Department of Public Safety
MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL
Colonel Ronald K. Replogle, Superintendent

An Internationally Accredited Agency

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor

Jerry Lee
Director

March 8, 2013

Environment Committee
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Environment Committee:

It is my understanding that you are considering an online boater education course and were seeking input on that topic. In 2005, Missouri adopted a mandatory boater education law requiring all persons born after January 1, 1984 to have boater education, including out of state boaters. One method that boaters could use to obtain a boater certification card was via an online course.

I was very skeptical of the program believing that proctored courses, taught by Troopers, better prepared the boater for operating a vessel. I still believe that is the case; however, with budget shortfalls, limited manpower and other similar issues affecting most government agencies, I have come to know that we would never be able to provide the necessary training without the online program.

Lessons Learned

Missouri is a relatively large state with several large lakes and float streams. In the 1980's, we learned that it was difficult to deliver boater education to all parts of Missouri. At we time, there were only approximately 60 troopers to provide law enforcement and education programs throughout the state. Consequently, we could not deliver education to vast areas of the state. When the mandatory education law passed, we knew that we could only deliver the service with an online course alternative.

Initially, our course allowed a person to briefly review the course material and then go directly to the test. As a result, we experienced a very high fail rate on the course. Seeing the flaw, we worked with the vendor to establish a minimum time to proceed through each module with section tests that must be completed prior to progression into the next section. This alone has dropped the fail rate on the test to about 10%.

In conclusion, while I would concur that a live proctored instruction environment is the preferred delivery method, a properly designed and provided online course can certainly be a benefit to both a provider agency and the customers they serve.

Sincerely,

TOMMY E. ROAM, Major
Water Patrol Division

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