

# Sink Fast

**TOPIC/SUBJECT:** Boating safety

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** 3rd Grade – Adult

**TIME:** 15-20 minutes

**THEME:** You must wear your life jacket while participating in water recreation activities in order for it to save your life.

**GOAL/PURPOSE:** Participants will realize that a life jacket is useless, unless it is worn.

**OBJECTIVE(S):**

- A. Participants will be able to identify a US Coast Guard approved, proper fitting, and good/serviceable condition life jacket.
- B. Participants will be motivated to wear their life jacket.

**DESCRIPTION:**

- A. Set up 4-8 chairs (depending upon the size of your imaginary boat and the amount of volunteers you wish to involve). Place a different type and size life jacket and flotation aid under each chair. A good assortment might include a large life jacket, a small child's life jacket, a ripped life jacket, a ski belt, a life jacket in a plastic wrapper, water wings, or other types of water toys, and nothing at all under one chair.
- B. Select enough volunteers to be boat passengers, and have them sit in the "boat." Remember to have a small person sit where the large life jacket is, and the opposite at the small life jacket chair. You can pass out additional props such as sunglasses, cooler, etc. to the boat passengers.
- C. In order to involve the additional members of the audience, you can select three groups of volunteers to:
  1. Represent the wind. The volunteers will surround the boat and make sounds associated with wind and water.
  2. Represent an unseen obstruction (rock, tree stump, etc.). The volunteers will rush out and say "kaboom," indicating that the boat hit something and is sinking.
  3. Represent the water. Armed with spray bottles, they will rush out and spray the boating passengers when cued to do so.
- D. After all of the volunteers are in place, begin your narration of their boat excursion. Their excursion quickly goes from a fun day on the lake to a frightening experience. They are speeding across the lake, as they have been all day. Other boaters are rather upset with them because they came close to their boats, causing various problems (swamped canoe, etc.). At one point the boat operator, who is showing off to his/her friends, goes real close to some swimmers, spraying them with the boat wake. But the skipper is not watching where he/she is going and hits a tree stump. The boat quickly takes on water, and begins to sink. Passengers (volunteers) rush to put their life jackets on (allow about 30 seconds), before the boat sinks. Have the volunteers remain seated when they are putting their life jackets on so as to better simulate being in the water.
- E. At the conclusion of the "boating excursion," ask the audience if they see anything wrong with the boaters and their life jackets. Discuss the problems and how they can be corrected. Do their life jackets fit correctly, are they in good condition, and are they actually considered life jackets? Stress that improper fitting life jackets, ripped life jackets, and life jackets that are left in the wrapper can be deadly.

F. You can possibly tie in statistics from your lake, community, or state that relate to fatalities or injuries that occurred because of failure to use life jackets. The majority of people who drown were not wearing a life jacket even though one was available. Also, it takes the average child 20 seconds and an average adult 60 seconds to drown.

**SUGGESTED MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT:** 4-8 chairs representing the boat, life jackets (large, small, ripped, and still in the wrapper), ski belt, water wings or inner tube, variety of props for “boating passengers” (sunglasses, sun tan lotion, fishing gear, etc.), and spray containers.