

Boaters Beware: Expect More E15 This Summer

BoatUS urges recreational boaters to be on watch for engine-killing E15; send message to Congress and President to fix Renewable Fuel Standard

SPRINGFIELD, Va., June 17, 2019 – Over the objections of a wide coalition of American citizens and environmental, conservation, food producer, fuel retailer, taxpayer advocate, and outdoor recreation industry groups, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently waived Clean Air Act provisions and eliminated the three-and-a-half-month blackout period on the sale of E15 (15% ethanol) fuel during the summer months, permitting the fuel to be sold year-round.

The fuel had been banned at the pumps from June 1 to September 15 over concerns that it contributed to smog on hot days. As a result of EPA's action, Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS) is advising boaters that they will need to be very cautious at the gas station to ensure they aren't filling their boats with fuel that's bad (and illegal) for boat engines.

"This summer, recreational boat owners will need to be vigilant when refueling their trailer boats at the gas station to ensure they don't accidentally fill up with E15," said BoatUS Government Affairs Manager David Kennedy. "E15 is often one of the lower-priced fuel options, and that may be appealing even with its lower energy content. The challenge when filling up the boat is that the only misfueling warning you may see is a small orange label among the clutter of signage, prices and advertising adorning the pump. It's very easy to miss."

Boaters have no love for ethanol in their gas. E15 is prohibited by federal law for use in recreational boat engines, and its use – accidental or not – voids many marine engine warranties. E15 has been proven to damage boat engines and fuel systems. A 2018 BoatUS Summer Fuel Survey reported that if they had their choice of fuel, more than four out of five boat owners (83%) would choose E0 (ethanol-free) fuel – if it was available. The same survey reported about half (49 percent) of respondents were unaware that the use of E15 fuel in marine engines was prohibited under federal law and will void the warranty.

The push to sell E15 year-round is a result of the Renewable Fuel Standard's (RFS) mandate to blend biofuels such as corn-ethanol into the nation's gasoline supply. BoatUS is asking recreational boaters for help on the issue by contacting their member of Congress to urge him or her to fix the RFS. The more than half-million-member boat owners group supports fuel choice, including smart biofuels development such as isobutanol, and the availability of ethanol-free (E0) fuels that are increasingly more difficult to find. "The fuel that most boaters want for safe engine operation, E0, is being pushed out of the market," added Kennedy.

BoatUS is a member of the Smarter Fuel Future coalition that aims to reform the RFS.
