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BC FERRIES ENCOURAGES RECREATIONAL BOATERS TO BE SAFE WHILE NAVIGATING NEAR FERRIES

VICTORIA – This week is North American Safe Boating Awareness Week and BC Ferries reminds everyone to stay safe on the water, especially when navigating near ferry lanes.

During the spring and summer months, BC Ferries ramps up its service, so mariners will see more ferries more frequently on many of its routes. “We have some of the most beautiful waters in the world for boating in B.C. and we want everyone to share the ocean safely,” says Corrine Storey, BC Ferries’ Chief Operating Officer.

For everyone’s safety, pleasure craft operators should use caution when boating near ferry lanes and BC Ferries’ terminals, and learn the ferry signals.

What the ferry’s signals mean:

- 1 long blast – while the ferry is in dock, this indicates it is about to depart
- 3 short blasts – indicates the ferry is about to go astern (in reverse)
- 5 or more short blasts in rapid succession – a warning that it is unclear if the pleasure craft ahead is manoeuvring in such a way that it can avoid a collision

We remind recreational boaters to avoid crowding the ferry in narrow channels such as Active Pass, steer clear of the berths and docks, and avoid crossing dangerously close in front of the ferry. “Boaters should keep in mind that ferries do not manoeuvre as easily as smaller boats,” said Storey. “It can take up to 10 ship lengths for a ferry to come to a complete stop in an emergency.”

With approximately 500 sailings per day and a fleet of 36 vessels covering the coast of British Columbia, BC Ferries’ crews often respond to emergencies at sea when requested by the Canadian Coast Guard.

BC Ferries’ crews are highly trained and keep their skills current by regularly performing fire drills, evacuation simulations and person-overboard scenarios. Last year, BC Ferries responded to 15 marine emergencies and generally, these types of incidents increase in the summer months when more pleasure boaters take to the water.

North American Safe Boating Awareness Week runs through May 24. This year’s campaign promotes responsible boating practices and reminds mariners to wear a personal flotation device or life jacket, take a boating course, understand the dangers of cold-water

immersion and abstain from drinking alcohol while operating a boat. For more information visit www.csbc.ca

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