



The Commonwealth Of Massachusetts
County Of Hampden

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Hampden County Sheriff's Marine Patrol Unit Receives
Sea Tow Foundation Loaner Life Jacket Grant**

Just in time for National Safe Boating Week (May 17–23) and National Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day (May 16), the Hampden County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) Marine Patrol Unit has been awarded a 2025 Life Jacket Loaner Program Grant from the Sea Tow Foundation. The grant will provide free life jackets and a loaner stand that will be located at Brunelle's Marina on the Connecticut River in South Hadley, making safety more accessible to local boaters and water enthusiasts.

Sheriff Nick Cocchi expressed his gratitude for the grant and emphasized the critical importance of life jacket usage.

"We're proud to partner with the Sea Tow Foundation to expand access to life jackets through this grant," said Sheriff Cocchi. "The reality is that accidents on the water can happen in an instant – and life jackets save lives. It doesn't matter if you're on a paddleboard or a powerboat, or if the skies are clear and the water's calm: If you're out on the water, compliance with having a life jacket readily accessible – and wearing one when mandated by state law – is a boating safety initiative that all boaters should practice and adhere to." This initiative will make it easier for families and boaters to stay safe while enjoying our beautiful rivers and lakes."

The loaner station will be installed and stocked with life jackets in the coming weeks as part of the HCSO's broader commitment to water safety education and public outreach. With the busy boating season approaching, the HCSO encourages all residents and visitors to take advantage of the loaner program and to always prioritize safety.

Since 2008, the Sea Tow Foundation has distributed more than 106,000 life jackets through over 1,300 loaner stations across the U.S. The life jackets, available in sizes ranging from infant to adult XL, can be borrowed at no cost and are intended to be

returned after use to ensure continued availability for others. The program is funded by a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The HCSO Marine Patrol Unit is a specialized division focused on waterway safety, environmental conservation, and emergency response. Deputies assigned to the unit are specially trained and certified in marine operations, working in partnership with other public safety agencies and environmental organizations. The unit patrols the Connecticut River and other waterways throughout Western Massachusetts, ensuring the safety of boaters, kayakers, anglers, and other recreational users.

For more information about the Hampden County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol Unit, visit <https://hcsoma.org/hcso-marine-patrol-unit>. To learn more about the Sea Tow Foundation and its Life Jacket Loaner Program, visit www.boatingsafety.com.
