



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."

NEWS RELEASE

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Sheriff Unveils Agency's Full-Time Marine Unit in Honor of Captain Grady Prather During National Safe Boating Week and Ahead of Memorial Day

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office unveiled the new full-time Marine/Beach Unit to patrol the beaches and waterways of Flagler County on Wednesday. The unveiling was timed to promote National Safe Boating Week and for the start of the Memorial Day Weekend. The Marine/Beach Unit will use a fully equipped Jeep Wrangler that is capable of driving on the beach and on most terrain that is impassible for regular patrol cars, as well as an airboat and traditional patrol boats.



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The re-launching of the full-time Marine/Beach Unit is in honor of Captain Grady Prather, a 33-year veteran of the Flagler County Sheriff's Office who headed up the Sheriff's Office Marine Unit, which he also created. Captain Prather retired on January 31, 2008 after 33 years of dedicated service to Flagler County. He passed away on November 17, 2009. In 2011, an artificial reef was deployed in Flagler Beach through grants from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation and the St. Augustine Port, Waterway and Beach District. The reef was named in honor of the late Captain Grady Prather.

"I'm pleased that we have the opportunity to re-launch a full-time Marine and Beach Unit in Captain Prather's honor. I'm also glad to have Captain Prather's lineage here at the Sheriff's Office with his son, Deputy Jason Prather," Sheriff Rick Staly said. "Flagler County is a diverse place to live, work and play ranging from farm and ranch lands, to urban cities and beach areas. We want to be able to respond to any emergency and promote beach and boating safety. We now have the capability to respond to any of the unique areas of Flagler County."

Flagler County has 85 square miles of water, which includes canals, Intracoastal waterway, salt marshes, Lake Diston, parts of Crescent Lake and 18.1 miles of ocean shoreline. Deputy Jeff Turner, a United States Navy Reservist with over twenty-years of boating experience from both the Navy and the Sheriff's Office, has been assigned to lead the Unit. He has completed numerous Boater Safety courses through the state of Florida, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Navy. Deputy Turner is also PADI certified.

National Safe Boating Week occurs from May 19th through May 25th, just ahead of Memorial Day. FCSO wants to make sure that you and your family have everything you need to be safe on the water by remembering to do the following:

CHECK SAFETY/RESCUE EQUIPMENT: This includes noise admitting devices (whistle), batteries, fire extinguishers, on-board electronics (VHF radios) and navigation lights.

BRING LIFE JACKETS: Make sure you have personal flotation devices (PFDs) for all onboard and make sure children wear a USCG-approved properly fitting life jacket at all times while the boat is moving.

WATCH THE SIGNS: Know how to read the red and green channel markers and watch for slow and no wake signs. These apply to all vessels.

WATCH FOR WEATHER CHANGES: Keep an eye out for a change of weather, so you don't get caught in a dangerous situation.

LICENSING: Make sure you have up-to-date boating licenses (needed if you were born after January 1, 1988) and current registration for your vessel.

ALCOHOL AND BOATING DON'T MIX: Don't drink and boat! Boating Under the Influence (BUI) is a crime and we will arrest you.

FILE A FLOAT PLAN: If you will be on the water for an extended period of time, let family or friends know about your plans and stay in touch with someone on shore.

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