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TOGETHERWE PREPARE for Outdoor Adventures

By Cecilia Matta

Where do you want to go this summer? From the Olympics to the Okanogan, Puget Sound to Lake Chelan, the Northwest offers a myriad of recreational delights. Whether you dream of mountain peaks or sunny beaches, kayaks or outboards, safety should be at the top of your “To Do” list for your summer activities. Our **TogetherWe Prepare** initiative gives you four simple steps to help you prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies:

Make a Plan. Build a Kit. Get Trained. Volunteer.

We asked three local boating and mountaineering veterans for their advice, to help you get ready for an exciting and safe summer outdoors. These tips come from Vic Bloomfield, a mountaineer and 28-year Red Cross Wilderness First Aid and emergency response instructor; Jake Beattie, Youth and Sailing Programs Director at the Center for Wooden Boats; and Pete Alderson, a climber and Washington Alpine Club volunteer:

Make a Plan

- Always check the weather report for current and predicted conditions before heading out boating, hiking or mountain biking.
- Call Ranger or Coast Guard stations ahead for local reports, permit requirements, camping restrictions, road, trail conditions.
- “Different mountains (or lake or bays) have different behaviors,” Vic emphasized. “Get familiar by talking with others who have been there.”
- “Tell someone where you are going, where your car will be parked, and when you will be back,” Pete reminded us.
- “Verbalize your plan for a maneuver before docking, anchoring or raising sail,” urges Jake. This forces you to figure it out, conveys to your crew what is about to happen, and will definitely “improve safety, stress levels and familial relationships!”
- Consider potential emergency scenarios – what is your plan of action? Jake Beattie’s advice for boaters applies to everyone heading on an outdoor adventure: “Think through your contingency plans for a variety of emergencies on an ongoing basis.”
- Practice, practice, practice to develop an automatic response. No matter the size of your boat, everyone onboard should know where fire extinguishers and PFD’s (Personal Floating Devices) are, and what to do when there is a “man overboard.”

Build a Kit

- “Always carry your Ten Essentials,” Pete Alderson reminded us: “First Aid kit (including space blanket); map and compass; flashlight or headlamp (with batteries); extra clothes; extra food and water; whistle; sunglasses and sunscreen; pocket knife; waterproof matches; fire starter.”
- “Fire extinguishers and a damage control kit designed to fix a variety of problems” can help save you, your crew and your boat, Jake recommends.
- Maintain your kits. Materials and supplies can degrade or expire in the off-season. Take the time, before you head out, to bring everything up to date.

Get Trained

- “Get First Aid training far in advance,” Vic stressed and Jake underscored. “All of the First Aid kits and fire extinguishers won’t do you much good if you don’t know how to use them. Get as much training as possible.”
- “If you’re new to boating, or it’s been a while, take a safe boating class and a navigation class,” observed the Center for Wooden Boats’ Jake Beattie. “Go out with other more experienced boaters, watch how they operate, and ask questions.” Great advice for climbers, campers and hikers too!
- “Build stamina and skills. Start small and move up,” Vic Bloomfield offered.

Volunteer

- Here in King and Kitsap counties, nearly 2,000 Red Cross volunteers provided over 117,000 hours of service last year.
- Share your time and what you know. It’s always good to teach and help others!

You can count on your local Red Cross to help you get ready for your outdoor adventures, especially with “Build a Kit” and “Get Trained”. Visit our online store for First Aid and emergency kits and for replacement packs.

To view our class schedule of First Aid, CPR, Emergency Response and other health and safety classes, visit our website, www.seattlredcross.org, or call us in King County at 206 726-3534 or 360 377-3761 in Kitsap County.

(Many thanks to Jake Beattie, Pete Alderson and Vic Bloomfield for their safety insights and tips.)



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