



DREW BURLINGAME'S CLOSE CALL

A reminder that life jacket wear should be part of our sport

Drew Burlingame and his father are alive today thanks to their life jackets. In October 1998, the two longtime hunting partners ventured onto a lake in northern Minnesota in their 12-foot boat. Both were wearing their life jackets. "I think honestly, if it'd been just me out there," says Drew, "I would not have had the life jacket on." But his father insisted that both don the life jackets instead of simply having them on the boat.

"We had picked out our spot in the morning and set out our decoys," Drew continues. "We set our stabilizer poles in front and in back of the boat. As most hunters know, this keeps us from drifting in the wind and it keeps the boat much more stable to shoot from. Around 3:00 p.m., the wind really started to pick up."

The wind increased to the point that it turned the blinds into sails, which began lifting up the edges of the boat. The two men moved to the high side of the boat to try to keep it down. This caused the stabilizer poles to snap, sending them tumbling backwards into the frigid water.

"The initial shock of the water temperature was very hard to take," says Drew. We estimated the water temperature had to be anywhere from 35-40 degrees... We tried to get the boat over many times, but it was too full of water. We were probably 500 yards from shore and about 250 yards from an island."

Finally another hunter, who happened to be nearby, noticed that ducks were coming to the Burlingames' decoys and no one was shooting. He came to the rescue and pulled them to safety. Drew believes they were in the water at least thirty minutes. Thanks to their life jackets, they managed to keep afloat.

It was a close call," says Drew. "You don't think it's going to happen to you. But you can't control Mother Nature. You're at the mercy of whatever happens, so try to take the best preventive measures... I will never hunt or fish in a boat without wearing my life jacket. It was an experience that nobody should go through."

Drew Burlingame is available for media interviews. Contact Kay Zimmer at PCI Communications. Phone: 703/823-1600. Email: kzimmer@pcicom.com

BOAT SMART. BOAT SAFE. WEAR IT!

National Safe Boating Council • PH: 703/361-4294 • FX: 703/361-5294 • www.safeboatingcampaign.com