Safety – for fishers

Returning safely from your fishing trip is a basic part of best practice. New Zealand’s weather can be changeable and mostly unpredictable. Unfortunately, if things go wrong on the water, they can go badly very quickly.

Preparation plays a big part in preventing tragedy or mishap while out fishing. Firstly, the skipper, who is responsible for the boat and all on board should be adequately educated from either doing a boating course ([www.coastguard.nz/education)](http://www.coastguard.nz/education)) or having learnt from an experienced person with the necessary skills. A smart skipper has the common sense to understand his or her own limitations and the limitations of the craft they are in charge of.

Ensuring your boat and engine is seaworthy, with regular maintenance and upkeep, is also essential. Preparing for outings by checking that the vessel is fit for purpose and that all the necessary equipment is in working order helps reduce any potential problems while on the water.

Safety gear essentials:

* A life jacket for each person on board (best to wear them as well, not just stored somewhere).
* A secondary means of propulsion if the engine stops working (a pair of oars or second outboard for example).
* Two forms of communication e.g. a VHF radio and cell phone (in some form of waterproof protection)
* Something to bail water out of the vessel if necessary
* Anchor
* Flashlight
* Knife
* Rope
* First Aid kit
* Fire extinguisher
* Unless your boat is very small, a chart or technology that enables you to see reefs and other underwater hazards is important e.g. Depth Sounder / Chart Plotter
* Consider obtaining a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) or buying a pack of flares.

Once you’re ready to go, the next step is to check the weather forecast to better understand the fishing conditions. Checking more than one source of information to see if they are in agreement on the conditions is a good idea.

Once you have established that the conditions are safe, it is time to tell someone where you are going and what time you will be coming home. If something beyond your control happens and search and rescue have to come find you, you will be grateful they know where to look. You don’t have to give away your favourite fishing location but detail enough information so that rescuers know where to start looking.

Hopefully you will never need the services of search and rescue however if you do, it is most likely Coastguard who will be the people coming to your aid. Consider a Coastguard membership as an investment in your safety. The list of benefits is long and the peace of mind you have knowing there is someone on watch if your boat breaks down is worth more than the membership fee.

Photo Captions:

DSC\_3224 Wearing your life jacket never ruined a day on the water. Photo: Digital Fish

Safety 1 : Always check the conditions before you go out on the water. If in doubt, don’t go out. Photo: Digital Fish