

That's not how you start a boat

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Tomorrow is Opening Day of the Seattle boating season. (Which, as I noted some time ago, is purely a social occasion with no legal significance.) One of my colleagues is not much of a boat person, but his wife is. (In fact, she's a commercial fisherman.) They were on board some fancy boat or other as it sat docked. He was up on the top deck—this being a boat so fancy that it had an upstairs and a downstairs—and as the preparations were made for heading out, his wife called out to him to start the boat, since he's up there already. Now, as I mentioned, my colleague isn't much of a boat person. But he figured, "These modern boats, how hard can it be? It's probably pushbutton nowadays." So he looked at the control panel and saw a bright red button. "Red button, that's probably the power button, right?" The button looked like a letter V with a dot in the middle, or at least that's how it was described to me. Immediately upon pressing the button, alarms rang on board the boat, and the Coast Guard called them on the radio.

It turns out that the V with a dot is not the power button. It is the "man overboard" button. The dot is the person's head, and the letter V represents the two flailing arms.

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