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Environment Committee  
Room # 3200  
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Safe Boating Education:

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in response to the notice of a review of how Connecticut conducts its Safe Boating Qualification Classes.

My first observation is that since inception, the requirements and classroom time for a Connecticut Boating Certificate have steadily eroded so as to significantly lessen the value of the Safe Boating Course and the Training of the new boaters. While I agree that we must make it reasonably convenient and "doable" for the new boater - we should also insist that they get an education.

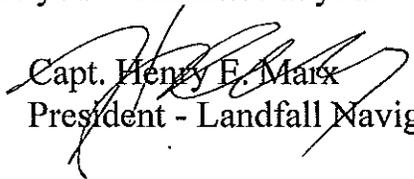
The very thought that you are considering "doing this on line" scares me. The degradation in the boating knowledge of today's recreational boater borders on the insane. In the Navy, before we could be promoted, we had to pass the usual written tests - which were normally conducted in a classroom environment with others of more and lesser knowledge. This always prompted exchanges between the students as well as the instructors and everybody gained useful insights from the discussion. This will not happen in an online course.

Another thing we had were "Practical Factors" where someone eligible for promotion was required to perform certain related tasks in front of an instructor. I used to do this when I was a Hunting Safety Instructor for the State and I believe that the Department of Motor Vehicles still requires a driving test? How is a boat different from a car? You cannot drown falling out of a car in the parking lot!

I have been at sea in various capacities since 1947 - commercial vessels, submarines, recreational vessels, both sail and power, and hold a 100 Ton Auxiliary Sail U. S. Coast Guard Masters' License - as well as having been teaching Marine Safety for the past 20 years professionally. I see no problem with the state turning the Education programs over to properly certified private providers - but to let inexperienced boaters do this all online, without any face time with real sailors - will lead to a further decline in the safety of recreational boaters on Connecticut Waters.

Also, I would like to suggest that while we now have a Boating While Intoxicated Standard for boats as well as motor vehicles - how about losing both "drivers licenses" if you get caught either BWI or DWI? Let's put some teeth in the laws against reckless behavior that endangers everyone.

If you would like to discuss this more thoroughly, I would be happy to appear before your committee at your convenience.

  
Capt. Henry E. Marx  
President - Landfall Navigation