



WEST VIRGINIA

ALCOHOL BEVERAGE CONTROL ADMINISTRATION

FREDRIC L. WOOTON, COMMISSIONER

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By the Numbers: State Agencies Highlight Fireworks, Grilling, and Boating Risks for Summer 2026

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration (WVABCA), West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR), and the West Virginia Fire Commission Office of the State Fire Marshal have united to educate the public and keep everyone safe this summer. Throughout West Virginia people will be outdoors enjoying the warmer weather and the Nation's 250th anniversary.

"Working with other state agencies allows us to better educate and protect the public from potential dangers that take place during the summer months," ABCA Commissioner Fred Wooton stated. "Keeping everyone safe is our goal and message."

Recreational activities on the water pose a greater risk of injury and death when alcohol is consumed. In 2025, there were 13 boating incidents with 6 fatalities in West Virginia. The WVDNR Law Enforcement Section will be working throughout the summer season to keep everyone safe and enforce the laws. These efforts will increase during the Fourth of July weekend for "Operation Dry Water" a nationwide enforcement campaign designed to heighten awareness and enforcement of Boating Under the Influence (BUI). According to Capt. Goodson with the WVDNR, last year 63 DNR police officers participated in "Operation Dry Water" and 1,162 vessels were contacted, 75 citations were issued, 2 BUI's were issued, and 165 various boating warnings were issued.

As much as water is part of the summer experience, so are land activities such as cookouts, festivals and fireworks. The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission reports that in 2024, there were 11 deaths and approximately 14,700 ER visits due to fireworks-related injuries. In addition, WV State Fire Marshal's Office public information officer Tim Rock reported that according to the National Fire Protection Association there were, on average, 12,141 fires per year resulting from grilling that required fire departments' response. These fires caused 15 civilian deaths and 171 injuries.

The combination of alcohol and an elevated heat index can increase dehydration and cause a more rapid increase in your Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) level. This can lead to impaired judgement, slowed reactions, and loss of coordination. Elevated BAC levels can impact the body's ability to process the alcohol consumed and can lead to a life-threatening situation such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke or even death.

So, if you hike, bike, or ATV, sit by a pool or relax on a boat, we encourage you to be careful and consume alcohol legally and responsibly.

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