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Sales Reports Better Than Expected at First Five NMMA Winter Boat Shows

Exhibitors report quality buying crowds and healthy boat sales at shows across the U.S.

CHICAGO, January 27, 2009 – Exhibitors at the first five National Marine Manufacturers (NMMA) boat shows of the season—the New York National Boat Show, Kansas City Boat & Sportshow, Nashville Boat & Sportshow, San Diego Boat Show, and New Orleans Boat Show—are reporting better-than-expected sales and healthy buying crowds, encouraging news considering the challenging economic situation facing our industry. Early reports indicate dealers are writing contracts and selling boats at the shows, as well as walking away with solid sales leads to pursue in the months ahead.

As expected, attendance was down at all five shows compared to the previous year: New York National Boat Show, 49 percent; Kansas City Boat & Sportshow, 38 percent; Nashville Boat & Sportshow, 36 percent; San Diego Boat Show, 12 percent; and New Orleans Boat Show, 5 percent.

NFL playoff games involving Nashville and San Diego Teams, the Tennessee Titans and San Diego Chargers, hurt attendance in these two particular markets. New York was rocked by a winter snow storm on the final weekend of the show, helping to dramatically reduce the gate. Kansas City experienced similar weather conditions that ultimately kept people indoors during the show's run.

“We expected to be down in attendance this year as a result of the economy, and while we wished we had greater numbers through the gate, we were nonetheless happy with the quality of attendees and both encouraged and optimistic to know that serious, interested buyers were, indeed, attending and buying,” says Ben Wold, NMMA executive vice president. “Exhibitors at shows in each of the five markets have been informing us that sales-wise, they’re doing better than expected—some even saying they’re outperforming last year, which tells us boat shows continue to be a solid selling venue.”

“We had a great New York show and sold more than 20 Glastrons,” says Dave Kaczmar, a dealer representative for Glastron and Baja. “The buyers here were serious; there was very little tire-kicking going on this year.”

“We were very happy with the display of one of our Bentley Pontoons in the Affordability Pavilion,” explains New York exhibitor Mitch Scharf of Lake Hopatcong Marine. “A lot of people came into the booth and mentioned that they saw one of our boats in the Pavilion. As a result, we collected four deposits at the show on that particular model—all of which are now beginning to close. We think the Affordability Pavilion was a great idea and hope to be part of it in the future!”

Kansas City exhibitors said they were equally pleased with show results. “This was the best Kansas City show ever,” says Denise Morgan of Anglers Point Marine. “Anglers Point sold several boats at the show to solid buyers.”

“The amount of qualified buyers at the Kansas City Boat & Sportshow was impressive,” echoes Chuck Landis of Cabela’s. “We sold boats at the show and in our store because of the show advertising campaign. Even more impressive is the number of qualified leads the show produced for us.”

In New Orleans, exhibitors also reported better-than-expected sales and quality buying crowds. “This year’s show was one of the best shows we’ve ever had, taking in 23 deposits,” says Chad Adcox of Dockside Marina. “Attendance appeared comparable to last year, with a high percentage of buyers in the mix.”

New Orleans exhibitors also expressed satisfaction with the amount of pre-show advertising aimed at bringing people out to the event. “If you didn’t hear about the New Orleans Boat Show, you must’ve been living under a rock,” says Bruce Taylor of Xtreme Jetsport. “The ads and publicity really worked,” agrees Barrett Canfield of Southwestern Yacht Sales, an exhibitor at the San Diego Boat Show.

“As a company, this is the best show we’ve done in two years in terms of sales, and the best show we’ve done in three years in terms of solid sales leads,” Canfield continues. “With the start of a new year, we’re really seeing peoples’ attitudes shift. They’re now saying they’re ready for ‘change,’ and as part of that change they’re saying they’re ready to buy a boat.”

NMMA boat shows continue through January and February. A full list of shows can be found online at *BoatShows.com*.

The 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 throughout North America. The association is dedicated to industry growth through programs in public policy, market research and data, product quality assurance and marketing communications.

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