



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

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Transport Canada**

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Focus Testing on Best Practices in Rental Boating Safety Communications

Summary

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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.

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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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Robson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being the most prominent.

Rick Robson
Vice-President
Sage Research Corporation