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Memorial Day Campaign Urges Drivers and Boaters to Stay Sober and Safe

As Memorial Day weekend launches the busy summer boating and travel season, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is urging North Carolinians to stay safe on the road and on the water by avoiding alcohol and impaired driving.

The agency is promoting its annual "On the Road, On the Water, Don't Drink and Drive" campaign, a public safety effort aimed at reducing alcohol- and drug-related incidents involving both vehicles and watercraft.

Officials say the campaign comes at an important time as lakes, rivers and highways become increasingly crowded during the holiday weekend and the summer months.

"While the overall number of boating incidents investigated has been declining in recent years, last year we saw a troubling rise in fatal boating incidents," said Lt. Anna Barbosa of the Wildlife Resources Commission. "Our goal is for everyone to enjoy their day on the water and return home safely."

Barbosa encouraged boaters to designate a sober operator if alcohol is involved and reminded the public that life jackets save lives. "So far this year, fatalities have currently surpassed last year's numbers," Barbosa said.

According to the Wildlife Resources Commission, 26 boating incidents have been investigated statewide so far in 2026. Five of those incidents were fatal, resulting in five deaths, and alcohol was a factor in three of them. Statistics from 2025 also highlighted concerns about boating safety:

- 138 boating incidents were reported statewide
- 25 fatal incidents resulted in 26 deaths
- Only six of the fatal incidents involved passengers wearing personal flotation devices
- Alcohol was reported in four fatal incidents

The agency noted that the majority of recreational boating accidents nationwide occur during June, July and August, with operator inattention remaining one of the leading causes.

The campaign also supports National Safe Boating Week, observed this year from May 16-22. Earlier this month, the campaign launched with the "Wear Your Life Jacket to Work" social media awareness effort.

The statewide initiative is led by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission in partnership with the N.C. State Highway Patrol, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and local law enforcement agencies.

Additional boating safety information is available at ncwildlife.gov/boating.



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New Rural Project Inviting Community to Upcoming Health and Wellness Session

Following a successful first session focused on local civics and community discussion, the New Rural Project is inviting residents to attend the next installment of its C.U.R.L.S. and F.A.D.E. Reboot program in Anson County.

The upcoming session will be held this Sunday, May 24, from 3 to 5:30 p.m. at Trend Settaz, located at 1228 East Caswell Street in Wadesboro.

This session will focus on health and wellness topics while continuing the program's mission of strengthening community connections, encouraging open conversation and creating opportunities for residents to share ideas and experiences.

Organizers say the program is geared toward adults ages 18-40, though all ages and viewpoints are welcome to attend.

Participants will receive a meal during the in-person session and may also receive a \$25 gift card.

The initiative is presented in partnership with Trend Settaz Barbershop and Beauty Salon as part of the New Rural Project's efforts to encourage civic engagement and strengthen rural communities.

Community members are encouraged to attend and bring friends or family members to join the discussion. Additional information about the organization is available at www.newruralproject.org.

For questions about the program, contact Kia Smith with the New Rural Project at kia@newruralproject.org or call 630-886-7908.

State Announces Amusement Ride Safety Council Ahead of Fair Season

As carnival season rolls back into North Carolina - bringing funnel cakes, giant stuffed animals and at least one ride that makes everyone question their life choices halfway through - the N.C. Department of Labor has announced the members of the state's Amusement Device Advisory Council.

Labor Commissioner Luke Farley said the council will help guide amusement ride safety and operational standards as fairs and festivals begin popping up across the state.

"North Carolina families should be able to enjoy fairs, festivals and amusement attractions with confidence," Farley said. "This council brings together experienced professionals from across the industry who understand the importance of safety, accountability and maintaining high standards for amusement devices throughout our state."

The council includes representatives from the amusement ride industry, agricultural fairs, entertainment venues and public safety agencies. Members include officials from Carowinds, Tweetsie Railroad, Andretti Indoor Karting & Games, Powers Midway and several county fair organizations.

The council will serve as a resource to the Department of Labor on amusement ride inspections, safety regulations and public safety initiatives.

State officials say inspectors will continue examining rides across North Carolina during fair and festival season to help ensure equipment meets safety requirements before riders buckle in and wonder whether that suspicious squeaking noise is "normal."

Of course, longtime fairgoers know part of the carnival experience includes spotting a ride held together by flashing lights, optimism and what appears to be approximately six bolts from 1987 — while a teenager named "T-Bone" casually operates the controls with one hand and eats cotton candy with the other.

Still, officials stress that safety inspections are taken seriously and remain a top priority for the state.

The Department of Labor said the advisory council's work supports its ongoing mission to protect the health, safety and well-being of both workers and the public throughout North Carolina's busy fair season.



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