



## Hearing Office Boating Under the Influence Case Numbers, Calendar Years 2012 and 2013

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For the last several years, during the last weekend in June each year, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (“NASBLA”) has promoted Operation Dry Water. That is a nationwide outreach and enforcement campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of boating under the influence (“BUI”) and raise the level of law enforcement efforts by local, state, and federal agencies during the campaign. In addition to state laws against BUI, the Coast Guard enforces federal law prohibiting BUI. Coast Guard BUI cases can be prosecuted as a crime, or forwarded to the Coast Guard Hearing Office for administrative civil penalty action. Although Operation Dry Water is a once a year event, enforcement of the BUI laws continues throughout the year.

According to Coast Guard records, 344 BUI cases were referred to the Hearing Office from Coast Guard units all around the nation, in calendar years 2012 and 2013. In the cases where a violation was proved, the Hearing Officers assessed civil penalties totaling \$327,725.00, or about \$953.00 per case. The largest penalty assessed was \$2,500.00, and the lowest was a warning. Twenty-two of the 344 cases were dismissed by the Hearing Officer or administratively closed after the Coast Guard decided not to pursue the case. In eight cases the Hearing Officer issued a warning, usually because the charged party had been convicted and sentenced in state court based on the same events.

As of summer 2014, the maximum penalty for a BUI violation is \$7,000.00. According to NASBLA alcohol is the leading contributing factor in boater deaths. Those are just two of the many good reasons not to go boating under the influence of alcohol or dangerous drugs.