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Ald. Tony Zielinski
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New Harbor Speed Restrictions Promote Safety

Boats To Slow During Fireworks Presentations

A new boating ordinance takes effect this Thursday, June 26 with the opening of Milwaukee's Summerfest Big Bang fireworks display. The ordinance restricts the speed of boats in the Milwaukee Harbor during special events such as fireworks displays and air shows. Boats are to slow to 5 mph and no wake rules apply two hours before, during and two hours after an event.

Ald. Tony Zielinski (District 14) and Ald. Terry Witkowski (District 13) co-sponsored the ordinance, which seeks to prevent damage and injury when many boats in the harbor are tightly parked near one another to watch festivities. "Speed boats cruising by generate wakes that can create collisions among boats in the harbor and prove very dangerous to property and boaters trying to enjoy our lakefront," Ald. Zielinski said.

Wayne Happel, spokesperson for the Lake Michigan Yachting Association, the group that helped lobby for the legislation, said the ordinance reduces hazards to the hundreds of anchored boats affected by the wakes caused by boats racing back to launch ramps trying to be early in line to remove their boats from the water. "The potential for harm can be alleviated with a little patience and this ordinance inspires that patience," Ald. Zielinski said.

"Fireworks bring out families in boats that range from very small to very large. Smaller boats, often taken to inland lakes, come across new problems and hazards with hundreds of boats in the harbor during fireworks and other events. Restricting speeds to a no wake speed on event days should enhance the enjoyment and safety for everyone," Ald. Witkowski said.

The Milwaukee Harbor police patrol will announce this ordinance on marine radio prior to these events and notices to boaters will be distributed at launch ramps.