



O.C.O.A.

ONTARIO CONSERVATION OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

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ONTARIO'S CONSERVATION OFFICERS NOW ENFORCE BOATING SAFETY

As Ontario's Conservation Officers (COs) take to the water this season, they'll have added responsibilities to their regular mandate of protecting the natural resources. The Ontario Conservation Officers Association (OCOAA) would like to inform the public about these new duties.

All COs were recently appointed and trained to enforce the Small Vessel Regulations (SVRs) under the Canada Shipping Act. These Small Vessel Regulations govern all aspects of safe boating including safety equipment and safe operation.

In the past, police officers enforced this legislation, and COs during their marine patrols were unable to take action against blatant violations. "The new appointment will allow COs to help keep Ontario's waterways safe for all users to enjoy", said OCOAA President Jim McMullen.

"COs will not conduct patrols exclusively to enforce the boating safety rules - that job remains the mandate of the province's police marine units". COs will continue to focus on resource related enforcement, and will simply ensure that boaters are in compliance with the safety rules at the same time. "This is an effective use of our officers' time and a provincial manpower resource. COs check thousands of boats each summer, and if we can save just one life by ensuring that someone had a life jacket with them, it will have been time well spent", added McMullen. "No police service in Ontario spends as much time on the waterways as do Ontario's Conservation Officers. It just makes good sense to give the CO's the tools to do this public safety enforcement while they are already out there"

Anyone with questions about the boating safety regulations is urged to contact their local CO or police service.

For more information about Ontario's COs, visit the OCOAA website at www.ocoaa.ca.

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