

As we're almost midway through the month of August and the summer season is coming to an end, we here in South Florida can still look forward to several more weeks of warm weather, and that brings with it lots of boating activity in our beaches and waterways.

This summer has also brought to our attention an increased need for raising awareness from the boating and general public about water safety and the dangers of mixing boating and alcohol.

Having spent most of my early career as a firefighter, we were always taught and we trained on prevention, taking the necessary steps to avoid dangerous situations. The best way to avoid an accident is to try and prevent one before it happens.

This is why it's so important that before you go and enjoy boating on our waterways, that we all take the necessary steps to avoid boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

We all know that drinking and driving never mix...Drinking and boating don't mix either.

DUI and BUI are illegal, and they make a very dangerous and sometimes even lethal combination.

Just this past weekend, Miami-Dade Police started to ramp up our efforts at patrolling our waters and enforcing BUI laws, resulting in _____ arrests.

Miami-Dade Police was also out on the water reminding folks that while it's ok to have fun, we need to take all steps possible to prevent fun turning into a tragedy.

To further maximize our efforts, I am convening an inter-agency working group that brings together several agencies that are responsible for water enforcement, including the State of Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, so we can find more ways to work together to promote water safety.

[We also look forward to continuing our negotiations with the Miami-Dade Firefighters union toward cross utilization of trained staff to put the fire boat back in service.]

Working together, these various agencies will be out on the water stepping up enforcement of our water safety laws.

Let me remind everyone that it is a violation of Florida law to operate a boat while impaired by alcohol.

Anyone operating a boat that is suspected of being under the influence must submit to sobriety tests to determine blood- or breath-alcohol content.

And as with driving a car, in Florida a boater is presumed to be under the influence if their blood- or breath-alcohol level is at or above .08.

Also, anyone under 21 years of age who is found to have a breath-alcohol level of .02 or higher and is operating a boat is in violation of Florida law.

The Miami-Dade Police Department and all the agencies represented here are fully committed to ensure that everyone who enjoys our waterways does so in the safest way possible...

And that by following all water safety laws, we can avoid boating accidents and tragedies, so that enjoying our beaches and water remains a fun and safe family activity.

