

'Tis the Season for Holiday Boat Parades! The Sea Tow Foundation Offers 6 Safety Tips for Watching from Your Boat

Taking friends and family out in your boat to watch a local winter boat parade gives you a front-row seat for all the lights and action. In addition to being festive and fun, however, these seasonal events can cause crowded and disorienting conditions on the water. The [Sea Tow Foundation](http://www.seatowfoundation.org) offers the following tips for boaters heading out to watch a parade, to ensure everyone on board will have a safe and enjoyable time.

1. **Choose a Designated Skipper** to stay sober all evening and be responsible for returning the boat and its passengers safely to shore after the parade is over. To take the Designated Skipper pledge, please visit <http://www.designatedskipper.com/>
2. **Watch your weight.** Don't overload the boat with passengers. Look for the boat's capacity plate on the transom or by the helm, or look up the passenger capacity in the boat's manual.
3. **Don't forget life jackets!** Make sure everyone onboard the boat is wearing warm clothes topped by either a traditional or an inflatable life jacket that fits. Navigating at night in a crowd of other vessels can be just as dangerous as boating in stormy weather or in fog.
4. **Things look different at night.** Remember that in the dark, visual navigation markers you rely on during the day may be invisible. Chart your route to the on-water parade-viewing zone in advance, and use GPS-enabled electronics to help you find your way, if necessary.
5. **Relax.** Don't be in a rush to get home; let some of the boat traffic clear out before you raise anchor after the parade is over.
6. **Listen Up!** Obey U.S. Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary designated zones and follow their orders – they are only out on the water to protect you.

