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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ALEA's Marine Patrol Launches National Safe Boating Week And Offers Free Vessel Inspections**

**MONTGOMERY** – Like the waves on Alabama's beautiful gulf coast shoreline, Summer is quickly rolling in, and with the weather warming up, it is a fantastic time to enjoy our state's scenic waterways. Whether you're a boater, angler, or water sports enthusiast, please remember to be responsible when near the water. The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency's (ALEA) Marine Patrol Division is joining the National Safe Boating Council (NSBC) to participate in this year's National Safe Boating Week which is held May 20-26.

To kick off the safety week, personnel within various divisions and units were spotted around the office wearing life jackets on Friday, May 19, in celebration of "Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day." The annual event serves as a fun, educational element prior to National Safe Boating Week, the official launch of NSBC's 2023 Safe Boating Campaign.

ALEA Secretary Hal Taylor said, "Educating the public about the safety as well as the comfort of life jackets continues to be a priority for our Agency during this important campaign. Situations on the water can change in the blink of an eye and fatalities from drowning are preventable tragedies that can affect anyone in or around the water. That is why it is imperative for those near the water to wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved and properly fitted life jacket as it is the simplest life-saving strategy for those participating in recreational boating, paddling or towed water sports."

ALEA's Marine Patrol Division Chief Steve Thompson said, "Wearing a life jacket is a key component of boating safety, along with the knowledge and skill needed to keep various types of craft under control in different environments. In February, ALEA's Marine Patrol Division offered numerous free boating safety and license courses across the state to prepare for the busy summer season. These courses were a great opportunity for citizens to spend time on their local waterways and discuss the particular challenges boaters may face with local Troopers. Now that our classes have wrapped up, we are looking ahead to continue to serve local boaters by offering free vessel inspections."

ALEA Marine Patrol's Northern District will be free offering courtesy vessel inspections on Tuesday May 23, from 10 a.m. to noon at the following locations:

Pickwick Lake (Florence)  
Florence Harbor Marina – McFarland Park

Lake Guntersville  
City Harbor Marina

Logan Martin Lake  
Riverside City Boat Ramp

ALEA Troopers will be available to inspect all required safety equipment and educate boaters on proper fitting life jackets ahead of the busy Memorial Day weekend.

ALEA recommends the following tips for boaters:

- **Take a boating safety course.** Gain valuable knowledge and on-water experience in a boating safety course with many options for novice to experienced boaters.
- **Check equipment.** Make sure all essential equipment is present, working and in good condition.
- **Make a float plan.** Always let someone on shore know the trip itinerary, including operator and passenger information, boat type and registration, and communication equipment on board before you leave the dock.
- **Wear a life jacket.** Make sure everyone wears a life jacket – every time. A stowed life jacket is no use in an emergency. In Alabama, children under 8 years of age are required to wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) except when below deck or in an enclosed cabin.
- **Use an engine cut-off switch – it’s the law.** An engine cut-off switch is a proven safety device to stop a powerboat engine should the operator unexpectedly fall overboard.
- **Watch the weather.** Always check the forecast before departing on the water and frequently during the excursion.
- **Know what’s going on around you at all times.** Nearly a quarter of all reported boating accidents in 2021 were caused by operator inattention or improper lookout.
- **Know where you’re going and travel at safe speeds.** Be familiar with the area, local boating speed zones, and always travel at a safe speed.
- **Never boat under the influence.** A BUI is involved in one-third of all recreational boating fatalities. Always designate a sober skipper.
- **Keep in touch.** Have more than one communication device that works when wet. VHF radios, emergency locator beacons, satellite phones, and cell phones can all be important devices in an emergency.

By following these tips, you can enjoy your boat, the water, sunshine and fresh air responsibly. For additional boating resources and tips, please visit [www.alea.gov](http://www.alea.gov).

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