- A few participants did not like the pictures, describing them as “cartoony,” although they were very much in the minority.
- An item specifically covering cannabis usage should be added, now that cannabis is legal in Canada.
- “It’s too long”: several participants preferred the TC’s 15-point checklist because it is shorter, and therefore more likely to be read by the customer.
- *I understand that each person on board should wear a lifejacket at all times*: This statement is on all of the different checklists. Several participants renting pontoon boats or houseboats said this is not realistic or necessary for these types of boats.
- The signature block for powered watercraft includes the following to check off: *I will not allow anyone else to operate this boat unless they have a valid proof of competency (such as a Pleasure Craft Operators Card)...* Several participants said it would not be acceptable to them to have a driver who has not gone through their safety briefing and orientation.

## Safety Concerns

Although participants were not specifically asked to list instances of customer injury or death, many nonetheless commented that in their time in business, serious injury or death was rare to nonexistent – which led some to wonder why TC is considering a campaign targeting the rental boat sector specifically. The more common issue they all faced was risk of damage to the watercraft, albeit recognizing that circumstances resulting in damage can pose a safety risk to the customer.

Therefore, the discussion of safety concerns involved both the safety of the customers and safety of the watercraft. Participants often noted that safety of the watercraft is a serious concern. While some of the cost of repairing damage will be covered by the customer's damage deposit, there is also a "time out of service" cost. The boat rental season in Canada is relatively short, so when a watercraft is in the shop for repair, there is significant lost revenue when the watercraft is out of commission.

The discussion of safety concerns is organized as follows. The first section addresses customer types generally associated with safety concerns. The next sections describe various specific safety concerns general to most types of watercraft, and the final section describes some safety concerns specific to certain types of watercraft.

## Customer Types and Safety Concerns

In general, participants have more safety concerns with renters who have little or no prior boating experience. Many of the safety concerns described in the report are particularly applicable to novice boaters.

The purpose of this section is to describe five more specific types of customers mentioned by at least some participants in connection with safety. Three of the types are defined by their purpose for renting, and other two are defined in terms of demographics/boating experience.

### **Rental purpose: Watersports**

Watersports refers to towing (skiing, wakeboard, tubing) and wake surfing.

Watersports are perceived to be associated with risk of serious injury. That said, it was observed that people who rent for the purpose of watersports often have prior experience with this, and prior experience reduces the likelihood of risky behaviour. One participant said they will only rent the "tow boat" to customers with previous experience, and another said they use only the most experienced staff to brief these customers because of the potential for problems. The following are the main safety concerns mentioned.

*Hitting the person being towed/in the water:* Less experienced boaters can risk hitting a person in the water they are picking up due to driving the boat too close to the person, and not appreciating the impact of the momentum of the boat and the impact of wind or current. They try to address this by giving specific instructions on how to pick up a person in the water.

*Hitting some other person in the water or another boat:* The concern here is about other boats on the water, including other boats involved in watersports where people are in the water. A driver may tend to keep looking back at the person they are towing rather than focusing on where they are going, and this creates a risk of running into another boat, or even worse into a person in the water. To address this risk, the safety briefing emphasizes the importance of using a spotter. As one participant said, "we hammer home that the driver drives, and the spotter spots what's behind the boat." Another said they have found it helpful to "officially" designate a particular member of the

rental party as the spotter (“we give them a title”), and brief them on their responsibilities. Another sort of instruction mentioned was telling the driver to stay away from other boats on the lake.

### **Rental purpose: Fishing**

People who rent a boat to fish are perceived to be generally safer boaters than people renting for other purposes. The reasons given for this perception were:

- People renting a boat to fish often have prior boating experience. Often they own a boat, but for various reasons opted to rent rather than use their own boat.
- They tend to drive more slowly, both because of the nature of the activity and because the fishing boats offered by the rental company often have smaller horsepower engines.
- They tend to pay more attention to the charts and to water depth, because this is important for fishing success.

One participant commented that they decided to focus their business specifically on renting to fishers because of the lower risk of injury and damage they associate with this type of customer.

To the small extent to which there are safety concerns associated with fishing, the concerns mentioned were:

- Standing in the boat: Several participants said this is a concern because a person may stand when landing a fish. In a relatively small tiller-steered boat, this can lead to a risk of falling in the water. A few participants disagreed that this is an issue because of the design of the fishing boats they rent: the boat has a seat for the fisher, or the boat has a floor that makes it safer to stand.
- Running aground or into submerged rocks: A person may deliberately fish near shore or shoals. Fishers are typically cautious in approaching these areas, but in windy conditions, the boat might get pushed into the shore or rocks.
- Not wearing lifejackets: Most participants with fishing customers did not perceive this to be a problem, and said people fishing usually keep their lifejackets on. That said, several said they have seen a customer fishing without a life jacket. Two reasons suggested for this were:
  - (1) the boat is not moving or going very slowly, so the person may think there’s no problem getting back into the boat if they fall out; or
  - (2) comfort/less restrictions on movement while fishing.
- Alcohol: Participants generally saw fishers as being unlikely to drink and drive, but a few mentioned the following scenarios where they have seen a problem:
  - 1) when it’s a group of men: “it’s a bunch of guys and they drink”;
  - 2) drinking onshore during the afternoon before going out to fish later in the afternoon/early evening.

## **Rental purpose: Party**

A group renting a pontoon or houseboat for a party are perceived to be at much higher risk for alcohol consumption, and the problems that can come from drinking and driving. Several participants said they will not rent to party groups.

## **Group of young men**

Many participants identified “young men” as being a group more likely be associated with safety concerns – although from their comments it appears to be more accurate to say “a group of young men,” because the group dynamic seems to exacerbate the issues. By young, most participant meant men 20-30 years of age.

The issues cited were: more likely to be impatient during the safety briefing and less likely to take it seriously, more likely to drink alcohol, and more likely to drive in a risky fashion (e.g. too fast, or too close to each other if renting multiple watercraft).

Participants speculated the reasons for this were such things as:

- think they’re invincible, want to look cool in front of friends;
- want to show off for friends;
- want to look like they already know what they’re doing in front of friends.

There were no particular tips for how to deal with this target group, other than being firm and clear in the safety briefing. Although, one participant said they “double the damage deposit” for customers under age 25.

## **Renters with a combination of language barrier and lack of boating experience**

The issue of dealing with a language barrier in the safety briefing was described earlier. It was also the case that some participants said these renters sometimes seem to behave in riskier fashion on the water. Some attributed this to cultural factors, but some others said they believed it is really more a lack of full understanding the orientation session due to the language barrier combined with a lack of previous boating experience.

## **Alcohol Consumption**

The majority of participants said that drinking and boating is a concern they have. While they say it is not a frequent problem, there are incidents from time to time. A minority said it is not really a concern for them, basically because their customers are typically families with kids, and they say that drinking and driving is not common in this group.

Renters perceived to be higher risk are groups renting a boat for a party, and groups of younger men. Beyond that, though, it could be anyone. The main reason offered by participants why people



might drink on the boat is that they are in a “vacation mode” of thinking, and this can include drinking alcohol. Other contributing factors sometimes mentioned included:

- Some said another factor is that some renters, prior to arriving at the rental facility, are not aware they cannot drink on the boat, and when told they cannot drink alcohol on the boat some nonetheless sneak the alcohol they brought on board.
- Related to the previous point, some said renters may not be aware that passengers cannot drink on the boat either (see below for the rules).
- Some participants suggested that some have the mindset that “only a few drinks/beers” will not affect their ability to operate the boat, and several said this is particularly the case when there is not much traffic on the lake. Unlike the constrained lanes and width of a road, an open body of water looks like there would be fewer consequences from drinking and driving a boat.
- A renter may drink on shore at a campsite or cottage, and then drive the boat. This was more of a concern with multi-day rentals. Participants said they will refuse to rent to someone who shows up intoxicated, but they cannot see or control what happens after the renter has left.

Our understanding of the rules<sup>1</sup> is that except in Quebec:

- a) the driver is subject to the same fines and penalties as for drunk driving in the province; and
- b) a person can drink on a boat only if the boat has a permanent toilet, cooking and sleeping facilities, and it is anchored or docked.

In Quebec, alcohol may be consumed as long as the driver’s blood alcohol level does not exceed the same standard as for drunk driving on the road; if it does, then the same fines and penalties as for drunk driving on the road apply.

Participants said that instructions on alcohol are a routine part of the safety briefing, but there is still the occasional problem. This can occur if the renter sneaks the alcohol on board, or if they pick up alcohol at some other location after leaving the dock.

Many participants said that to reinforce the instruction not to drink alcohol on the boat, they make a point of emphasizing that:

- (a) there is police enforcement on the lake – and several said they tend to overstate the actual likelihood of being stopped;
- (b) the police will levy fines; and
- (c) a drunk driver of the boat will be treated the same as if they were caught drunk while driving a car, including that their driver’s license could be taken away.

The last point is something they say renters are often unaware of, and definitely gets attention and helps discourage drunk driving.

Note that several participants said they have customers who tell them that they can drink on the boat as long as it has a toilet. One said they thought this was the case “years ago” but is no longer the case, while the others said they did not know where this idea comes from. This suggests two things:

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<sup>1</sup> BOATSmart, *Know the Facts about Drinking and Boating in Canada!*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.boatsmartexam.com/know-the-facts-about-drinking-and-boating-in-canada/>

- (1) among some rental boaters the role of having a toilet on the boat has gotten through to them, but not the other requirements that go along with that (see the rules above); and
- (2) it looks like some rental boat agencies themselves are not fully clear on the rules.

When asked what TC should focus on its upcoming rental boating safety campaign, some suggested addressing drinking and boating. The suggested objectives are particularly to improve awareness of the rules, and awareness of the consequences if caught.

While participants agreed that the driver should not drink and drive, some felt the rules are unrealistic and too strict with respect to passengers. The latter view was held by some participants renting pontoons, houseboats or larger boats. They suggested the rules should be relaxed for passengers who will not be driving the boat. That said, another view expressed was that drunk passengers can cause safety problems, so the current rules are appropriate.

## Cannabis

Cannabis usage was legalized in Canada in October of this year (the month interviews were done for this project). Cannabis usage was not raised as an issue spontaneously by most participants – perhaps because at the time of interviewing most were winding down their rental operations and so had not yet had to deal with implications for boat rental. However, the interviewer asked what they knew, if anything, about the implications for their business.

Some said they assumed that with respect to renters, cannabis would be treated the same as alcohol, while others said they did not know what the rules would be, or had not yet thought about it. When asked if it would be helpful if TC proactively sent information on this topic incorporating both federal and provincial regulations to rental agencies, participants said that would be a good thing.

## Hitting Rocks/Debris

A majority of participants said a concern is the renter hitting submerged rocks or debris, the latter particularly in the Georgian Strait where there may be “deadheads” – i.e. logs in the water lost from log booms. The geology of some lakes, particularly in northern Ontario but elsewhere as well, is such that there can be submerged rocks that are not close to shore. Hitting a rock may not result in any injuries, but it can cause serious damage to the watercraft.

The ways mentioned for addressing this risk were:

- The rental agency provides charts to the renter which flag areas to avoid, and they point out some particular problem areas during the briefing. But there can be many problem areas on a large lake, and it’s not possible to point out all of them and not all of them may be marked. Less experienced boaters may not be skilled at using charts.
- If there are navigation markers or rock warnings on the water, these are explained. However, it was noted that it is simply not feasible to put rock warnings on all submerged rocks in a large lake. So, this only works if the boater stays within the main navigation channel – which is not

always the case. One participant said they find it helpful to show some photographs of actual navigation markers in the water, because they believe this makes them more salient to the renter than a verbal description.

- During the briefing, the cost to the renter for damages is emphasized, and the bigger and scarier the dollar amounts mentioned, the more effective this tactic is. The requirement for a damage deposit, reinforces the message because as one participant put it, “they know you have their money.”
- Driving too fast contributes to the risk of hitting things. In this context, several said they suggest the renter drive slowly at first while they are familiarizing themselves with the lake, and in general to “be aware” of what’s around them at all times while moving.

Some rental businesses are on lakes or rivers where the water level is controlled by a dam, and the water level can vary considerably over the course of a season, or even over the course of a few days. If the boater is not aware of this possibility, an area that they boated in previously could be unsafe at another time due to a lower water level. A few suggested TC should encourage better marking of areas that are hazardous at times of low water.

A related concern is driving into shallow water near the shore. This is particularly a risk for less experienced boaters who do not understand the depth of water required for safe watercraft operation.

Several participants said they have boats equipped with depth finders. However, one of them said this is not all that helpful for purposes of avoiding collisions with rocks because “it shows you how deep it was five seconds ago 30 feet behind you.” They said it would take a much more expensive system to show what is ahead of the boater.

## Lifejackets/PFDs

Boaters are required by law to have a lifejacket or PFD (Personal Flotation Device) on board for each person on a watercraft, including both powered and human-powered watercraft. The law does not require the lifejackets or PFDs to be worn.

*Note on terminology used by participants, and used in the report:* In posing the main questions about lifejackets/PFDs, the interviewer referred to both lifejackets and PFDs. In their comments, participants almost always only referred to “lifejackets.” While there is a technical difference between lifejackets and PFDs, our impression was that participants were using the term “lifejacket” in a broad generic sense, encompassing both lifejackets and PFDs. In this report, we will use “lifejacket(s)” in this broad generic sense.

Participants said that, as required by law, they provide a lifejacket that fits for every person on board. The exception was one participant who said they do not stock or provide lifejackets for children, and therefore tell parents they must supply lifejackets for their children; other participants do provide lifejackets for children.

Several participants commented that sometimes people who bring their own lifejackets bring one that does not fit properly, so they routinely check for this and will provide a lifejacket if necessary.

They said this particularly can be an issue for children, where the lifejacket brought by the parent may be too large or too small.

As context for the lifejacket discussion, participants were asked about the potential for hypothermia and swimming ability:

- *Potential for hypothermia:* When asked if hypothermia is an issue for the water used by their renters, a small number answered with an unqualified “yes,” while most either said it is not an issue during the rental season, or is only an issue during their shoulder seasons – i.e. spring and fall.
- *Swimming ability:* Participants were asked if they ask renters about their swimming ability as part of the safety briefing. Most do not ask – they assume that people will exercise judgement on whether or not to wear a lifejacket based on swimming ability. The exceptions were a few who rented houseboats with slides, and a few who rented kayaks/canoes.

The typical stance of the rental agency is that they equip the renters with lifejackets and show them where these are, but they leave it up to the renters to decide whether or not to wear them. There are, though, variations and exceptions across participants:

- There are exceptions to the typical stance, albeit among a minority of participants. If there is an exception, it will be for tiller-steered boats, wheel-steered boats (excluding pontoons, houseboats, large boats), or canoes/kayaks. Some say they explicitly encourage wearing a lifejacket all the time – with a few also commenting that if they tried to tell the renter it is required “they would be laughed at.” A few said a line they use that seems to help is that “if there’s an accident, you can’t put it on after you’re in the water.”
- TC Rental Boat Safety Checklist item that says, *I understand that each person on board should wear a lifejacket at all times:* As noted earlier, several participants renting pontoon boats or houseboats said that in their view this is not realistic or necessary for these types of boats.
- *Children:* Many participants said they communicate expectations about children wearing lifejackets, but are about equally split in terms of how forcefully the expectation is communicated. Some position this as “required,” while others “encourage” it but do not state it as a requirement.

There is also variation in how a “child” is defined. Definitions mentioned included: 16 and under, under 16, 12 and under, under 12.

A few participants said they try to discourage parents from bringing an infant on board because of the difficulty of fitting a lifejacket and what might happen in the water.

Several of the participants renting houseboats said they encourage or require children to wear a lifejacket when outside the cabin.

Overall, participants said their impression is that most parents are responsible in ensuring their children wear a lifejacket, and that often the parent will then wear one also in order to set an example. That said, several said that parents may be more lax with older children (early teens), or if they believe their child is a good swimmer.

- *Watersports:* Participants said they require the person in the water to wear a lifejacket.

- *Personal watercraft*: Some participants said they required renters using a personal watercraft to wear a lifejacket, and a few said they believed this is a legal requirement. Generally, participants said that lifejacket usage is very high among PWC users, and they rarely see someone without a lifejacket.
- *Circumstances when it will be recommended the renter wear a lifejacket*: Small numbers of participants mentioned circumstances in which they will proactively recommend the renter wear a lifejacket while in the boat:
  - If the weather is not good or if there is potential for bad weather
  - If the water is cold – e.g. it is a shoulder-season rental
  - If the renter is boating alone
- *Pets*: One participant said that renters who brings dogs often do not have any lifejacket for the dog. They said this is not good, and that they know of cases (not their renters) where a pet has drowned. They encourage renters to bring a lifejacket for their pet.

Participants were asked why they thought people might not wear a lifejacket, and various ideas were given:

- Particularly for pontoon boats, houseboats and large boats, there is little perceived risk of falling in – for example because of railings on the boats. As noted earlier, this is quite often a view shared by the participants renting these boats.
- In this regard, as noted earlier, only a minority of participants will explicitly encourage or require the renter to wear a lifejacket. In the majority of cases, the renter is not under pressure from the rental agency to wear a lifejacket. Indeed, the renter may be told during the safety briefing that they are not required to wear a lifejacket.
- The person has a general attitude that “nothing bad is going to happen.” That is, they are not thinking of, or perceiving, circumstances that might end up with them in the water.
- The lifejacket interferes with ease of movement. A few participants said they make an effort to stock comfortable lifejackets, but it is not clear how widespread this mindset is.
- On a hot day, it’s uncomfortable to wear a lifejacket.
- A lifejacket interferes with sunning or trying to get a suntan.
- The person thinks they are a good swimmer.
- The renter wearing a lifejacket stops to swim off the boat without a lifejacket, and then does not put it back on.
- There is no need to wear a lifejacket when the boat is not moving, or only moving very slowly: there is no perceived risk of a problem in these circumstances, or the person assumes it would be easy to get back into the boat.
- Among younger people especially, wearing a lifejacket does not look “cool.”
- They see other boaters not wearing a lifejacket.
- Among older people who have boated before, an attitude that “I never wore a lifejacket before, and I never had any problems.”

- The lifejackets provided by the rental company are perceived as not being sanitary, because they are used by many different people. One participant said they make a point of telling renters that the lifejackets are washed and disinfected every week.

## Overloading/Adding New People

A boat has a capacity limit expressed in terms of weight and number of people. Quite a few participants mentioned they had concerns about the boat getting overloaded. The main concern expressed is about renters who pick up other people (without telling the rental agency) after leaving the dock. Participants said they think this sometimes happens deliberately – e.g. when a large party arrives and discovers not everyone can fit on the boat, and the renter surreptitiously arranges to pick up the other people somewhere else. It can also be unplanned – for example people at a campsite or cottage might later have other people at the campsite/cottage get on the boat.

There are several negative consequences that can happen in these circumstances:

- The boat can become overloaded. This is both dangerous, and can result in a fine if the boater is stopped by police.
- There is a mismatch between the lifejackets provided by the rental agency and the number of people on board. Either there are not enough lifejackets, and/or the lifejackets on board do not properly-fit the new people (even if the boat is not overloaded).
- One of the new people may drive the boat. This person may not have proof of competency, or even if they do, they have not gone through the rental agency’s safety briefing. A few participants commented that they have seen cases where parents who are campers or cottagers may rent the boat, but then subsequently let a teenage child drive the boat on their own to keep the teen occupied.

Two other issues were mentioned by some participants in connection with overloading/adding new people:

- *What really matters for boat operation is more the weight, and less so the number of people:* There are two issues here. One is that the average weight of the people renting the boat may exceed the manufacturer’s assumption of people’s average weight. The rental agency needs to take this into consideration, which can be awkward when the renter knows the stated capacity in terms of people. The other issue is that people bring stuff on to the boat, and the weight of that stuff needs to be taken into consideration in addition to the number of people. Several participants said they have a policy of reducing the maximum allowable number of people by one or two to compensate for the weight of the supplies brought on board.
- *Are children counted as people?* Some renters arranging a rental may not include children as counting towards the person limit, and so may be surprised when they show up for the rental. Also, there was some evidence of variability across rental agencies in terms of how children are counted. One participant said they count children as half a person, while another emphasized they count a child as a full person. The latter said they did this because typically a parent brings various supplies related to the child, which can then add up close to the weight of an adult.

## Leaving/Docking

Some participants expressed concerns about renters leaving the dock and then subsequently returning to dock the boat. This concern is exacerbated if space is tight in the marina used by the rental agency. The main concern is damage to the watercraft and/or to other watercraft. This concern particularly applies to less experienced boaters, and there are two senses in which a boater may be less experienced:

- A renter may have little or no prior boating experience, and because of this, not have a feel for how the boat handles. The usual problem is that they tend to go too fast when leaving or returning, and as a result risk collision.
- A renter may have prior experience on smaller boats, but if they are renting a larger boat – such as a pontoon or houseboat, or a much larger boat – they may not realize that it responds more slowly to controls. This risk, again, is collision.

One way some participants address this issue is by taking less experienced boaters out for a short test drive. In addition to helping the rental agency assess the renter's skills, it gives the renter a chance to get a feel for the controls.

Several participants – particularly those renting large boats – avoid the problem by not letting the renter handle the boat when leaving or docking. They will take the renter out to open water, and have them call ahead when returning and/or provide a temporary place to dock that is easier to deal with.

One participant who rents large boats said they ask the renter to practice “docking” next to a piece of driftwood out on open water before returning and docking the boat for real.

Collisions around the dock can result in serious damage, but usually do not cause safety problems for people (unless speed is a factor). Several participants renting larger boats said there can be a safety issue for people during docking if a person jumps off the boat in order to try to help tie up the boat. What can happen is they try to use their body to stop the boat, and since this will be ineffective they can get injured. A few participants renting houseboats said they try to impress on renters not to try to stop the boat with their body – e.g. one tells them the boat “is the equivalent of three elephants” to try to get the concept across.

## Hitting Other Boats

Some participants were on bodies of water where there are a lot of other boats. These participants said there is a concern about the renter hitting another boat, particularly when there are a lot of other boaters going relatively fast. The problem can be if the renter driving the boat is focused only on what's ahead of them, and then turns the boat without first looking back. The participants try to stress to the renter to always be aware of what's all around them, and to generally stay away from getting close to other boats.

## Problems Caused by Other Boats

One way the safety of a renter may be compromised is by the behaviour of other boaters. The main concern mentioned by some participants in this regard is the wake produced by other boats. A large wake may be produced by a boat speeding too close to the renter's boat. Some also said a particular concern is the increasing popularity of wake boats: they said that these can cause large waves from up to 200 to 300 feet away. A large wake can cause a small boat to become unstable, and can cause damage to a larger boat such as a houseboat. For example, one participant who rents houseboats said they have had "people tossed out of their chairs" and "dishes broken" because of the rocking of the boat caused by a large wake.

There is not much the renter can do in these circumstances. Ideally the renter would turn the boat into the wake. However, they may not have been given instructions about what to do in this situation, or they may not have time to maneuver the boat, or they may not appreciate how far the wake from a wakeboat travels.

A different type of problem mentioned by a few participants who rent large boats is the behaviour of smaller watercraft – especially PWCs. They said that these boaters may not realize how much time it takes for a large boat to turn or to slow down. These other boaters may come too close, or may not follow proper "rules of the road" and risk collision. One participant particularly pointed their finger at the "hourly renters" who have little boating experience. They felt those other rental businesses should either not be renting to inexperienced people, or at least should give better instruction about behaviour on the water.

## Personal Watercraft

Among participants who rent out PWCs, most said their biggest concern is renting to a group, and particularly to a group of younger men. The problem is they may drive too fast and too close to each other, causing a risk of collision that will cause damage to the machine and possibly injury to the riders.

The perceived contributing factors include:

- a) not understanding the limits on maneuverability including the fact a PWC "slides" a bit when turning (one participant said he tells renters "it's like turning a car on ice"), not keeping in mind that the ability to steer is lost when the throttle is released, and not realizing the impact of "there's no brake";
- b) excitement in being on the water with a bunch of friends;
- c) wanting to spray each other; and
- d) just generally being too close together.



And, in the case of a group of younger men, there are the general factors discussed elsewhere in the report that cause them to be associated with higher concerns about safety (see the earlier section, *Customer Types and Safety Concerns*).

The participants said they try to address this by emphasizing the damage deposit and the cost to the renter. A few tell stories of injuries from PWC collisions – e.g. “you could break your buddy’s leg.” A few said with respect to making turns they tell people to act as if they were in a car – that is, look before turning and signal the turn.

A safety concern mentioned by a few participants is a group that rents a boat and a PWC. Out on the water, the renters may try to transfer people between the boat and the PWC. This creates a risk of collision.

Note that several participants who had previously rented PWCs said they no longer rent them because of the safety and liability concerns.

## Canoes/Kayaks

The following are safety concerns associated with canoes and/or kayaks mentioned by participants that particularly pertain to novices.

*The boats are tippy:* Novices may not realize how tippy the boats are. This can cause problems right at the dock – for example a participant said there had been instances over the year of people falling into the water right at the dock while trying to get into a canoe. Falling in the water at the dock is manageable for the rental agency, but falling into the water on open water can be more serious. One participant said there had been cases of people needing to be rescued because of falling out of the boat.

*Getting into the boat after falling out:* Related to the above point, novices may have difficulty getting back into the boat if it has tipped over. For example, one participant said there had been an instance of two seniors in a kayak who tipped over and were unable to get back into the kayak; a passing boater rescued them. A participant noted that it’s not possible in a short rental to teach a person how to flip an overturned kayak upright.

*Impact of wind:* Several participants said novices do not appreciate the difficulty of paddling against the wind. One participant said they have had people call them because of inability to get back to the dock due to wind. One said a group walked back to the dock on the shore because they could not make it on the water.

An issue that can affect all paddlers, but particularly novices, is the impact of wake produced by passing power boats. Because of the small size and tippiness of the boats, they are particularly affected by the wake from other boats.

A general instruction participants said they give to paddlers is to stay close to shore, to reduce the risk if there are issues with tipping over or with the wind.

## Houseboats

The following are safety concerns associated with houseboats mentioned by participants.

*Impact of wind:* Participants noted that the design of houseboats is such that they are very affected by wind. Houseboat novices, and even renters with prior experience on smaller boats, may not fully appreciate the effects of wind on a houseboat. A few commented that with customers who have experience with smaller boats, they really have to emphasize the impact wind can have during the safety briefing, because these customers may not take the information as seriously as they should.

The wind affects the houseboat not only when it's on the water, but also when moored, and participants were particularly concerned that the boats be moored properly. The safety briefing includes instruction on how to tie the boat down, but sometimes renters still do not do it properly. One participant believed this was again more of an issue with renters with prior experience on other types of boats, who may think they already know how to tie a boat down properly. One participant said if they have concerns in this area about a renter, they may drive out and check that a boat is tied down properly.

*A houseboat does not maneuver like smaller boats:* Because of its weight, a houseboat does not respond as quickly to the controls as smaller, lighter boats. A renter with previous experience on smaller boats may not anticipate the difference in handling, which could lead to a risk of collision. Participants said the best way to address this is through a short test drive with the renter in order to give them a feel for the controls.

*Children:* Because of the size and design of a houseboat, children have some space that can result in them "running around" (e.g. excitement when using the slide). Surfaces on a boat can become wet and slippery if people are swimming (e.g. using a slide on the houseboat). One participant commented they try to "scare" the parents a bit by emphasizing the risk of a child falling overboard if they are "running around." As noted earlier, several participants said they encourage or require children to wear a lifejacket when outside the cabin.

*Seniors:* Some participants said they have concerns when renting a houseboat to seniors. This is because of the physical demands of mooring the boat, which requires jumping off the boat and strength to tie the boat down. One participant said there have been occasions when they will go out and help with the mooring.

## Pontoon Boats

Some participants suggested that pontoon boats are generally safer than other boats because they will not sink, they are more stable, and they go slow.

The safety concerns flagged for pontoon boats were similar to houseboats:

- a) people with experience on smaller boats may not appreciate that the pontoon boat handles differently from those boats; and
- b) renters – including those with experience on smaller boats – may not anticipate that wind can have a greater impact on pontoon boats.

As discussed earlier, alcohol consumption is a widespread concern. Some said it is particularly a concern for pontoon rentals because some renters come with an attitude or belief that it is acceptable to drink on a pontoon boat.

## Participant Suggestions for Transport Canada

Participants were encouraged to offer suggestions for things TC should focus on or do in the upcoming rental boat safety campaign. Many participants had to think a bit about this, and some did not have any suggestions. It was also the case that while some types of suggestions were more common than others, the suggestions did not strongly converge on a few particular priorities. Our impression is that this is probably because overall participants felt that they are doing a good job of managing safety risks, and so suggestions for TC's priorities for the campaign do not always immediately come to mind.

### Suggestions referenced earlier in the report

Suggestions referenced earlier in the report are summarized below, together with page number references. These are divided into those that were more frequently mentioned, and those that were mentioned by one or several participants.

#### **More frequently mentioned suggestions discussed earlier:**

*Provide a section on the TC website for rental businesses (p. 18):* This would put everything pertinent to rental businesses in one easy-to-find location in order to provide a single “go to” source for information. It could also have a consumer-oriented section that businesses could point to for people interested in renting a watercraft.

*Make hard copies of the Safe Boating Guide more easily available (p. 17):* Hard copies of the Guide are difficult to come by, and hard copy can be better as a format for the purpose of sharing with renters.

*Proactively send information to rental agencies on resources developed by TC (p. 26):* This suggestion was triggered in particular by TC's current Rental Boat Safety Checklist, which quite a few participants had not seen. The larger point is that if TC does not send information on the resources it has developed, rental businesses may not become aware of these resources.

*Address alcohol and boating (p. 31):* Focus on improving awareness of the rules and of the consequences if caught breaking the rules.

*Inform rental businesses of their rights and obligations with respect to cannabis (p. 31):* Because cannabis was only very recently legalized, most participants have not yet gotten any information on what it means for their business.

#### **Less frequently mentioned suggestions discussed earlier:**

*Work with industry associations (p. 19):* Industry associations are good at communicating with members, and so can be a good communication channel for reaching some rental businesses.

*Add a driving test component to the PCOC (p. 20):* The goal would be to provide renters – as well as other new boaters – with some basic hands-on training in operating watercraft.

*Provide a short video (p. 22):* This would be a short video that highlights key safety points.

*Provide the TC Rental Boat Safety Checklist in an easy to customize format (p. 25):* This would, for example, allow the rental agency to put their name/branding on the checklist, to provide contact information if the renter needs help while on the water, and to customize the contents to their boats and to their safety concerns.

*Encourage renters to be aware of the dangers of shoals (p. 32):* The possibility of hitting shoals and damaging the watercraft was a common concern, and this led to a suggestion this be one of the targets for TC's campaign.

*Provide a designated contact in TC for rental agencies (p. 18):* This could complement the suggestion to provide a section on the TC website for rental agencies.

*Work with police services on enforcement policies (p. 15):* The specific concern that led to this suggestion was a participant's observation that police did not appear to enforce safe driving rules such as speed limits.

*Provide financial support for installing GPS systems (p. 15):* This would be to help rental agencies monitor renters when they are out of sight.

#### **Other Participant Suggestions**

The following are other participant suggestions that were not mentioned earlier in the report.

#### **More frequently mentioned suggestions**

*Provide handouts/display materials:* Some version of this was mentioned by quite a few participants. These participants would appreciate having safety-oriented materials in their rental office that customers can see and perhaps pick up. It can be nice to have something to show or give to people when they come in. More importantly, they said it can help to reinforce safety messages because it can add more authority to the message: "it's not just me saying this, the government is saying this also." This is helpful generally, but particularly for messages that may be met with some

resistance or skepticism, such as “don’t drink alcohol”, or “wear a lifejacket.” Therefore, it would be important that the materials be clearly branded as being from the government.

Two types of materials in terms of format were suggested – posters and handouts. With regard to the handouts, it was emphasized that these should be short, because participants said people do not want to have to read a lot. One suggestion, for example, was a very brief summary of basic safety regulations and recommendations people could take with them.

*Message to renters – Be aware of what’s around you:* This suggestion is a generalization of the more specific suggestion mentioned earlier about making people aware of the dangers of shoals. A frequent concern of the participants was risks to the watercraft in the environment around the renter: running into shoals, going into water that is too shallow, collision with other boats, people in the water, the impact of the wake produced by other boats. A communication theme of “be aware of what’s around you” could encompass all of these types of safety risks.

*Lifejackets:* Some participants suggest the campaign include promotion of wearing lifejackets. It should be noted the majority of participants do not actively encourage renters to wear a lifejacket all the time, but some do, and some encourage it in particular circumstances. Our impression from the interviews is that a lifejacket message should give reasons for wearing a lifejacket, and focus on circumstances where it is particularly important to have one on.

### **Suggestions made by one or several participants**

*Include ethnic communities in Canada as a target group:* Participants said that it can be good for business to encourage newcomers to Canada to try boating, but as discussed earlier there can sometimes be a language barrier in conveying safety information. This motivated a suggestion to target this segment as part of TC’s rental boat safety campaign.

*Don’t scare people away:* A few participants were concerned that TC’s campaign might go too far in highlighting risks to safety, such that novice boaters would be afraid to rent a boat. The suggestion was that the message needs to include the idea that the risks can be effectively managed.

*Encourage novices interested in trying out boating to get their Pleasure Craft Operators Card:* This will not by itself make them safe boaters because it does not include hands-on experience in the water, but it does give people a basic level of education about safety.

*Promote “mind your wake”:* This suggestion was prompted by the perceived growing popularity of wakeboats, which produce a wake that can be a problem for other boaters, as well as docks and shorelines.

*Provide a template for doing an effective safety orientation for use by new rental businesses:* This could help a new businesses reduce trial-and-error in designing their safety orientation process.

*Require documented sailing experience for people who rent a sailboat:* The participant said sailing experience is not required now to rent a sailboat, and said that the technical demands of sailing are such that sailing experience should be a requirement for a rental.

## Appendix A - Screener

### Boat Rental Agencies Telephone Interviews - Screener-

Use this screener for recruiting from the list provided.

In the participant profile, also include the following information from the list:

- Respondent Identification (RID)
- Company name
- City
- Province

#### INTRODUCTION:

Hello/Bonjour, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ of (Synchro Research/Ad Hoc Research), a public opinion research company. We are organizing a research project on behalf of the Government of Canada, specifically Transport Canada. The study is about the experiences of rental agencies with recreational boat renters related to boating safety. The research results will help to inform the development of a rental boating safety campaign

#### IF HAVE A NAME FROM THE SAMPLE LIST:

May I please speak with **(NAME FROM LIST)**?

**If not available:** When would be a good time for me to call back? \_\_\_\_\_

**If no longer there:**

We would like to speak to the owner or a manager of the business who would be involved in providing boating safety information to recreational boat renters. Who should I speak to in your company to see if they would be interested in being part of this study?

**Record:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When connected, read the Introduction, then read:**

Would you prefer that I continue in English or in French? Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais? **[If prefers French, either switch to the French screener and continue, or say the following and then hang up and arrange French-language call-back]** Nous vous rappellerons pour mener cette entrevue de recherche en français. Merci. Au revoir.

**Go to Qualified Contact Introduction**

#### IF DO NOT HAVE A NAME FROM THE SAMPLE LIST:

We would like to speak to the owner or a manager of the business who would be involved in providing boating safety information to recreational boat renters. Who should I speak to in your company to see if they would be interested in being part of this study?

**Record:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If not available:** When would be a good time for me to call back? \_\_\_\_\_

**When connected, read the Introduction, then read:**

Would you prefer that I continue in English or in French? Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais? **[If prefers French, either switch to the French screener and continue, or say the following and then hang up and arrange French-language call-back]** Nous vous rappellerons pour mener cette entrevue de recherche en français. Merci. Au revoir.

**Continue to Qualified Contact Introduction**

**QUALIFIED CONTACT INTRODUCTION**

**Note to recruiter: When terminating a call with someone, say: *Thank you for your cooperation. We already have enough participants who have a similar profile to yours, so we are unable to invite you to participate.***

Thank you. We are organizing a research project on behalf of the Government of Canada, specifically Transport Canada. As part of its mandate to develop and promote boating safety, Transport Canada (TC) is developing a rental boating safety campaign. The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the experiences of rental agencies with recreational boat renters related to boating safety.

Do you rent watercraft of any sort to recreational boaters?

- Yes            1
- No            2        **Thank and end the interview**

Are you the owner of the business or a manager who would be involved in providing boating safety related information to recreational boat renters?

- Yes            1        **Continue**
- No            2        **Ask for contact**

I'd like to tell you a bit more about the study and ask some questions to see if you fit the profile of the types of people we are looking for in this research. This will take 4 or 5 minutes. May I continue?

- Yes            1
- No            2        **Thank and end the interview**

In this research project, you would take part in a 45 to 60 minute online interview, which involves logging on to a website and using the phone for the audio portion of the interview. I'll schedule the interview for a later time at your convenience, and you would receive a cash honorarium as a thank you for your time.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and your decision about taking part will not affect any dealings you may have with the Government of Canada. Your identity will be kept confidential, and neither your name nor the name of your business will be given to the government. You are free to opt out at any time. All information collected will be used for research purposes only in accordance with the requirements of the Privacy Act.

May I continue?

- Yes            1
- No             2        **Thank and end the interview**

Thank you.

1) Are you the ..... ? **(Read list)**

Owner	1
Manager	2
Or do you hold some other position in the business? <b>(Describe)</b>	3 _____

2a) Which of the following types of watercraft do you make available for rental to recreational boaters? Please only include bareboat rentals where you do not provide a crew. **(Read list; accept all answers)**

<b>A</b>	Tiller-steered motorized boats, excluding sailboats	1	
<b>A</b>	Wheel steered boats, excluding sailboats	2	
<b>B</b>	Houseboats	3	
<b>C</b>	Pontoon boats	4	
<b>D</b>	Sailboats	5	
<b>E</b>	Personal watercraft	6	
<b>F</b>	<i>Canoes, kayaks, rowboats or other non-motorized small boats*</i>	7	<b>Ask Q.2b</b>
	<b>None of these</b>	8	<b>Thank and end the interview</b>



2b) **[If code 7 in Q. 2a, ask Q.2b)** Are these guided rentals only, that is accompanied by a guide in another watercraft, non-guided rentals, or do you offer both types of rentals?

Guided rentals	1	<b>If only type of watercraft rented, thank and end the interview</b>
Non-guided rentals	2	
Both types of rentals	3	

3a) **[If more than one type mentioned in Q.2a, ask Q.3a)** You mentioned that you rent more than one type of watercraft. Is there one type of watercraft with which you do the most business?

Yes	1	<b>Ask Q. 3b</b>
No	2	<b>Record all types rented in Q2a in the quota grid</b>

3b) Which type watercraft would that be? **(Record this type in the quota grid)**

<b>A</b>	Tiller-steered motorized boats, excluding sailboats	1
<b>A</b>	Wheel steered boats, excluding sailboats	2
<b>B</b>	Houseboats	3
<b>C</b>	Pontoon boats	4
<b>D</b>	Sailboats	5
<b>E</b>	Personal watercraft	6
<b>F</b>	<i>Canoes, kayaks, rowboats or other non-motorized small boats</i>	7

## QUOTAS

Minimum Quota Target	Type of watercraft
16	<b>Type A:</b> Tiller-steered and wheel-steered
4	<b>Type B:</b> Houseboats
4	<b>Type C:</b> Pontoons
4	<b>Type D:</b> Sailboats
8	<b>Type E:</b> Personal watercraft
4	<b>Type F:</b> Non-motorized – kayak, canoe, rowboat

**These quotas account for 40 of the 50 interviews to be completed. The remaining 10 interviews can come from any category, providing at least 8 are in Types A, B, C, D or E**

4a) Including yourself, how many people are employed in your watercraft rental business at the height of the season?

1-2 employees	1
3-5 employees	2
6-9 employees	3
10 or more employees	4

4b) How long has your company been in the watercraft rental business?

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1 year or less     | 1 |
| 2 to 3 years       | 2 |
| 4 to 5 years       | 3 |
| 6 to 10 years      | 4 |
| More than 10 years | 5 |

Let me tell you some more about this study to see if you would like to take part.

5) As I mentioned earlier, the research involves an online interview. To take part you will log on to a website and use the phone for the audio portion of the interview. The interview will last 45 to 60 minutes. Do you feel comfortable doing this?

- |     |                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Yes | 1                                    |
| No  | 2 <b>Thank and end the interview</b> |

There may be someone from Transport Canada who has been involved in this project listening to the online interview. However, they will not take part in the interview in any way, and they will not be given your name or the name of your business. Is this acceptable to you?

- |     |                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Yes | 1                                    |
| No  | 2 <b>Thank and end the interview</b> |

The interviewer will make an audio recording of the interview. These recordings are used to help with analyzing the findings and writing the report. Neither your name nor the name of your business will appear in the research report. Is this acceptable to you?

- |     |                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Yes | 1                                    |
| No  | 2 <b>Thank and end the interview</b> |

## INVITATION

Thank you. I'd like to schedule the interview with you. It will last 45 to 60 minutes, and following your participation we will send you an honorarium of \$150.

**Schedule a date/time based on information provided by the interviewer**

**In the schedule of interviews, show the time of the interview in both the participant's local time and in EST.**

**[If outside of Quebec:]** The interview will be conducted by Rick Robson of Sage Research. Rick will call you at [time] on [date].

**[If Quebec:]** The interview will be conducted by Sylvain Laroche of Sage Research. Sylvain will call you at [time] and [date].

Just to confirm, the name I wrote down for you is [insert name]. Is that correct?

- Yes            1
- No             2    **Get correct name**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

What telephone number should we use for the interview?

**Telephone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to send you an email confirming the date and time, and who will be interviewing you. Please give me an email address to use for this purpose?

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

As we are only inviting a small number of people to participate in this research, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to do the interview at the arranged time, please give us a call so that we can reschedule or get another business to replace yours. You can reach us at **[Insert recruiter's phone #]**. Please ask for **[recruiter's contact name]**.

**[If applicable, also provide email address:]** You can also get in touch with us by email. The email address is **[insert recruiter's email address]**

Please note that you may not have someone else do the interview if you are unable to do the interview.

Someone from our company will call you back before the interview to confirm these arrangements.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study!

**Record gender based on observation:**

- Male            1**
- Female        2**

**Recruited by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Confirmed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to recruiter:**

**If outside of Quebec:**

**Should a participant require more information about the interview, please refer them to the interviewer Rick Robson and give them one of the following contact options:**

- 1) The person can call Rick at 905-577-4040, ext. 5
- 2) Rick can call the participant instead at a time convenient to them
- 3) Rick can be contacted via email [rick.robson@sageresearch.ca](mailto:rick.robson@sageresearch.ca)

**Should a participant require validation that this is a legitimate research project, please refer them to:**

Carol Lau  
Transport Canada  
613-991-0043

**If Quebec:**

**Should a participant require more information about the interview, please refer them to the interviewer Sylvain Laroche and give them one of the following contact options:**

- 1) The person can call Sylvain at 514-572-1489
- 2) Sylvain can call the participant instead at a time convenient to them
- 3) Sylvain can be contacted via email [sylvainlaroche@videotron.ca](mailto:sylvainlaroche@videotron.ca)

**Should a participant require validation that this is a legitimate research project, please refer them to:**

Carol Lau  
Transport Canada  
613-991-0043

## Appendix B – Interview Agenda

### Study about the Experiences of Boat Rental Agencies With Recreational Boat Renters Related to Boating Safety - Interview Agenda -

**To take part in the interview, you will need to log onto a website and use your phone for the audio portion of the interview. Please be sure to have this information available for the call. The interview is scheduled for 45 to 60 minutes.**

**The interviewer will call you and once you are connected on the phone, the interviewer will ask you to log onto the website using the link provided below.**

#### Interview Date & Time

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Interviewer:** The person conducting the interview will be Rick Robson/Sylvain Laroche of Sage Research Corporation. **He will call you on the date and time above at [Insert telephone # given by participant from profile sheet].**

#### iTracks Website Link

**This is the link to the website you will need to use once you and Rick are connected on the phone.**

**XXXXXX**

#### Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research interview!

This research is being done on behalf of the Government of Canada and specifically a group within Transport Canada involved in promoting recreational boating safety.

Transport Canada is developing a rental boating safety campaign, and the results of this research will be used to help develop that campaign. The campaign will be directed at boat rental agencies, their employees as well as members of the public who occasionally rent boats.

The following are some of the topics, we will cover during the interview:

- Your roles and responsibilities, as they relate to providing safety information to recreational boat renters and some information about the types of watercraft you rent out.
- The range of boating experience of your rental customers.
- How you typically learn about the safety features or requirements for the watercraft you rent out.
- Your company's approach to giving a safety briefing to recreational boat renters.
- The challenges your company may sometimes have in delivering effective safety briefings to rental customers.
- Once renters are on the water and perhaps out of sight, the types of issues you may have had with renters not following safety instructions, or acting in an unsafe manner.

- What you consider to be the biggest safety issues among recreational boat renters.
- What do you suggest are the most important things Transport Canada could do for boat rental businesses to help them promote safe boating among their rental customers?

## Appendix C – Interview Guide

### Rental Boat Agencies - Interview Agenda -

#### 1) Introduction (5 minutes)

- a) **Introduce self, and explain purpose of research:** My name is (interviewer name) and I work for a marketing research company called Sage Research. This research is being done on behalf of the Government of Canada. More specifically, the group sponsoring this research is a group within Transport Canada involved in promoting recreational boating safety.

One of their areas of interest is boating safety among people who rent watercraft for recreational purposes. In this research project, I'm talking with rental agencies to get their perspective. In this interview, I'll talk about your experiences with recreational boat renters as it relates to boating safety. The type of rentals I'm interested in are what I call "bareboat" rentals, that is, rentals where you're not providing any crew or guide.

Transport Canada is developing a rental boating safety campaign, and the results of this research will be used to help develop that campaign. The campaign will be directed at rental boat agencies, their employees as well as members of the public who occasionally rent boats. One thing I'll be particularly interested in is if you have any suggestions for things Transport Canada could do to assist rental agencies with providing boating safety information to their customers.

b) **Review interview procedures:**

- Role of interviewer
- There are no right or wrong answers; it's just about your experiences and opinions
- Confidentiality: neither your name nor the name of your business will appear in the report
- Recording: The session is being recorded, including both the audio and what is visible on the screen. The recording is for my use only to help in preparing the report on this research, and will not be provided to Transport Canada.
- Presence of observers online from Transport Canada – observers can hear us and see what is on the computer screen; they do not know who you are; they are here to observe the interview and to get ideas on how they can help promote safe boating.
- The interview will take 45-60 minutes.

c) **Any questions?**

#### 2) Company information (6 Minutes)

What is your position in the company? What is your role in the company with respect to providing boating safety information to recreational boat renters?

Besides yourself, how many other people at your location are involved in providing boating safety information to recreational boat renters?

Where is your rental agency located? What types of waterways are your rental customers using? (lakes, rivers, canals, coastal waters)

What types of watercraft do you rent out? (Keep the focus on bareboat rentals).

What are the most common types you rent out?

What is the typical length of a rental?

**Note to interviewer:** Adapt the questions and probes in the interview guide to the types of watercraft rented.

What is the range of boating experience of your rental customers? Is there a typical level of experience?

**Probes:** By type of watercraft

Motorized: Do you rent to customers who do not have a Pleasure Craft Operators Card (PCOC) or other proof of competency? (**Probe**) Roughly, what percentage of your renters have a PCOC or other proof of competency?

### 3) Sources of boating safety information/regulatory requirements (5 Minutes)

How do you typically learn about the safety features or needs of the watercraft you rent out?

**Probes:** Vendor you buy the watercraft from

User manual

Safe Boating Guide available from Transport Canada

**Probe:** If not mentioned, ask if aware of

If aware: Used it?

If aware/not used: What are your impressions of it? Any particular reasons you haven't used it?

If aware/use: Is it helpful to you? Why/why not?

Small Vessel Regulations

**Probe:** If not mentioned, ask if aware of

If aware: Used it?

If aware/not used: What are your impressions of it? Any particular reasons you haven't used it?

If aware/use: Is it helpful to you? Why/why not?

[Time permitting:] What sort of maintenance schedule do you have for the watercraft you rent out?

**Probes:** How often is safety equipment on board the watercraft checked?



#### 4) Safety briefing (13 Minutes)

What is your company's approach to giving a safety briefing to recreational boat renters?

**Probes:** Does the approach vary with the level of experience/proof of competency of the customer? If so, in what ways and what are the reasons for that?

What areas do you focus on in the safety briefing?

Are there any printed or web-based materials or videos that you use as part of the safety briefing? If so, what, and what is their role?

- Probe: Do you ever have to revise or update the materials?

Do you use a checklist with the customer? If yes, are you using the checklists available from the Canadian Safe Boating Council, or some other checklist?

**At this point, show a relevant Transport Canada checklist available at the CSBC website:** Here's an example of one of the checklists available from the Canadian Safe Boating Council (CSBC).

- If use checklist: How well do these checklists work for you? Do you have any suggestions for changes?
- If use some other checklist: Were you aware of the checklists on the Canadian Safe Boating Council website? How does your checklist compare to the ones from the Canadian Safe Boating Council?
- If no checklist used: Were you aware of the checklists on the Canadian Safe Boating Council website? Is there a role for using a checklist such as this in your business, or not really?

What challenges does your company sometimes have in delivering effective safety briefings to rental customers? Are there challenges specific to certain types of watercraft?

(As challenges are mentioned, ask how they handle the challenge, and if there are any resources that Transport Canada might provide that could help – e.g. pamphlets, videos, training manuals for staff)

**Probes:** Staff (**Note to Interviewer: Ask only if have staff**):

- Getting staff trained; how do you train staff who give safety briefings?
- How do you make sure staff are consistent in the safety briefing?

Rental customer:

- Do your customers have difficulty understanding certain aspects of the safety briefing?
- Do your customers not take certain aspects of the safety briefing seriously, or say they already know this when it's possible they don't know as much as they should?
- Are there some types of customers less likely than others to take the briefing seriously, or less likely to pay attention? Can you describe that type of customer? (Probe) How do you handle the briefing of customers who have rented from you in the past, or who say they are experienced boaters?

## 5) Unsafe boating by renters (14 minutes)

Once the customer is on the water and perhaps out of sight, you don't have any direct control over what they actually do, and whether or not they follow the safety instructions that you've given them.

- What issues have you had with some customers not following safety instructions, or with acting in an unsafe manner? Are there issues specific to a particular type of watercraft?
- What do you think are the reasons why they do these things? Are there certain types of customers who are more likely to act in an unsafe manner?
- Do you have any tips or suggestions for what works best to reduce the likelihood of the problem?
- Do you have any suggestions for anything Transport Canada could do or provide to you that would help reduce the likelihood of the problem?

**Probes:** Not wearing a PFD or lifejacket; not appreciating the dangers of hypothermia if they fall in the water. (Probe) Do you ever ask about swimming ability?

Drinking alcohol

Not following the rules of the road while out on the water – e.g. going too fast, or inappropriate actions relative to other boats, swimmers, or the shoreline

Not properly using navigational aids on the water such as buoys and beacons

Not remembering or knowing how to deal with emergency situations

## 6) Wrap-up questions (1 minute)

- Overall, what do you think are the biggest safety issues among recreational boat renters?
- What do you suggest are the most important things Transport Canada could do for boat rental businesses to help them promote safe boating among their rental customers?

## 7) Conclusion (1 minute)

Thank you for your help! The report on this project will be available to the public, and you will be able to access it online at the Library and Archives Canada website. As I mentioned earlier, the report will not have any names in it, so your contribution will be anonymous.

The firm that recruited you for this interview, namely [Synchro Research; Ad Hoc Recherche], will mail you a cheque for \$150 as a thank you for taking part in this interview.

Thanks again!