

Ship Report Transcript  
Thursday, June 13, 2024

By Joanne Rideout

All rights reserved. No use without permission. © 2024. Joanne Rideout/The Ship Report.

---

It's time for the Ship Report the show about all things maritime. I'm Joanne Rideout. It's Thursday, June 13th, 2024.

Today. I thought we'd start out with our marine weather forecast. And then I want to talk a little bit more about water safety with you and in a very important way in kind of a different way from the way that I usually talk about it related to a recent local incident. But first, to look at our marine weather we have a small craft advisory in effect through this evening. High pressure will continue into today and then weaken into Friday. The next weather front arrives Friday night as a low pressure system moves southeast into our region. North winds today 10 to 15 knots, rising to 20 to 25 knots. Seas 5 to 8 feet. Wave detail waves from the north five feet high at 7 seconds apart. Those are probably our wind waves matching our north winds. And then we have those west swells eight feet high at 10 seconds apart. And the forecast for the weekend looks rainy, but sunshine is forecast for next week. So take heart.

So today I want to talk with you about a serious issue related to water safety. And before you say, "oh, here she goes again," I'd like to talk about it in a slightly different way than I usually do. To make an important point that I think a lot of people miss and was the focus of a recent tragic local incident on the water.

It's related to an incident that happened last Thursday in Tillamook County where there was a drowning on the Nehalem River was two people in a canoe that capsized. One of those two people died. Now, I don't want to say much more than that about it in terms of detail about the specific incident, because there are people grieving and I don't want to add to their pain. But as the weather continues to get more summery and the water looks even more inviting, I do want to talk with you about water safety to emphasize a few things that may not be on people's radar when it comes to this important topic. I know that I haven't talked about it much.

Now, when I warn you or others warn you about being safe in the water. Generally, I'm talking about the high interest, high drama, exciting places around here. By that I mean the ocean beach with surf and sneaker waves and rip currents and cold water or the Columbia River with its turbulent bar and slippery jetties and swift and frigid currents and strong tides. Those are the no brainer danger areas. Those are the places everyone knows about. The high danger spots, the places that are in the news. And there are special warnings about them from the National Weather Service or the Coast Guard. So we all know to be extra careful. And while people in general are not really wanting to wear water safety gear, even in these places, most people know the dangers.

What I'm talking about today is a bit more insidious because it's low key and it appears low risk, even though it's really not. And that is taking a small watercraft out in what looks like calm water or relatively calm water and still running into trouble in a low drama, peaceful environment. It's the epitome of that tragic joke. What could go wrong? Plenty could go wrong and did in this recent incident where in pretty calm water, a canoe hit an underwater obstruction the boaters didn't see. Current may have been involved and suddenly the canoe tipped over, dumping both occupants in the water with deadly results.

Well, the answer is wherever there is a body of water, there's risk. And as this story shows, with two people in a canoe on a river, even in a quiet place. You can get into deadly trouble on the water. Small rivers have current, too, and they can pose the same hazards as the bigger, more publicized places.

There's an important thing about water incidents that most people don't realize until it happens. The difference between a fun time and a tragic time can happen in a matter of moments with something you didn't expect happening seemingly out of nowhere, and suddenly it's a serious emergency.

There's one simple and universal solution to this dilemma and to most water situations. That will up your survival potential exponentially. And that's wearing a PFC, a personal flotation device, a life jacket. Here's what a life jacket will do for you that nothing else can. It will keep you afloat. For starters, when you fall in the cold water here. It's a shock to your body. It's really disorienting. And then there's the involuntary gasp reflex to contend with. You can't control that.

And all of a sudden, you went from a safe place, sitting dry in a boat to a very not safe situation. And all of that just overwhelming.

So a lifejacket will support you and it can keep your head out of the water so you don't inhale water. It can keep you warm to some degree as you float. And perhaps most important of all, it buys you time. Falling in unexpectedly can be a very unnerving thing. You need a little time to assess where you are and what you can do about it. You may need to wait for someone to help you. A lifejacket says No worries. I got you. We can wait.

Which brings me to people, especially kids not wanting to wear Ph.Ds. And I think as adults, we can do something about this for ourselves. And the children in our lives. First of all, insist on your kids wearing Ph.Ds. No negotiations about this. It's too important. Second, where one to yourself as an adult, if you do it, your kids will want to be like you. But just as important is our overall attitude toward water gear. For gosh sakes, as a society of outdoorsy people, we love gear, hats, hiking shorts, backpacks, tents, smartwool socks, sleeping bags.

REI and similar stores make a fortune off our fascination with outdoor gear. Gear is cool. We all love gear and gear specific to our sport is even better. Running shoes. Climbing shoes. Rope carabiners. Climbing gear. Deck shoes. Sunglasses. So let's include life jackets in the Cool Gear Club. There are some pretty cool inflatable pfd's out there that you hardly know you're wearing until you need them. And poof, they're there holding you up and saving your life.

It's not such a leap, really, this change in perspective, but it's an important one. If we could just manage it. Look at some of the coolest mariners we know around these parts: marine pilots, U.S. Coast Guard, rescue personnel, lifeguards. They wouldn't be caught dead without that gear on because they know they could be caught dead without it.

So let's get the memo about this before someone else dies. Gear is cool. Wear your life jacket. Be the standard bearer for a new, safer, cooler way of seeing the world. That way there will be more of us around to see it.

You've been listening to the Ship Report the show about all things maritime. I'm Joanne Rideout. You'll find ship schedules and a podcast of this program on my website at [shipreport.net](http://shipreport.net).

Ship Report Podcasts also on Apple and Spotify. You'll find marine weather and links to ship schedules and more on my Ship Report Facebook page. Transcripts of the show are available with podcasts.

Thanks for listening and have a great day.