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Before Navigating by Seaman's Eye U.S. Coast Guard Offers Boating Safety Class

FORT MYERS BEACH, FL – February 6, 2026 – With Southwest Florida's waterways bustling, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 91 of Fort Myers Beach is excited to announce a crucial opportunity for local and visiting boaters: the **"Boat America" Responsible Boating Course on Saturday, February 21, 2026**. This basic class is designed to equip every family member with the knowledge and skills needed for safe, confident, and enjoyable adventures on the water.

Navigating by seaman's eye is the art of operating a vessel based on visual cues, professional intuition, and a refined "feel" for the environment rather than relying solely on electronic instruments or charts. It is a fundamental skill where a mariner uses the horizon, the color and texture of the water, the movement of clouds, and the relative bearing of landmarks to judge position and safety. Whether it's sensing a subtle change in depth by the shade of blue in the waves or estimating a closing speed with another ship by watching its "aspect" against the coastline, seaman's eye represents a synergy of experience and observation. It serves as a vital fail-safe against sensor error, demanding that the navigator stay physically and mentally attuned to the immediate reality of the sea.

Before you attempt to navigate by seaman's eye, you must first master the basics of boating. Whether you're a seasoned captain, a new boat owner, or simply looking to enhance your safety on the water, the "Boat America" course is your essential guide. Taught by experienced and dedicated Coast Guard Auxiliarists, this engaging program covers everything from navigation rules and essential safety equipment to emergency procedures and responsible environmental practices. Participants will learn how to:

- **Understand the "Rules of the Road":** Navigate confidently and safely alongside other vessels.
- **Equip Your Boat Properly:** Know what safety gear is required and how to use it effectively.

- **Handle Emergencies:** Be prepared for unexpected situations, from adverse weather to mechanical issues.
- **Protect Our Waters:** Learn best practices for environmentally conscious boating.
- **Ensure Family Safety:** Special emphasis is placed on safeguarding children and all passengers aboard.

"Boating is part of the Southwest Florida lifestyle, and for many, it's a wonderful family activity," said Gary Martell, Flotilla Commander of Flotilla 91, Fort Myers Beach. "Our 'Boat America' course goes beyond just meeting legal requirements; it empowers families with the confidence and knowledge to prevent incidents and truly enjoy their time on the water. Every family member, regardless of age, benefits from understanding these vital safety principles."

Even experienced boaters will find this course a valuable refresher, ensuring they are up-to-date on the latest regulations and best practices. Plus, many insurance companies offer discounts to those who complete approved boating safety courses. Many students who take the class leave saying, "I didn't realize how much I didn't know".

Event Details:

- **What:** Boat America: Responsible Boating Course
- **When:** Saturday, February 21, 2026 – 9:00 am – 5 pm
- **Where:** Pine Ridge Community Center, 15660 Pine Ridge Rd., Fort Myers, Fl, 33908.
- **Hosted by:** U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 91, Fort Myers Beach
- **Cost:** \$45 per person; Students under 17 years old free when accompanied by an adult
- **Registration:** Online at <https://www.aux91fmb.org/safeboating> or 239-690-6780

Don't leave your family's safety to chance! Invest in knowledge that lasts a lifetime.

About the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 91, Fort Myers Beach: The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed civilian volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard. Flotilla 91 of Fort Myers Beach is dedicated to promoting boating safety through public education, vessel safety checks, and providing support to the U.S. Coast Guard in various missions, including search and rescue and environmental protection.