

Pat Harvey, St. Augustine Police Department's Marine Operations Officer, June 3, 2025

Transcript

Narrator:

You tuned in to another edition of The Break Room a weekly conversation about how the City of Saint Augustine works from those who do the work every day hosted by the City of Saint Augustine's Communications Director, Melissa Wissel, The Break Room offers a closer look at the different City departments and provides updates on current and upcoming projects and events and now your host, Melissa Wissel.

Melissa Wissel:

Welcome to The Break Room thanks for tuning in I'm Melissa Wissel Communications Director for the City of Saint. I mean summers just getting started in Saint Augustine that means getting out on the water some folks head to the beach others head out to their boats and while it's mostly fun in the sun there are some important things to remember to play it safe when you get behind the wheel of a boat or even if you're just getting on board, so I've invited Saint Augustine Police Departments Marine Operations Officer, Pat Harvey to join me back in The Break Room, Pat welcome back.

Pat Harvey:

Well thank you, I appreciate it.

Melissa Wissel:

I can't believe it's been 2 or 3 years since I was looking back over my notes. It's been a while no not at all but it it's always important to have you come on and give us your message about boating safety. It's June and it's time to get into that topic so let's start with the heat.

Pat Harvey:

It doesn't seem that long does it.

Melissa Wissel:

Heat is, I think, our biggest enemy in addition to the sun and so help us remind.

Pat Harvey:

That is true.

Melissa Wissel:

Get our listeners on board see what I. Did?

Pat Harvey:

That was that was. Good.

Melissa Wissel:

Give us give us some tips. On some boating safety.

Pat Harvey:

Like you said with the heat biggest thing you have to remember is hydration hydration hydration make sure you're drinking will make sure you're drinking water that way your alcohol is the reverse effect of that, and people don't really realize when the wind is blowing it doesn't feel as hot.

Melissa Wissel:

Right.

Pat Harvey:

So. The reflection off the water you so you're gonna get a sunburn faster and you're gonna get dehydrated faster so make. Sure, you're drinking the water.

Melissa Wissel:

And you bring up a good point you're right there where that alcohol we all know that you get on the boat it's fun grab some beers have some drinks, but you really do have to be careful with that.

Pat Harvey:

You do and in excess is a different number on the water because your body deals with the alcohol in a different way because of the heat so enjoy yourself but remember especially if you're operating the boat. Excess can be very very hit very quickly so just be very careful as to how much you drink.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah. And I think sometimes we kind of joke about BUI 's but we do you do give BUI 's you you get a boating and what is what is the rule or what happens if someone stopped and they're under the influence same thing. Is when you're in a car?

Pat Harvey:

Yeah, it works very much the same as it does in the in your car you will take you to the dock we'll run, we'll run through some what they call seating field sobriety test cause in the in the boat it's difficult to stand up because of the the environment is difficult to deal with, but you'll go to jail just like you would drive in a car.

Melissa Wissel:

And then you got to find somebody to take your boat back and then that's that's a little bit bigger problem than getting somebody to come.

Pat Harvey:

Yes ma'am. Get your car and sometimes when no one else on the boat is able to do so then we have to tow it in it gets to be a long process. But jail is still the ending event.

Melissa Wissel:

Alright, so boating safety number one if you're going to be drinking make sure you're having lots of water and if you're driving same thing have a designated boating driver.

Pat Harvey:

That's true that's true.

Melissa Wissel:

OK so we've got heat we've. Got sun what other kind of things do we need to watch. Out for we're out on the boat.

Pat Harvey:

I think fatigue. You're if you're out on the water all day long or you're at the sand. Bar you get a lot the sun will wear you out so you need to settle down and relax and know your body very well and if you are at the point where you shouldn't be driving whether it's fatigue or sun or even alcohol stay where you are for a while or call for some help. Yeah, you know we have we have law enforcement underwater obviously we also have the fire department on the water for medical help so there's always help out there.

Melissa Wissel:

If I'm looking to so when you say call for help you could either call on your cell phones but if your phone is not handy what channel would I call on a radio?

Pat Harvey:

We all monitor channel 16 on the VHF that's for hailing an emergencies only and all of us on the vessels every vessel that's out there has that. So, we listen up for that.

Melissa Wissel:

So, channel 16 is yours is your distress call do you do do you then move people to a different channel.

Pat Harvey:

Yes ma'am. Uh we can depending on what the distress is, or we'll work off of that depends on what what it would take if you have the ability to move to a.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Pat Harvey:

Different channel we'll just tell you which one to use.

Melissa Wissel:

Let's talk a little bit those are sort of the natural elements what about our human factors we talked a little bit about. If you're the boater you're the driver being designated driver, what other type of things do we need to consider in terms of the human factors of people?

Pat Harvey:

Well, you have to understand that the rules of the road always apply so. Pretty much the similar to the vehicles right so stay on the right side it will stay in the channel if you exit the channel especially here in Saint Augustine, we do have issues with low low water sandbars things that show up we have a 5 foot tide swing so you could go out in the morning and the water is there with 5 hours later there's no water and you're kind of stuck and you have to

wait another 5. Hours to come back out yeah but we have a lot of folks that rent boats around here who may not be real familiar with the area or boating in general so pay attention while you're out there because not everybody may be at the level that you are.

Melissa Wissel:

And if I own a boat, do I have to take a boating safety class? Is there a law?

Pat Harvey:

Yes. Yes, if you were born after January first, 1988, you have to have a boater safety card which you can get online. It's a very simple process but you have to take the time, and do it and we do check for those once we know how old you are we check your license and things.

Melissa Wissel:

OK. And my other my other thing that came to mind as I was working on my notes for today do you look for certain behaviors do I as the boater draw attention to myself by doing certain things obviously erratic movements but is there anything in particular.

Pat Harvey:

Sure, sure any unsafe activity like you would be driving a car same thing in reckless behavior jumping with wakes on a jet ski things that will draw your attention to anyone if you were out there boating you would look over and go well that doesn't look safe, we also look for young kids not wearing their life preservers. In the state of Florida if you're 6 years or younger you have to have one on all the. Time so that's kind of a red flag for us if you see the little kids little kids love to be on the boat but they have to have their lifevest on.

Melissa Wissel:

OK, another one that I learned many years ago people who like to sit on the bow of the boat with their feet hanging over, let's talk about that one.

Pat Harvey:

That goes back and forth is it safe no however they've taken that out of it is it is not illegal to do but it is it it used to be, and I know that kind of goes back and forth it's just not a good thing to do because it's not safe. But. Be careful doing it.

Melissa Wissel:

Right right so particularly riding at high speeds if you're at a slower speed of course that's fine I I would have always I always thought it was illegal and maybe when I was more actively boating it was so that's interesting to know it's not but that to me would seem like kind of a commonsense rule that you might have on your own boat.

Pat Harvey:

This should be but a lot of folks like to do the the kids especially like to hang off and get their feet in the water every time you go over a wave and things like that but that also brings the the weight of the boat in a different perspective. The boats aren't made to have that much weight in any certain portion of the boat it could lead to capsizing you could lead to taking on extra water and the boat isn't ready to handle that so it could. Also lead to injury.

Melissa Wissel:

And accident Sir if you're just now tuning in, you're listening to The Break Room I'm Melissa Wissel Communications Director for the City of Saint Augustine and Pat Harvey is with us he is a Saint Augustine police departments marine operations officer at Pat you just started to mention the weight distribution being in the wrong place hitting. Makes creating accidents you guys have been busy already this season.

Pat Harvey:

Yeah, this this weekend was an especially a busy weekend number one it's a holiday so it's the first kind of boating season boating weekend of the season we we've had a few capsized vessels we've had some jet ski accidents some 2 big accidents you have to be very careful where you are pulling a tube or in a jet ski or or even in your regular boat. There again sand and waves become the problem we have the Shoals, and the inlet people get to places where they shouldn't be, and they lose control very quickly.

Melissa Wissel:

The you have a great partnership with not only the fire department but Coast Guard, Saint John's County Fire rescue how are those types of calls work just who at first on the scene.

Pat Harvey:

Our of operations, AOR as we call it is, is pretty big but we our partners our marine partners are like you said. Yes. It's. Sheriff's Office, the marine Patrol from FWC and the fire department and the Coast Guard. We all get the call at the same time we all kind of work in in our as a group so whoever gets the call, we all go it just depends on what boat is closest and we all work those calls together.

Melissa Wissel:

Anything you can suggest I know this is kind of the whole topic of conversation today anything you can point out. Common thread of things that you see necessarily you may not speed the inlet the tides any anything like that that you kind of want to say to some to people in general these are really some if you see this use your common sense this is a good sign that you may be getting yourself into trouble.

Pat Harvey:

I think there's 3 things that you could probably. Hit as basics speed being number one and just paying attention because you, you're dealing with other people who may not be be paying attention and a lot of folks don't know those rules of the road, so you put speed the inlet the inlet is its own different animal because of the tides and the wave change as you hit the inlet but if you if you were to pay attention.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah.

Pat Harvey:

Watch your speed and pay attention to the other boats, I think you'll have a great day. The water.

Melissa Wissel:

The boating season we really don't have a non-boating season in the winter slows down but with it now being summertime there there's going to be a lot of that any favorite spots that people like to hang out any places you can recommend or recommend they watch out for other we just mentioned the inlet.

Pat Harvey:

Right. Several of the places where folks like the beats are boats, we have bird island right here downtown salt run Matanzas island or Matanzas inlet those are the really the big places folks like to go, and they're always packed which is fun go have a good time but remember all the things we've already discussed about your safety and drinking and and getting along well with others.

Melissa Wissel:

And the wakes remind our listeners about the wakes you are responsible for your wake.

Pat Harvey:

Yes, even if you're in a non-wake zone you are always responsible for the wake that your boat provides whether it causes damage. Do not and if there's a lot of people around even if it's if it's not in the lake zone slow down there's really no reason to get any faster? Where you're going?

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah, that bird island that that cut there behind bird island or Julia 's island is really seems it would seem when you're beached there. That the people that cut through would know not

to speed because they're probably the same people that would also be beaching but man, they are have you seen a slow a slowing down of people cutting through there.

Pat Harvey:

A little bit. We were able to put a slow speed zone and the entrance to hospital creek so that has slowed folks down just a little bit but then they speed back up again around that corner where everyone does beats their boat but I think with that speed zone being in place last year people have slowed down because most of the folks back there like you say are the ones who beach themselves there you know to to relax and have fun. So I think so far this year you know we just did the first weekend but so far this year I think we've. Slowed down a little bit so far so good.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, lots of great boating safety tips always great to have you any last any last observations anything to to we did we miss anything.

Pat Harvey:

Just the 4th of July. Excuse me, we do have a safety zone for the 4th of July which we closed downtown we close the bridge of lions and other things, it's a very small, short period of the day. But just be to if you're coming downtown for the 4th of July in your boat, know where those zones are, they're published way in advance and we're all going to be there to help you but know where you're going to go before, we close it down because once it's closed you. Can't go back or forth.

Melissa Wissel:

And be Patient when you're when you're getting back to the dock when you're getting back to try to get your boat out of the water those who are on the smaller boats be Patient keep it safe right.

Pat Harvey:

We're all friends out there so let's make sure we act that way.

Melissa Wissel:

We're going to see you out on the water nobody gets to take that day off no no well thank you.

Pat Harvey:

Yes ma'am. No, we don't.

Melissa Wissel:

Thank you so much for all that great information boating safety if you need to relisten to this broadcast or you want to listen to back from the. Beginning you can find a complete listing of our podcasting apps where you can find this episode CityStAugradio.com you can also subscribe to The Break Room wherever you find those favorite podcasting apps Spotify iHeartRadio apple podcast and more we want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the City follow the City on Facebook Instagram. And X at CityStAug and you can also find the Saint Augustine Police Department they're on Facebook and Instagram at Saint Aug PD until next time thanks for. In.

Narrator:

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