

## Avoiding Collisions with Kayaks

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Over the past few years, there have been several tragic examples of small paddle boats, notably kayaks, which were run down by larger, fast-moving boats.

A group of prominent engineers recently presented the paper, "Visibility Factors in Small Boat Collisions," at the 2012 International Marine Forensics Symposium sponsored by the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. This paper offers some good suggestions on how to avoid being run over in smaller boats such as kayaks, and for the power boaters, how to avoid running over small boats.

The recommendations on how to avoid being run over were based on a series of on-the-water tests using volunteers in kayaks and powerboats.

Researchers found that kayakers aren't likely to be spotted by a powerboat until they're only a quarter-mile away." The sooner a small boat is spotted, the better.

Seventy-five percent of the powerboat operators first reported seeing "paddle flash" when they saw the boat. A white or light colored paddle blade was much easier to see than a dark blade. The remaining 25 percent saw the luminous jersey that was being worn by the volunteers.

Among the recommendations to kayakers:

- 1) Carry an audible signaling device.
- 2) Wear fluorescent life vests or shirts.
- 3) Use paddles with white or light colored blades.
- 4) Avoid kayaking in areas with high boat traffic.
- 5) Use flags that can be mounted on kayaks.

Conversely, for owners of larger boats: wear sunglasses; keep a proper lookout; and, be especially alert in areas where you are likely to encounter smaller craft.

To learn more about boater education, Vessel Safety Checks and other services provided by the Coast Guard Auxiliary - or if you are interested in learning how to become one of us - please visit us online at [www.uscgauxflotilla3-13.org](http://www.uscgauxflotilla3-13.org) or contact us at [msz@charter.net](mailto:msz@charter.net).

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