



For Immediate Release

[Johnson\(ljohnson@nmma.org\)](mailto:ljohnson@nmma.org)

## **Amid Economic Concerns, Boat Shows Remain Strongest Selling Venue for Industry**

### **MSU study reveals 55 percent of buyers visited a boat show within six months of boat purchase; NMMA fall boat shows provide further evidence of shows' strength**

**Chicago, IL** -September 30, 2008 - The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) and the Recreational Marine Research Center at Michigan State University (MSU) today announced findings from a year-long study demonstrating that boat shows remain a crucial step in consumers' final decisions to purchase a boat. Initial exhibitor feedback stemming from NMMA's 2008 fall boat shows serves to underscore the MSU study results, as many exhibitors across all four shows reported quality buyers and strong sales, despite a smaller turnout at the gate.

The MSU study surveyed more than 20,000 attendees across all of NMMA's 2008 consumer boat shows-the largest study of its kind-and revealed that 55 percent of boat buyers attended a boat show within six months prior to their purchase. And, of survey respondents, 65 percent agreed that attending a boat show actually increased their desire to purchase a boat.

"As evidenced by the MSU findings, boat shows are more important than ever - particularly given the economic challenges our industry is facing," explains Ben Wold, NMMA executive vice president. "The internet is a terrific research tool, but from our experience and what buyers tell us there's nothing like hands-on, face-to-face time at a boat show to really get people off the boat-buying fence. Boat shows are the strongest 'call to action' when it comes to communicating with potential buyers."

Additional MSU study findings that demonstrate the power of boat shows include:

- • 86 percent said attending a show increased their desire to go boating
- • 50 percent said they went to the show with no intention of buying a boat, but became interested once onsite
- • 15 percent said they intended to buy a boat at the show
- • 5 percent said they actually bought a boat at the show
- • 73 percent said they attended the show to buy accessories
- • 65 percent said they will buy products they saw at the show
- • 47 percent said they spoke with 3 to 5 dealers at the show
- • 49 percent said they intend to follow up with a dealer they spoke with at the show
- • 45 percent said they have a household income over \$100,000

What's more, exhibitor reports out of all four NMMA fall boat shows-including the Tampa Boat Show (September 5-7); Toronto In-Water Boat Show (September 11-14); Virginia In-Water Boat Expo & Sailfest (September 12-14); and Norwalk International In-Water Boat Show (September 18-21)-confirm that despite attendance decreases at each event, exhibitors were not only pleased with the quality of show attendees, but were also successful in selling boats and related accessories.

"This was the best sales event we've ever had for our Tampa dealership," says Jim Kranendonk of Bay Area Watersoprts. "Despite the economic climate, we were surprised to find that the quality and quantity of show attendees was really strong."

Echoing feedback from fellow Norwalk exhibitors, Fran Zicuis with Silver Hawk, a subsidiary of JD Marine Group LLC, says his dealership had a very strong show, selling boats throughout the week. "We had good results from retail sales, and dealer response has been phenomenal. We're very pleased and looking forward to next year's Norwalk show."

In Toronto, exhibitors say that the decrease in attendance didn't prevent the show from proving a success-and that those who did turn out brought with them an upbeat, positive mood in spite of growing concern over U.S. economic uncertainty.

"Over the years, the show has consistently provided a broader market to retail certain boats we failed to sell at the dealership," explains U.S. Marine Corporation's Bryan Down. "This year proved to be no exception, as we retailed boats identified as 'must-sell' units at the show and sold even more during the follow-up process."

Virginia exhibitor Oliver Midgette of Trident Marine Electronics agrees attendees at this year's Boat Expo & Sailfest were definitely looking to buy. "The amount of business we wrote was great," Midgette says. "I'd rather have 100 qualified people come talk to me than 1,000 who aren't interested in buying anything. This is the best show we do, and we can't wait until next year!"

*For more information about NMMA's 2008 fall boat show results or the MSU survey, contact NMMA public relations manager Sarah Ryser at (312) 946-6285; [sryser@nmma.org](mailto:sryser@nmma.org).*

*National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the leading association representing the recreational boating industry. NMMA member companies produce more than 80 percent of the boats, engines, trailers, accessories and gear used by boaters in North America. The association is dedicated to industry growth through programs in public policy, market research and data, product quality assurance and marketing communications.*