

## Newspaper Article 15: Regatta Season

Regatta is defined as: "A boat race or an organized series of boat races." In our CSRA there are a number of such regattas during the summer months. Last weekend it was drag racing at Wildwood Park, which was well-attended by spectators on shore and on the lake.

In addition to regattas, there are other spectator events either on or near water. Particularly from now to just past July 4th, there are several firework events. Let's look at what we boaters should do and watch out for during these events.

A line of round buoys, usually yellow, mark the outer limits of the race and boaters are prohibited from crossing this buoy line. It may seem that the buoys are farther from the actual race than required. Just remember that these boats are traveling at more than 100MPH and, as is the case with yours, have no brakes! Furthermore the race boats are subject to upset if they encounter even small wakes.

In addition to the buoy line, you will notice there are patrol craft at the buoy line to further discourage boaters from crossing the line. These patrol boats are usually from the state DNRs (Department of Natural Resources), the Sheriff's department, the Corps of Engineers or the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Sometimes, as was the case last weekend, all of these agencies are present. Pay attention to their instructions and you will continue to have a nice day on the water.

Now for the fireworks. Boaters start arriving several hours prior to the display. Their usual procedure is to get a good anchorage early. Smart! There will also be a buoy line and patrol boats at these events.

The event will probably be near a natural or marked channel. **DO NOT ANCHOR IN THE CHANNEL!** You could pose a collision danger to yourself and other boaters.

At last year's "Thunder over Thurmond", held just south of the 378 bridge, there were several safety issues that became evident. Here are some practices that will help reduce the potential risk to other boaters.

First, as you approach the event site, slow down. I mean you are already there, so why keep going fast? Remember, you are financially responsible for damage caused by your wake. If you have not gone to a boating safety class and do not know the 'rules of the road' for boating, then treat every other boat as a possible danger. Defensive boating is every bit as important as defensive driving in a car.

Turn on your running lights at twilight – running light only, not your docking lights. Docking lights blind everyone else and are very little help to you. Running lights are the red and green lights on your bow (red on the left side and green on the right) and the, usually, all-around white light on your stern.

Your running lights must be on after dark, whether you are under power or just drifting. Once you have anchored, though, turn off your running lights and turn on your anchor light. For most of our boats the running lights and the stern all-around anchor light are on the same rocker switch. To select the anchor light, simply turn the rocker-arm switch from 'running' to 'anchor'.

This maritime rule was the most violated at last year's Thunder event. Most boaters left their running lights on while anchored. Those who know the rules and, believe me, the law enforcement folks do, will think your boat is moving or adrift instead of anchored.

**BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL** after the event! When leaving for home, hundreds of boats will all be trying to occupy a very limited space. Go slowly and pay attention. Unfortunately, there will be irresponsible boaters who have been drinking during the event becoming a real hazard to themselves and the rest of us.

Well, there you have it. It's really simple to have a safe regatta or event if all boaters follow instructions, follow boating good practices and rules, stay sober, be courteous and, above all, pay attention to what is going on around you.

For you and your crew to become more familiar with good boating practices and maritime rules, consider coming to the monthly safe boating courses offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Army Corps of Engineers. The next class is Saturday June 27th at the Thurmond Lake visitor's center at the dam.