



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

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Hazards of Parasail & Watersport Passenger Transfers

Recently, on two separate occasions, passengers on uninspected parasail vessels were seriously injured during underway transfer from the vessel to an inflatable raft, (i.e., "banana boat") that was being towed alongside the vessel by personal water craft ("Jet Ski"). During both incidents, the parasail vessel continued to make way during passenger transfer to the inflatable raft. One incident resulted in double-leg amputation of the passenger and the other resulted in hip fracture. In the first incident, the passenger became trapped under both the raft and parasail vessel and was struck by the parasail vessel's propeller.



Although the investigation continues and the causal factors are still being identified, the failure of the operators to put the engine transmission in neutral likely contributed to both casualties. Putting the engine transmission in neutral would have required the parasail chute be deflated, increasing the time before the next launch.

The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** parasail and watersport vessel owners/operators take immediate steps to detail safety orientations for passengers and instructions for crew to include comprehensive written guidance for all aspects of the underway transfer of passengers from the vessel to a raft and vice-versa, specifically:

- detailed procedures focused on passenger safety during transfers;
- roles and responsibilities of crew during passenger transfers;
- unless a hazardous operating condition would result, requirements to deflate the chute before transferring passengers; and,
- unless a hazardous operating condition would result, requirements to stop the rotating propeller of the parasail vessel by placing the engine in neutral during passenger transfers.

Furthermore, USCG-credentialed mariners are **strongly reminded** of their obligation to remain in control of their vessel at all times. Vessel operators and crewmembers are required to report hazardous conditions (e.g., parasail towline failures, falls overboard) and other potentially unsafe practices, as outlined in [Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular \(NVIC\) 01-15](#).

The Coast Guard has engaged with industry trade groups, such as the Water Sports Industry Association (WSIA), to study and discuss best practices for the underway transfer of passengers from parasail and watersport vessels.

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