

22 November 2010

**From: Gary Polson
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**To: Rear Admiral Kevin Cook
Director of Prevention Policy
Prevention Policy Directorate (CG-54)
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters
2100 Second Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20593**

Reference: "Don't Wreck Your Summer" PSA Controversy

I webmaster the Propeller Guard Information Center, a major online portal of propeller accident information, propeller safety devices, and propeller accident statistics. I am a licensed professional engineer, have been studying propeller safety devices for nineteen years, and encouraged the development of "virtual propeller guards" (sensor based propeller safety systems). Recently I spent over two years writing a major report on the industry errors and untruths leading to withdrawal of proposed houseboat propeller safety regulation USCG-2001-10163. Additionally, I have provided information support to many groups developing propeller safety devices around the world.

Upon learning of the release of the Propeller Safety PSA, I immediately embedded the YouTube video code in our website and began broadcasting it to the world. When it was pulled from circulation, I engaged in conversation with propeller safety advocates, propeller accident victims, manufacturers of propeller safety devices, boating writers, bloggers, and others affected by the controversy.

From those conversations, I gleaned the following points:

- 1. Those closest to propeller safety (propeller safety advocates, victims, and propeller safety device manufacturers) saw the PSA as a Propeller Safety PSA and are "mad as hell" about USCG pulling the PSA in response to industry objections.**
- 2. Those a little further removed from the propeller issue saw the PSA as focusing on the dangers of mixing boats and alcohol in a party environment. To them, the PSA punctuated the need to "Boat Responsibly".**
- 3. Responses in the online forums discussing the withdrawal of the PSA are OVERWHELMINGLY in support of keeping the PSA in circulation.**
- 4. Many commented the PSA was particularly effective. A retired advertising executive noted, the PSA really pulls the audience in with the juxtaposition of fun, frolic, and pretty girls with the accident. The suddenness of the accident serves up the message in a powerful in-your-face manner AND it represents a realistic situation.**
- 5. Several noted it takes some "shock value" to reach "20 somethings" and traditional PSAs don't cut the mustard. This one did.**

- 6. One writer pointed out it is not boats and engines that are being spotlighted, it is the behavior. The boating industry is just having a knee jerk response to a message that was not the focus of the PSA.**
- 7. Another boating writer mentioned he recently quit boating on weekends in response to many weekend boaters exhibiting behaviors similar to those in the PSA. He quit for his personal safety. The industry better get behind this PSA before thousands more flee boating.**
- 8. Drunk Driving PSAs and Texting While Driving PSAs are not indictments of the auto industry or phone companies. DWI PSAs and Texting While Driving PSAs have not had an impact on sales of cars or phones. "Don't Wreck Your Summer" is from the same mold.**
- 9. The industry often uses intoxication and inattentiveness as their defense in propeller accident cases. The next time they raise those defenses, they better be prepared to explain to a jury why they banned a PSA that could have changed those behaviors. Selling that explanation is going to be even tougher the closer the accident resembles "Don't Wreck Your Summer".**

On a more serious note, propeller accidents result in some of the most horrific injuries ever inflicted upon humans. Countless surgeries and altered lives await the survivors, their families and loved ones, while fatalities leave victims families alone and wondering "what might have been". Recreational boating propeller fatalities began in the very early 1900s. Besides killing countless young people entering their prime, America now has multiple generations of unborn potential community leaders, hunters, sport fishermen, environmentalists, volunteer firemen, policemen, nurses, teachers, PTA presidents, and grandchildren around her Christmas trees.

Our efforts and other studies have proven time and time again, the BARD database only contains a fraction of all propeller accidents. Each passing year results in hundreds more propeller accident victims while the industry refuses to take action. Now, the government agency charged with regulating the industry and protecting boaters has pulled a PSA in response to industry pressure. In the eyes of many, caving to industry pressure and banning this PSA is despicable.

This PSA was created to alter boater behavior, especially that of the "20 somethings." Most people outside the industry appear to think it is effective. Those in the boating industry have not said it does not work, they just say they don't like it because it shows the dangers of boating. As a result, USCG pulled the PSA and those impressions are no longer saving lives.

**USCG is charged with saving lives, not taking them.
Reinstate the PSA.**

Sincerely;

**Gary Polson
Propeller Guard Information Center
www.rbbi.com/pgic**