

Social Marketing and Boating Safety: A Project to Increase Personal Floatation Device Use



Social Marketing Plan

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For:

**Lee County
Department of Natural Resources
Marine Program**

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About This Plan

The purpose of this social marketing plan is to guide the development and implementation of a Lee County Department of Natural Resources – Marine Program campaign to improve personal floatation device (PFD) voluntary wear rates among recreational boaters in Lee County.

Specifically, the plan provides strategies to:

- Encourage the priority population of operators of power boats of all sizes to wear PFDs (TYPE III and V- Inflatable Belt Pack and Inflatable Life Jackets)
- Encourage operators of power boats to use their influence to get passengers to wear PFDs (TYPE III and V- Inflatable Belt Pack and Inflatable Life Jackets)

The Social Marketing Plan includes the following components:

- A summary of the project
- A review of key findings that provides information on the foundation for the marketing plan
- Strategic recommendations for how to influence the priority population or audience, based on each component of the marketing mix:
 - Product: How to maximize opportunities to engage in the desired behaviors.
 - Pricing: How to minimize the perceived costs associated with the desired behaviors.
 - Placement: How to develop program partnerships to disseminate information and reinforce the proposed behavior.
 - Promotion: How to promote the proposed behavior in a manner that is relevant, appealing, and accessible for the priority audience.
- Implementation plan outline

Project Summary

Florida has been one of the top two states in reportable boating accidents in the past several years (FWC, 2007). In 2006 there were 671 reportable boating accidents; in 2007, there were 670 accidents. Drowning accounted for 62% of the fatalities in 2006 and 55% of the fatalities in 2007. In 2008, there were 657 accidents and 54 fatalities of which 70% were from drowning and 30% from injuries (FWC, 2008).

Falling overboard and capsized watercraft constitute the major types of accidents with males accounting for 90% of the fatalities in 2007 and 83% in 2008. Of particular note, personal flotation devices (PFD) were not worn by 27% of these victims in 2007 and 9% in 2008 (FWC, 2007; FWC, 2008). Florida policy mandates PFD use among adults only during water skiing or personal watercraft (PWC) use and in children under the age of 6 years of age who are aboard a vessel less than 26 feet in length. All other boaters use PFDs on a voluntary basis. Although it is recommended that all occupants wear a PFD, it is believed that the usage rates remain small (Fl. Boaters guide).

Lee County, with a population of 571,344 residents in 2006, reported 32 boating accidents in 2007 with 5 fatalities, placing it among the top three boating fatality counties in Florida (FWC, 2007). In comparison to all counties, Lee County ranked fourth in accident rates for 2007 and fourth in unintentional injuries for the state (FWC, 2007 Vital stats). Lee County also ranked ninth in boating fatalities and accidents for the state, with 1 fatality reported in 2008. The majority of Florida's recreational boating deaths reported in 2008 were due to victims either falling overboard or capsizing their boat, resulting in drowning among 70% of the victims. Although there may be other contributing factors such as inexperience and alcohol use, a

consistent factor noted in the drowning deaths was non-use of a personal floatation device (PFD).

Lee County's Division of Natural Resources Marine Program (DNR-MP) and Florida Sea Grant (FSG) conducted a social marketing project to develop a plan for improving voluntary PFD wear rates among adult recreational boaters. Working cooperatively with the University of South Florida Center for Social Marketing, a mixed-method, research design was used to achieve the research objectives. An observational study (n=7089) was conducted to determine the voluntary PFD wear rates in Lee County. Key informant interviews were then conducted to identify segments of the boating population that require targeted attention to wear personal floatation devices. This qualitative inquiry was followed by intercept interviews and phone interviews with Lee County boaters. The last stage of data collections was a panel survey (n=300).

This data is the foundation for this marketing plan that will guide future efforts to improve PFD wear rates among the intended audience groups.

Project Objectives

1. Conduct research to ascertain key influencers relative to appropriate PFD's use among recreational boaters, specifically exploring the benefits and barriers associated with voluntary use of PFD's;
2. Develop a comprehensive strategic marketing "action plan" that will guide long range implementation of a program to increase voluntary behavioral compliance with appropriate PFD's use; and
3. Provide training in community based social marketing to key agency and community stakeholders to increase capacity for the proposed project as well as future community based social marketing programs.

Research Objectives

1. Understand how participants perceive personal floatation devices.

2. Understand the emotional meaning wearing a personal floatation device holds for participants.
3. Understand the factors that motivate participants to wear personal floatation devices.
4. Understand factors that deter participants from wearing personal floatation devices.
5. Identify issues that compete with wearing a personal floatation device.
6. Identify personal floatation device-related policy issues being considered
7. Understand how key informants perceive personal floatation devices and related issues (e.g., segments to target).
8. Understand how to promote personal floatation devices to identified segment/s.
9. Identify trusted spokespersons for personal floatation device use.
10. Identify the places where participants are most receptive to hearing about the need to wear personal floatation devices.
11. Understand how to reposition personal floatation devices.

Priority Population

Social marketers are committed to understanding everything they can about their consumers – the people they hope to reach. Typically, they give greatest priority in developing their marketing plans to one or more segments with the following characteristics: willingness to change, potential they have to influence others in their communities, overall size or proportion of the target population, potential to serve as role models for more resistant consumers.

The observational study and survey revealed that a negligible percentage of Lee County motor boaters regularly use PFDs. Rather, they are most likely to use them during inclement weather and rough seas. However, the observational study also demonstrates that passengers are more likely to wear a PFD if the boat operator is wearing one. Most operators are males over the age of 18.

The panel survey found that the majority of operators who responded to the survey reported spending their time in open motorboats. The Florida fatality data points to open

motorboats as the primary vessel involved in fatalities. Owners of this type of craft will comprise the priority population. This population is predominantly Caucasian, married, male, and lives in Florida year round. Economic status, education, and age are variable. This segment is recommended because of its potential to influence a larger population of boaters, responsibility for safety of passengers, and relative ease of targeting interventions to this narrowly described segment of the boater population.

Audience Profile

A profile of typical members in the priority population can be a valuable guide in program design. This profile is intended to be a narrative rendering of the target audience. It draws on data from the study for this project.

“Hank” is long time resident of Florida. He has enjoyed boating for many years and has never had a serious boating incident. He’s over 40 but looks and feels younger. He says boating “helps keep him young.”

He considers boating and relaxation and recreation with family and friends a vital part of a full life and wants to assure that he can continue to share with those he loves the fresh air, companionship, sports activities, and feeling of joy that boating has come to mean for him.

He and his family have been fortunate in life and the opportunity to enjoy boating has been one of the rewards. Even though he feels like a bit of a free spirit on the water, he trusts authority.

He values how others see him and feels that self-respect is essential in maintaining his good name and reputation. He loves the excitement of boating but

not at the expense of safety, which he places at the top of the list of things important in his life and his boating.

He “gets a “kick out of the toys” associated with boating and favors good design, high tech, well branded items for his boating needs.

Specific Recommendations

Demonstrate that existing styles of PFDs (TYPE III and V - Inflatable Belt Pack and Inflatable Life Jacket) fit the priority population’s desired characteristics.

1. Give greatest priority to reaching this group in planning the initial phase of the program so segment members can model the recommended PFD behavior.
2. Focus all interventions on boat operators to emphasize their role as members of the “sales force” for safety.
 - Test prototype concepts and messages with members of the priority population.
 - Test prototype concepts and materials with non-members of the priority population and program partners to ensure they have County-wide appeal and do not have a negative impact on others outside the priority segment.
 - Test all materials with potential “gatekeepers” and other influencers who may have an impact the use and placement of promotional materials.
 - Focus on Operators as the person “in charge” of the boat and of passenger safety and comfort.
 - Operators are in the best position to make recommendations to other boaters
 - During program development explore whether additional segmentation of this group will be needed to target interventions more effectively and identify the “willingness to change” factors
 - 96% of operators are Male
 - Different characteristics to address in priority group:
 - Safety is important to priority population
 - Respect is important to priority population
 - Operators tend to have a “Sea Cowboy” mentality when boating alone
 - Captains perceive themselves as:
 - Both “responsible & care-free”:
 - Role models
 - Wanting to maintain control
 - Consider the “cool factor”, i.e., boaters identify with professional anglers and the ‘gear’ (brands) they use
 - Other values associated with priority population

- Freedom to do what they want
- Control & Choice
- Fun

Marketing Mix

This section summarizes recommendations based on four components in an integrated marketing mix: the product strategy; the pricing strategy; the placement strategy; and the promotional strategy. Each section includes an overview of the strategic approach, specific recommendations made during the strategy development session, and a list of relevant research findings.

Product

To be marketed successfully, social marketers believe new behavioral practices should provide a solution to problems consumers consider important and/or offer them benefits they truly want. The goal of the product strategy, therefore, is to identify the product benefits and any special features of the product that could make it more valuable to the priority population. Bill Smith, former Executive Vice President and Senior Scientist for the Academy for Educational Development describes this “exchange” framework as making the adoption of the desired behavior (product) “fun, easy and popular”. Thus the goal of product strategy is to maximize the value (fun) attached associated with engaging in the desired behavior(s), minimize the effort (easy) required to engage in the behavior(s), and create a climate in which the behavior is normative (popular).

Features of the PFD are also important to consider, especially those that affect attractiveness, comfort, and perceived effectiveness.

Strategic Approach

Emphasize the benefits and other motivators for wearing PFDs and encouraging passengers to wear PFDs. The most important include safety, protecting the passengers under your care, providing leadership, maximizing the fun and relaxation of boating by being prepared.

Demonstrate that the TYPE III and V - Inflatable Belt Pack and Inflatable Life Jacket PFDs are actual products that fit the description of boat operators preferred PFD (comfortable, light weight, colorful, safe).

Specific Recommendations

- Develop and deliver traveling PFD demonstrations at key distribution points (e.g., launch sites, marinas, boat supply/gear stores) to improve awareness of the benefits and availability of the desired PFDs.
- Emphasis that PFDs are available that are attractive, comfortable, “cool” , bright colored safe, approved/legal, are allow the freedom of movement.
- Explore Small Business Innovative Research grant to partner with PFD manufacturer (e.g., Sterns (USA) or Mustang Safety Equipment (USA)) to enhance designs and promote PFDs

Relevant Findings

- Most frequently recalled type of PFD worn during most recent boating experience
 - 40% Type 3-floatation aid
 - 34%-Type 2-Near Shore Buoyant vest
- PFD believed to be the safest to wear
 - 39% - Type 3-Floatation aid
 - 26% - Type 5-Special use device
 - 25% - Type 1 device
- PFD believed to be the most comfortable to wear
 - 41% - Type 3/5 - Inflatable belt pack
 - 30% - Type 3/5 - Inflatable life jacket.
- PFDs considered most attractive
 - 41%- Type 3/5 Inflatable belt pack
 - 29% - Type 3/5 Inflatable life jacket

Price

In social marketing, price refers to the psychological, social, and financial costs that consumers exchange for product benefits. The goal of the pricing strategy is to identify the costs or barriers to the recommended PFD use to identify ways to counter those barriers and make the practices more acceptable.

The major barriers to PFD use (the "costs" boaters report as reason for not engaging in the recommended behavior) are the bulkiness and lack of comfort. Monetary costs also are an important consideration.

Strategic Approach

The vast majority of boat operators own TYPE II - Near Shore Buoyant Vest (77%) and TYPE III - Flotation Aid (47%) PFDs. The styles of these PFDs embody the characteristics most cited as barriers to use (bulkiness and lack of comfort). TYPE III and V - Inflatable Belt Pack and Inflatable Life Jacket PFDs are owned by only 16% of the boat operators. Develop innovative partnerships with manufacturers to make PFDs an essential part of the boaters' gear. Correct misinformation held by priority population regarding which PFDs are the safest. Determine ways to reduce price of TYPE III and V - Inflatable Belt Pack and Inflatable Life Jacket PFDs.

Specific Recommendations

- Work with local PFD vendors to develop price reduction programs and special promotion programs for TYPE III and V - Inflatable Belt Pack and Inflatable Life Jacket
- Work with boat manufacturers to establish incentives of "free" preferred PFDs with boat purchases
- Foster partnerships between boat manufacturers, PFD manufacturers, and boater supply retailers to facilitate cross promotional product support

- Explore funding opportunities for providing the preferred PFDs at low cost through public programs similar to car seat programs through public health departments
- Create value added product “bundles” in cooperation with boating gear manufacturers and/or retailers that offers preferred PFDs with other products at reduced cost
- Make it a bundle purchase with other gear; maybe with Costa del Mar?
- Explore redesign options with manufacturers to add utility pouches to PFDs to expand function and efficiency for users
- Provide supplemental purchase coupons at time of boat registration or as an insert in Boater’s Guide mailings Negotiate reduce insurance rates with insurers for boate

Relevant Findings

- Reasons given why PFDs are difficult to wear
 - 73% reported the bulkiness of PFDs made them difficult to wear
 - 69% reported discomfort as the greatest the barrier to wearing a PFD
- Reasons boat owners purchased the PFD they currently own
 - 27% - cost
- Purchase price boat owner are willing to pay for a comfortable PFD
 - 35% - \$21-\$40
 - 17% - \$41-\$50
 - 6% - > \$80
- Most frequently recalled type of PFD worn during most recent boating experience
 - 40% Type 3-floatation aid
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Place

In this project, place refers to the people or circumstances that can reinforce the use of PFDs. It also refers to locations where the most desired PFDs can be promoted and acquired.

Strategic Approach

Purchasing of boating supplies and gear is most often handled by men. However the decision to use PFDs occurs at launch sites and/or onboard the craft. This means a two tiered reinforcement of the desired PFD behavior is needed; one which influences purchases of PFDs and one which influences modeling of the behavior by boat operators while on board the craft.

Specific Recommendations

- Target men with point of purchase programs to encourage purchases of the preferred PFDs
- Use launch sites and “on board” time as the location to deliver influences that will encourage boat operators to model and encourage the use of the desired PFDs
- Emphasize the “recommended by and expert” theme in point of purchase programs

Relevant Findings

- Females are 2.8 times less likely to shop for recreational and boating supplies.
- Reasons boat owners purchased the PFD they currently own
 - 28% - recommendation from someone
 - 27% - cost

Promotion

The promotional strategy includes guidelines for designing effective, attention-getting messages, selecting appropriate information channels, and identifying promotional activities to promote change including: advertising, public relations, policy changes, public information, special events, and community-based activities to bring about the desired PFD wear rates.

Strategic Approach

A variety of promotional tactics and information channels are appropriate for addressing PFD wear rates. Promotional tactics should be designed to reinforce the product, pricing, and

placement strategic approaches discussed above. The most preferred sources for receiving pertinent information on boating safety are boating magazines, boating shops, and the internet. Promotional materials should emphasize the joy that boat operators experience from boating; relaxation, fresh air, spending time with others, and fishing are all highly valued as parts of the boating experience. Boaters share attitudinal characteristics that can help frame promotional activities. Self respect is important, with an emphasis on doing the right thing regardless of the price. Boaters are also fun seeking and feel recreation is vital to their happiness. They value the opinions of others and care what others think of them. And being physically safe is highly important. Using these attitudinal frames in promotional approaches will help to attach the desired PFD use with ways boat operators see themselves. The preferred spokesperson for information on PFDs is an authority figure (e.g., Coast Guard, Marine Patrol, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission).

Specific Recommendations

1. Use professional anglers and others boaters as a comparison to evaluate the strength of influence.
2. Develop news releases, feature stories, and blog articles that focus on existing styles of PFDs that fit the desired style characteristics.
 - Build a long term relationship with print and electronic media outlets to secure support for promotional efforts at the county level.
 - Use existing radio talk shows on recreational boating and fishing and use boat captains to promote PFD use.
 - Arrange for promotional “drop-ins” during boating and weather reports as regular features of broadcasts and weather sections.
 - Provide regular “consumer help” news features about PFD use.
 - Develop partnerships with business and other boating organizations that can be effective at distributing potential program messages.
 - Evaluate current outlets and provide lacking signage for “point of purchase” outlets stating which PFDs are approved by the Coast Guard
 - Secure promotional placement in:
 - Florida Sportsman (print)
 - Nautical Mile (print)
 - Fishing publications of the Florida Wildlife Commission

- Florida Sportsman Message Board (electronic)
 - The Boating Guide
- Partner with West Marine, Bass Pro Shop, other retailers, and boating supply/gear manufacturers to fund paid media development and advertising purchases
- Partner with Bass Pro Shops and West Marine in PFD exchange programs that provide reduced cost preferred PFDs for returned old PFDs.
- Provide preferred PFDs to police, ecotour operators, local guides, etc. as promotional “modeling” opportunities; include brand/logo signage for boats that accept new PFDs from program.
- Brand for the Program
 - Responsible, but carefree; passionate about the water and knowledgeable about boating “American”
 - PFD users are supplementing their boating gear:
 - the gear is cool and purposeful
 - the operator is a knowledgeable expert and a style leader
 - the operator is a trend-setter
- Tone
 - Individualistic ; the Harley Davidson of boating
 - ”Free, but necessary”

Relevant Findings

- Preferred sources for boating safety information
 - 27% - prefer boating magazines,
 - 19% - prefer boating shops
 - 18% - prefer Internet sites.
- Other credible information sources (from interviews)
 - Television (i.e., commercials)
 - Newspapers
 - The side of boats (i.e., a slogan)
 - The boater registry (i.e., mail out information)
 - Tide charts
 - Other boaters

Implementation Plan

Materials Development and Brand Management

A central project theme or “brand” provides the “face” for program materials and interventions. An effective and sustainable program will benefit from coordinated activities over

time. By serving as the platform for consistent and creative message elements, a strong brand will enable the initiative to become sustainable throughout the County.

The project materials should be unified with consistent messages, themes, creative elements, and an easy to identify “mark” or “brand”. The value of establishing a program brand is found in an increased capacity to reinforce and support consistent messages and to provide clear identification for all target audiences and partners who come in contact with the project.

Brand identification is also important for “internal marketing” of the program. Project success is, in part, influenced by staff and key partner organizations staking a claim in the success of the initiative. The brand provides a key point around which everyone can rally. This can help symbolize how PFD use and boating safety is central to the Lee County DNR - Marine Program mission.

Deliverables and Implementation Guidelines

Audience: Boat Operators

Deliverables: Public Information and Outreach

- “Kick-off” Media event to introduce program and gain “earned media” attention
- Build a schedule of staged program events to attract media attention throughout the year
- Boating magazine advertisements
- Pre-packaged news, feature and blog articles for use in various media outlets
- Newspaper supplements on PFD use
- Utility bill inserts (designed to serve as key floats with program logo)
- Mass media/paid media/PSAs
 - Radio
 - Television
 - Outdoor advertising Posters (outdoor and posters should share design and be used in multiple placement settings)

Description: TDB

Responsible Party: TBD

Funds Needed: TBD

Other Support: Media cooperation for placement and free time and/or space for inserts and radio production/placement. Negotiated reduced advertising rates for public information campaign materials.

Timeline: TDB

Intervention Site(s): Appropriate media outlets, area businesses and services where boaters purchase boating supplies and gear, marinas, and launch sites.

Other Implementation Activities

Audience: Local government, media, local commercial outlets, and boating related businesses

Deliverables: Program Brief, Power Point Program Campaign Presentation, and Program Web Page site.

Description: These interventions are intended to secure partnership support from area organizations to enhance other program activities through provision of space for community events and educational fairs, media attention, and information distribution, and public information support. The web page also provides all community partners and the general public with program/campaign information directly from the Lee County DNR – Marine Program site.

The CD ROM, power point program provides a pre-packaged presentation for various forums. The Brief reflects the information found in the power point and consists of a concise overview of the program, its goals, and specific ways these partner organizations can provide support.

Responsible Party: TBD

Funds Needed: TBD

Other Support: TBD

Timeline: TBD

Intervention Site: TBD

Coordination

Coordination of program implementation, marketing, and distribution of the program interventions and materials will be managed by the DNR – Marine Program. CSM can provide consultation as desired by the agency. Factors to consider include:

- Program development
- Program launch and promotion;
- Coordination of trainings and/or events;
- Distribution of materials;
- Follow-up technical assistance to cooperators/partners.

Each of the components being implemented has an interactive relationship with one another. Additional preparation and/or in-service training among DNR – Marine Program staff and key partner organizations may be required to complement the implementation activities that will be put into play.

It may be helpful to consider the relative untoward impact of implementation of the project on the Lee County system at large, including:

- How various components of the plan interact;
- Competing demands among staff;
- The most appropriate time to implement respective interventions;
- Potential outcomes of implementing the interventions (positive and negative);
- The resource allocation for implementation.

Testing

Concept Testing

Program brand and materials concepts are the starting point for building a cohesive, readily identifiable and sustainable PFD use program. Prior to actual materials development, conceptual approaches should be developed and tested. This process is intended to establish primary message themes, key design approaches, and a creative direction within which all materials will be developed. Concept testing assists the creative and research team to correctly establish the key message and communication tactics needed to reach the intended audience groups before extensive production work is initiated. Data from concept testing provides a materials development blueprint to guide writers, designers and artists. This blueprint also provides guidance for research staff as they conduct pretesting of fully articulated prototypes of the respective materials being developed. Concept testing will examine responses to message tone, design, instructional approach (when appropriate), visual imagery, and linguistic structure and style.

The most important goals for the concept testing phase are to ascertain the key message delivery approach, to establish which approach most successfully establishes rapport with the intended audiences, and to ensure tactical approaches are consistent with the marketing strategy. This process also helps identify whether potential messages are offensive or “off target” with intended audiences.

It is helpful to develop multiple conceptual approaches to compare in order to provide a more accurate assessment of audience responses. Individual interviews and/or focus groups can be used to assess target audience and key influencers (TDB) responses to prototype concepts and materials.

Additionally, in order to flesh out additional research questions that have been identified during the strategy development process, concept testing interviews can be used to elicit additional information from the priority population, and other groups likely to be exposed to the program, if it is determined necessary, to assure that interventions are appropriate for all exposed groups. During this process, testing with potential “gatekeepers” (local businesses, partner agencies, etc.) will help guard against developing approaches that may offend those groups which could offer resistance to the program,

Pretesting

Upon establishing the central message, creative design, and instructional themes, prototypes of materials will be developed for pretesting. At this stage, key communication elements are reviewed in order to hone these elements so that they are as effective, understandable, attractive, and rapport building. The central objectives during pretesting are to learn whether the key information being delivered is understood, is doable, and has the ability to influence the receivers of respective messages to engage in the desired behaviors. Pretesting will be conducted in sites in Lee County.