

Captain Alcohol

TOPIC/SUBJECT: Alcohol and water safety

TARGET AUDIENCE/AGE LEVEL: 3rd Grade – Adult

TIME: Approximately 20 minutes

THEME: Alcohol and boating can be a deadly combination.

GOAL/PURPOSE: Members of the audience will understand that they should never consume alcoholic beverages or do drugs when partaking in water-based recreational activities.

OBJECTIVE(S): To make the visitor aware of the fact that alcohol can affect their thought process, reaction time, and coordination.

DESCRIPTION:

- A. Remind the audience that alcohol is involved in at least half of the boating related fatalities nationally.
- B. Tell the audience that alcohol consumption slows down reaction time, affects vision and dexterity, and dulls the thinking process. Also remind the audience of any statistics on the local level that relates to the use of alcohol and drowning.
- C. Set up 1-2 chairs representing the boat.
- D. Select a good-natured volunteer from the audience. It is recommended that you request a volunteer that does not have any health problems such as asthma, as they will be portraying several simulated effects of drinking too much alcohol. You could also select a second volunteer who will remain sober throughout the demonstration. They can assist you with the props for the other person.
- E. Hand the one volunteer a can of beer (soda can marked as beer), and have them sit down in the “boat.” Start explaining the effects that alcohol has on a person as they continue to “drink.”
- F. Place a hat on the volunteer’s head to represent the effect on the thought process/judgment. The person no longer has the ability to think clearly, and may take chances they would not take when sober. Anticipation, sense of judgment, and caution slowly slip away.
- G. Next, place a pair of sunglasses, tinted safety goggles, goggles, or a diver’s mask over the volunteer’s eyes. Explain that alcohol consumption can affect a person’s peripheral vision, which leads to tunnel vision.
- H. If using a diver’s mask, place a piece of clear lamination over the front of the mask. Then mark the lamination with red and green magic markers. This is done to represent how alcohol can actually take away the person’s ability to clearly distinguish colors. The colors red and green are very important while boating, as they are on the highways. When boating at night or during times of reduced visibility, the running lights on the boat should be turned on. There is a red and green light on the front or bow of a boat. The red light is on the port or left side of the boat, and the green light is on the right or starboard side of the boat. These lights tell you from which direction another boat may be approaching your boat. This is very important to know, so you can avoid collisions. At night, red can easily be mistaken for green when under the influence of alcohol.
- I. Place headphones or earmuffs over the volunteer’s ears, thus restricting his or her hearing ability. When under the influence of alcohol, a person may not hear what is going on around them, because they are not paying attention. A person’s attention span is reduced while under the influence of alcohol.
- J. Next place a pair of gloves on the volunteer’s hands to represent the loss of dexterity.

- K. This is followed with weights that are placed on the volunteer's wrists to show not only loss of coordination or dexterity, but also how ones movements and reactions are slowed down; they begin to feel tired.
- L. This part is optional. Assist the person that is simulating the effects of alcohol in putting on a pair of coveralls and a pair of boots (optional), which represents how the consumption of alcohol can affect coordination. When coordination suffers, the brain's commands cannot be properly executed.
- M. At this point, explain once again that the various items have been placed on the volunteer to demonstrate through a step-by-step process how alcohol can affect a person as he or she continues to drink. The combination of the sun, wind, water, and motion of the boat intensifies the effects of alcohol. Place two life jackets on the floor near the volunteers. Create a story of how they ended up in the water, and instruct the volunteers to put their life jackets on. Give the volunteers sixty seconds to do this. Very rarely does the person simulating the effects of alcohol get his or her life jacket on correctly.
- N. Explain that when a person falls into the water they become disoriented and if they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs this could be intensified. They may actually swim towards the bottom of the body of water, instead of towards the top and possible safety. Explain that generally it only takes 60 seconds for an adult to drown whether they are under the influence of alcohol or not.
- O. Compare the two volunteers to one another. How much time did it take each one of them to put on their life jacket? If this was a real boating accident what's the possibility of them surviving? You could also discuss briefly the importance of wearing a life jacket while boating. Involve the audience in this discussion.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT:

Two chairs

Funny hat

Pair of sunglasses (goggles, safety glasses, or diving mask will also work)

Gloves

Wrist weights

2 life jackets

Optional: A pair of coveralls and boots