



## If you Drink, Don't Drive

There's a windsurfing launch site in Collingwood, Ontario. Just next to it is a large inukshuk. That inukshuk was built to honour the memory of Pete Crompton.

Pete was an amazing guy, by all accounts. He was a member of Ontario's ski team. He was a scratch golfer. And he was a stellar windsurfer. Windsurfing was his passion. He loved the water and he loved speeding across it, propelled by a stiff breeze in his sail. If he had lived past his 27<sup>th</sup> year, there's no end to what he could have achieved in his life.

But Pete didn't live to see 28. He was killed in a boating accident in 2003, struck while sitting in the stern of a friend's boat on Lake Joseph. The driver of the other boat was charged with 8 different offences but, chief among them was "impaired operation of a vessel causing death".

When the Canadian Safe Boating Council and the **Canadian Power & Sail Squadron** speaks to Canadian boaters each year about the dangers of drinking and boating, there is no gentle way to do it. Drinking is dangerous on boats. It can lead to deaths like Pete Crompton's. Every death on the water is avoidable but that's especially true with alcohol.

The motto on the road is "if you drink, don't drive". It's the same on the water. And so are the laws.

Legally, there are only very few instances when you can drink on a boat in most provinces in Canada. Specifically, it is legal to drink if the boat is tied up at the dock or anchored for the night - in other words, you're not going to drive it anywhere - and if the boat is equipped like a residence, complete with sleeping accommodations, a galley and a head. Many people don't realize this. They assume a boat is a floating version of their cottage, a mobile bar. It isn't.

First and foremost, a boat is a vessel in the same way a car is a vehicle under the Highway Traffic Acts in all provinces and territories in this country. If you are convicted in Canada of driving a vehicle under the influence, you lose your licence. In many parts of Canada, the same thing applies if you are under the influence in a boat and you're not meeting the two conditions mentioned above. And you might lose your car driver's license too.

The Canadian Safe Boating Council completed a survey that confirmed some longstanding bad habits among boaters. The study focused on drownings involving boats in Canada and demonstrated that, in nearly 40% of the deaths, alcohol was detected or suspected and 23% of victims were above the legal limit. The effects of sunshine and a boat's rocking motion increase the effects of alcohol and, for a boater, a simple ride can turn into a dangerous dunking. A big wave, a quick change in the boat's direction, or a 'tippy canoe' can result in someone in the water.

However, Pete Crompton's death was different. He was hit and killed by an impaired operator, a driver so intoxicated he couldn't avoid slamming into another vessel on open water. When he died, Pete became not just a statistic but a life cut short, its promise never fully realized.

Fortunately, his death was not in vain despite how senseless it was. Pete's father, Ken, lobbied for changes to the drinking laws in Ontario that now reach out to include boat operators.

Psychologists know that human nature has a way of rationalizing. "It can't possibly happen to me" is often the thought. Whether that means "I'll never be caught" or "I'll never be killed" doesn't matter.

Neither of those things will happen if boaters stick to just boating on the water. Have a few drinks on shore and then stay put.

It's that simple - **If you drink, don't drive.**