



## **Boating Safety**

### **VHF Etiquette**

Experienced boaters will tell you the VHF radio is a vital safety tool on any vessel. Radio chatter is a familiar, background sound while underway. In time, it is easy to tell the novice from the experienced boaters, just by the way they call other boats or conduct their conversations. Many of us get relaxed and skip the formalities as we chat with each other. As long as it's not an emergency or hailing channel, these casual conversations usually don't cause problems, but simple radio etiquette should be observed, nonetheless.

Most of us at SBCC are very familiar with the VHF radio and these points may seem trivial or elementary. But like most other safety topics, it's always good to review and refresh your knowledge. Here is a very brief summary of the basics for those who need a refresher and those who would like to know more.

Let's first start with the 88 VHF channels and their specific purpose:

Channel 16: Distress calls and initial ship to ship or ship to shore contact.  
(Boaters should always monitor this channel)

Channel 6: Reserved for marine safety operations

Channel 9: The calling channel for initial contact with another vessel or shore

Channel 13: Ship to ship working and calling channel or to communicate with a bridge operator.

Channel 22A: Coast guard communications

Channel 70: This is the Digital Selective Calling (DSC) channel used for safety

Channels 68, 69, 71, and 72 For general use by all types of vessels, (commercial and pleasure).

Islip Pumpout boat can be reached on channels 9 and 73

Atlantique Harbor master can be reached on channel 9

72 is the channel normally used by SBCC members when cruising or racing.

68 is the channel preferred by most Long Island fisherman.

The other channels are reserved for specific commercial purposes. For most of us pleasure boaters, the channels listed above, are all you'll need for safe boating and for simply enjoying time on the water.

When calling another vessel, use channel 9 or 16. I like to use 9 and leave 16 free for those calling the coast guard. Wait a few seconds before transmitting to insure you're not "stepping" on another conversation. Say the name of the vessel 2 or 3 times and then the name of your boat. When they answer, ask to switch to a working channel, like 72 or 68 for example, and switch after they acknowledge. This will free channel 9 again for others to use. If you get no reply to your call after 2 or 3 tries, just wait. They are probably out of