

Safety league boat owners to beware

The Ontario Safety League, reporting on pleasure boating fatalities in Ontario during 1975 boating season, finds that the major problem facing anyone who uses a boat for fishing, hunting, canoeing, sailing, water skiing, water transportation or just plain cruising, is the possibility of drowning from one of many types of boating mishaps.

The report indicates there is some comfort for boat owners in the fact that drownings were one third less than for the previous season but this information should not lead boaters to become overconfident. The hard facts are that 41 persons drowned while using outboard motor boats and 20 others were drowned when their canoes over-

turned. Only one of the 61 people was wearing a life jacket at the time of the fatal accidents.

The league's analysis shows that 60 per cent of the people who drowned were mature persons of 30 years of age and over and that 49 per cent of the accidental drownings were due to boats capsizing or swamping.

The greatest number of drownings occur in the cold-water months of April, May, June, September, October and November when hypothermia is an ever-present danger.

The Ontario Safety League cautions boat owners to carefully consider how to avoid tragedy by reviewing these major causes of accidental mishaps:

- Lifejackets or personal flotation devices that are used as seat cushions are difficult to put on when you are in the water. They should be worn at all times when boating.

- Improper loading and overloading of people, equipment and supplies in a small boat or canoe will

cause the vessel to capsize or swamp should a sudden squall arise or if someone shifts their weight suddenly. Keep loads light, well distributed and low so that the centre of gravity is low. Know the weather you are likely to encounter and make for the nearest shore if the weather deteriorates.

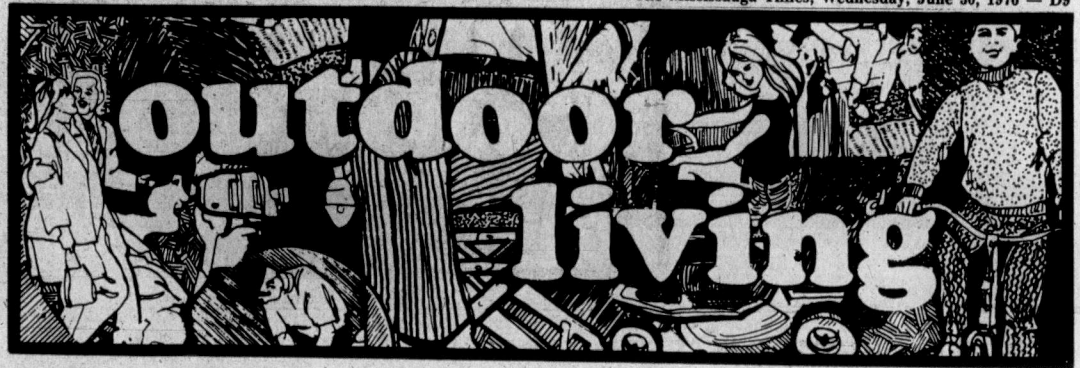
- Overpowering your boat with too large a motor for its size is not only against the law, it is a foolhardy practice. Many fatal accidents are caused by sudden turns at high speed. The maximum horsepower and load is listed on the capacity plate of all outboard motor boat hulls.

- Starting a motor boat frequently throws people into the water. Make sure the clutch is neutral and the throttle is in the 'start' position.

- Maintenance of equipment is a must for all boat owners. Holes in hulls and motors that fail can cause swamping. A little bit of care and a lot of caution, by maintaining equipment regularly, will prevent the problem.



National Safe Boating Week is July 4 - 10
Don't get carried away just because it's National Safe Boating Week! Instead, the lads at Mercury outboards suggest that you "practice using" required safety gear while afloat. It's particularly important to conduct safety drills with young boaters.



Boat camping

New outdoors dimension

Whether heading out to sea or exploring inland waterways, boat camping adds new dimensions to wilderness treks.

Motor-powered boats provide the fastest transportation afloat. If you're planning to camp along the shore, it's best to begin looking for a location in mid-afternoon. That allows ample time to set up camp and moor the boat securely.

In salt water, anchor the boat offshore at twice the distance of the tide drop. Then run the boat away from the anchor to be sure it's firmly hooked in place. And be sure to allow

enough line to hit bottom and compensate for high and low tide.

Canoes are the best choice in areas where motors aren't allowed or where the water is too shallow for larger boats. Keeping the gear light is important. Ideally, the canoe and gear should be carried in one or two portages.

Flat bottom canoes provide stability and carrying capacity for campers. Experts recommend stowing coolers and other gear in the bottom and center of the craft. And, of course, the gear should be packed while the canoe is

in the water.

To protect gear from rain or splashes, a waterproof all-weather blanket or tarpaulin can be placed across the cargo and tied down with rope. This is especially important if swift rapids or white water is expected along the route.

The all-weather blanket or tarp can also double as a rainproof shelter, although you may prefer a lightweight tent.

You'll probably want to take along a fishing rod for a fresh dinner along the way. But to be sure you have a good meal anytime, take along dehydrated

foods. They do not require refrigeration and rehydrate in a few minutes to provide tasty steaks, chops, vegetables or fruits.

Maps of inland waterways are generally easy to follow, but a compass will help you spot

landmarks on the map. And to prevent getting water-logged, take along a sponge for mopping up any bilge that might accumulate. Scooping water from the nearly flat bottom of a canoe is almost impossible.

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Off-road driving easy in four-wheel-drivers

Getting to a secluded setting in the mountains, desert, beaches or wilderness can mean excitement — landing a pontoon bush plane at a remote mountain lake, or adventure — traveling overland with pack mules and a guide.

But for most of us, transportation to the great outdoors means choosing a route the family car can manage. And this frequently results in a weekend or extended vacation spent amid a campground full of people.

There is an alternative to overcrowded campsites, however, if the family's transportation is equipped with four-wheel-drive. These rugged vehicles can leave the crowds behind, exploring territory inaccessible to conventional automobiles.

Learning to drive off-road is not difficult, and many four-wheel-drive vehicles compare favorably to passenger cars in both comfort and performance. Moreover,

they frequently are more economical to operate while offering greater load capacity and trailer-towing capacities.

A four-wheel-drive vehicle is a special machine with components specially designed for both durability and versatility. The steering is very responsive, particularly off-road, and the driver sits up for better control and visibility.

Controls are similar to a passenger car except for the transfer case and the locking front hubs. On a Scout, the transfer case control can be either dash-mounted single-speed, or floor-mounted two-speed.

Front hubs offer a choice of manual or automatic locking. On the highway, it's best to operate in two-wheel-drive with the hubs in the "free" position for reducing wear and tear. It is, however, a good idea to lock the hubs when engaging the lower speed in a two-speed transfer case.

The lower range doubles the number of forward speeds available — eight

rather than four with a four-speed transmission and provides a maximum amount of operating power at minimum speeds.

Caravanning with an experienced four-wheel driver is a good idea if you're new to off-road driving. By discussing technique first, then observing him in action, you'll learn how to "read" the terrain.

For off-road driving, keeping up momentum is essential but if you're in doubt, stop, get out and look. You can better assess your chances of making it over a rock from outside the vehicle.

Over rocky terrain, the lowest possible gear range should be utilized. If you can't avoid large rocks, ride the wheels over them. In hill climbing, take it straight on and use the low range. If you get stuck and your vehicle is equipped with a winch, use it to pull you up. If not, back down in your tracks. Don't try to turn around!

Cross ruts or ditches slowly and at a slight angle so that only one wheel is in the hole at a time. If you get stuck here, rocking the vehicle by shifting back and forth rapidly between

forward and reverse will usually pop you loose.

Driving in soft surfaces such as sand, momentum is the key. On mud, if there are existing tracks, use them; if not, keep up a

steady speed and don't stop if at all possible until you're on dry ground.

The great outdoors is becoming more accessible, thanks to this new breed of vehicles.

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Towing a trailer easier if you know the facts

There are small trailers for carrying boats, snowmobiles, motorcycles and other auxiliary recreational gear; and there also are tent or camping trailers which fold into a lower profile than the towing vehicle. Generally, these trailers do not exceed 2,000 pounds in weight.

The most popular travel trailers range from 22-25 feet and weigh less than 5,000 pounds. These require a special type of hitch for towing, as well as special equipment for the towing vehicle.

Or for smaller trailers, a heavy-duty step bumper (Class II hitch) with a 1½-inch trailer ball could have

a maximum towed load of 2,000 pounds.

A trailer is easier to manage if it and the towing vehicle sit horizontal.

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