

I was contacted twice recently by customers/friends who expressed concerns about something they'd experienced or heard about, and they thought I might want to create a blog to share with others. So, I am doing it this morning!

One said he'd heard about an older man afflicted with a "flesh-eating bacteria", which he encountered while wading a bay on the Upper Coast. I put the quotation marks in the last sentence because I'm not sure exactly what organism the man came in contact with, but I do know all of us who fish in saltwater should be cognizant of the dangers associated with these kinds of things. Of primary concern is vibrio vulnificus, the bacterium which causes the most deaths in Texas every year among critters of this kind.

According to my quick research, about a dozen different strains of vibrio bacteria have been identified. None are considered "flesh-eating". Flesh-eating bacteria are also known to exist in bodies of saltwater along the coast of North America. Most of these bacteria thrive in warm water, so summer is the season in which the dangers associated with contacting them reach a peak.

In order to minimize risks associated with these harmful, potentially fatal organisms, do the following: 1) avoid eating raw oysters and other shellfish, 2) apply spray-on band-aid on all cuts before fishing saltwater, 3) rinse any cuts which occur on an outing with a solution of 50% bleach and 50% water and 4) thoroughly clean all cuts and abrasions where the bacteria might enter the body after fishing, and cover them with anti-bacterial ointment.

For the record, most people who die from a vibrio infection get the bacterium into their system by ingesting raw oysters. And, people with compromised immune systems are far more likely to be killed by vibrio than are people with healthy ones. Last, all anglers who fish the salt should be cognizant of the risks, since the bacteria can enter the blood stream through cuts on the hands and arms, which come into contact with the water whether one is wading or fishing from the boat. For more detailed information on this topic, check out this link: <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/07/health/vibrio-vulnificus-bacteria/>

The other person who took the time to contact me with a concern wanted me to reemphasize the need to remain vigilant while at the helm of a boat. He told me of an incident where he narrowly avoided disaster while backing his boat out of the sling and into the canal. He admitted he became "complacent" and lost awareness of the potential danger inherent to operating a boat with whirring propeller blades and enough horsepower and torque to throw humans around like little rag dolls.

To make a long story short, he made the mistake of stepping away from the helm with the boat engaged in gear, moving backwards. When he noticed the motor might bang into the bulkhead, he reached across the leaning post and pushed the throttle forward, but did so too forcefully, causing the engine to race and the boat to plane off in the canal! He was thrown off his feet into the stern, his wife and their two dogs tossed off the bow and into the bottom of the craft. Luckily, the boat was pointed straight down the ditch, and he was able to get up and stop it before it smashed into something.

The moral of his story is simple. One should connect the kill switch to their body AT ALL TIMES WHILE THE MOTOR IS IN GEAR. If something requires moving too far away from the wheel for the kill switch lanyard to reach, the throttle should be in the idle position.