



CITY OF KIRKLAND
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033
425-587-3000

MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: David Wolbrecht, Communications Program Manager

Date: May 6, 2026

Subject: **Safe Boating and Paddling Week Proclamation**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Mayor, on behalf of the City Council, proclaims May 16 – 22, 2026, as “Safe Boating and Paddling Week” in Kirkland, Washington.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- National Safe Boating Week is an annual observance that occurs the week before Memorial Day weekend and encourages boaters to make the most of their boating adventures by being responsible.
- By issuing this proclamation, the City reaffirms its commitment to promoting public safety, raising awareness about life jacket use, and supporting safe and enjoyable experiences on the waterways.
- This proclamation is part of the City Council’s adopted 2025-2026 Proclamation Schedule.

BACKGROUND:

National Safe Boating Week, sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard, is now in its 68th year. The intent of this national campaign is to bring attention to important life-saving practices for recreational boaters. As part of National Safe Boating Week, members of the Puget Sound Coast Guard Auxiliary have asked the city councils of cities on Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish, the Sammamish River, and the Puget Sound to formally support safe boating practices. Due to the popularity of non-motorized, paddling options in Kirkland, such as kayaking, standup paddle boarding, and canoeing, Kirkland has expanded the title of this proclamation to “Safe Boating and Paddling Week.”

The Auxiliary was established by Congress in 1939. Its mission is to promote and improve recreational boating safety, provide trained crew and facilities to augment the Coast Guard, and enhance safety and security of the nation’s ports, waterways, and coastal regions. The Auxiliary offers classes throughout the Puget Sound region on boating safety, boating skills and seamanship, and navigation.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Safe boating begins with preparation. The Coast Guard estimates that human error accounts for most boating accidents and that life jackets could prevent nearly 86% of boating fatalities. Through basic safety procedures – carrying lifesaving emergency distress and communications equipment, wearing lifejackets, attending safe boating courses, participating in free boat safety checks, and staying sober while operating a boat – boaters and paddlers can stay safe throughout the season. Wearing lifejackets is also one of the most important safety measures anyone paddling a kayak, canoe, or paddleboard can take for themselves and their families and friends.

NEXT STEPS:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – 2026 Safe Boating and Paddling Week Proclamation



A PROCLAMATION OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND

Safe Boating and Paddling Week May 16-22, 2026

WHEREAS, Kirkland's proximity to Lake Washington and a variety of waterways brings community members and visitors from all over to enjoy watersports, including boating and paddling; and

WHEREAS, with the surge of untrained Americans engaging in paddling activities since 2020, paddling fatalities constitute more than 25% of national recreational boating deaths; and

WHEREAS, an average of 650 people die each year in boating-related accidents in the United States, the vast majority caused by human error or poor judgment; and

WHEREAS, operator inattention and inexperience, improper lookout, excessive speed, alcohol and drug use, and lack of training are the primary contributors in boating accidents; and

WHEREAS, wearing a life jacket could have prevented many of the drownings that occur each year among boaters and paddlers; and

WHEREAS, understanding safe boating practices, wearing a lifejacket, and knowing the rules of the water are important in reducing risk and result in better boating precautions; and

WHEREAS, the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and Washington State have partnered on a boater education and certification program at <https://www.boat-ed.com/washington/>; and

WHEREAS, the Kirkland Fire Department's Water Rescue crews stand ready to respond and to work in conjunction with the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to promote and improve recreational boating safety by teaching boating safety and conducting vessel safety checks.

NOW, THEREFORE, Mayor Kelli Curtis, on behalf of the City Council, proclaims the week of May 16-22, 2026, as Safe Boating and Paddling Week in Kirkland and urges all community members and visitors to practice year-round safe boating and paddling; to "Boat Smart, Boat Safe"; and to wear lifejackets while enjoying our beautiful waterways.

Signed this 19th day of May, 2026

Kelli Curtis, Mayor