

Cape Cod Canal Co-Sponsors Local Water Safety Day

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The Cape Cod Canal and the U.S. Coast Guard teamed up for the 12th annual Cape Cod Canal Boating and Water Safety Day, June 24, outside the Cape Cod Canal Visitor's Center. "Water recreation activities are certainly fun, but unfortunately, drowning is the nation's second leading cause of accidental deaths," said Park Ranger Samantha Gray. "At the Cape Cod Canal we have about three million visitors annually. Many of our visitors engage in water-based recreational pursuits at the canal and surrounding areas such as swimming, boating and fishing."

Despite sporadic downpours and the occasional roll of thunder, about 100 people participated in the event. Many of the activities were moved indoors because of the rain.

However, once the weather cooperated, the highlight of the day, the Dunk-A-Ranger Tank, attracted many participants who had to learn about personal flotation devices (PFDs) before dunking the ranger. "Participants had to find a life jacket that was a proper fit for their size and a specified activity/scenario," said Gray. "They were able to select from a table full of PFDs that were different types and sizes, plus some that were not life jackets – like a swimming noodle or ring. Once they found the proper fit, they were given a chance to dunk the Ranger. Participants were also given the option to answer water safety-related trivia for another chance to dunk the Ranger."

New England waters can get cold and the Canal team wanted to educate the public on that subject as well.

"We had a table focused on the threats of hypothermia in our local waters," said Gray. "It included an activity that tested and compared participants' fine motor skills in warm and cold water scenarios."

Other activities included a Marine Stewardship game, "Ocean Clean Up" where participants had to remove trash from the ocean, played by a kiddie pool. "The other activity was a matching game, where participants had to match an item to the correct biodegradation time," said Gray. The U.S. Coast Guard had a damage Control Cart setup which simulates different emergency boating situations, according to Gray.

"Activities were also set up to educate the public about safe paddling," she said. "The Coast Guard had vessels docked in the Sandwich Marina and were open for tours."

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary conducted tours of the Coast Guard Station and performed complimentary vessel safety checks at the Sandwich Marina boat ramp and docks.

Other agencies participated in the Water Safety Day as well. Massachusetts Marine Fisheries held a fish clinic where children 16 and under learned how to bait a hook and cast a line into the Canal.

"The other focus of the fishing activity was to foster responsible recreation by following rules and regulations such as size and catch limits, and disposing of fish line and other trash properly," said Gray.

The American Red Cross offered a Learn to Swim exhibit and a "Reach, Row, Throw, Don't Go" activity. Team members who made this event possible were Gray, Park Rangers Elisa Carey, Kyle Henderson, Daniel Grippo, Emily Moynihan as well as patrol boat operator Susan McDonald and Nate Barrett-Millar.