



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
St. Louis District®

News Release

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Summer Months Call for Water Safety

St. Louis, Mo. -- Approximately 700 recreational boaters will die this year due to boating mishaps, according to the National Safe Boating Council. The majority of these fatalities (about 79 percent) will occur on inland waters such as rivers, streams, lakes and ponds.

That's worse than bad news. It's tragic news. But the silver lining to this horrendous prediction is that a great many of those losses could be prevented. Properly wearing life jackets alone could cut that number by more than three-quarters.

Although summer starts officially on June 21, many Americans are already kicking the recreation season into high gear. If they haven't already, they will soon take leave of their daily lives and venture out on vacations and weekend getaways.

Water safety must be a top priority for all individuals using the nation's waterways and lakes this summer. It is not only for their safety but the safety of others.

An estimated 360 million Americans visit U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas each year. A majority of these visitors come during the summer months.

The Corps is the Nation's largest provider of water-based recreation, operating more than 2,500 recreation areas at 463 projects (mostly lakes). The St. Louis District manages five of these lakes: Carlyle (Carlyle, Ill.), Mark Twain (Monroe City, Mo), Rend (Benton, Ill.), Shelbyville (Shelbyville, Ill.) and Wappapello (Wappapello, Mo.).

The District also maintains a 9-foot navigation channel on 300 miles of the Middle Mississippi River, 80 miles of the Illinois River and 36 miles of the Kaskaskia River. These rivers will also experience increased pleasure boat traffic during the summer months. Combined St. Louis District's Rivers Project and lakes average 15 million visitors a year.

It is imperative that boaters have taken appropriate safety classes, are familiar with governing state laws and have proper safety equipment on board before venturing out this summer.

The type and size of boat will dictate type of equipment but a necessity is a life jacket. A properly fitted life jacket for everyone on board is not just a consideration, but it is the law. Life jackets save lives when they are used properly. The #1 cause of death in boating accidents is drowning with approximately 80 percent of drowning victims not wearing life jackets.

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Other appropriate equipment includes an operational fire extinguisher, visual distress signals, anchor and anchor line, paddles and oars, tool kit, horn or whistle, spare fuel, flashlight, First Aid Kit, sunglasses, sun screen, mooring line, pump bailer, food and water and a mariner's radio.

In the case of the St. Louis District it is important that boaters know the state laws for Missouri or Illinois. Many states require boater education or boat operator licenses. As an added incentive, some insurance companies offer discounts to boaters who have successfully completed a boating safety course.

Safety courses are taught by many governmental and private boating organizations. Courses are offered in various formats including classroom, home study and on-line so prospective boaters can find courses that work best with their schedule.

The U.S. Coast Guard's safety web page at http://www.uscgboating.org/safety/safety_courses.htm provides links to several on-line course providers. BoatU.S. Foundation at <http://www.boatus.org/onlinecourse/> offers on-line courses and also provides information by calling 1-800-336-2628.

Fatality rates decrease significantly when a boater has some boater education. Eighty-eight percent of fatalities occur on boats where the operator has not taken a boater education course, according to the National Safe Boating Council.

The St. Louis District lakes offer on-site water safety programs on weekends during the recreation season. The public is welcome to call the lakes for additional information.

Carlyle Lake Project Office	618-594-2484
Rend Lake Project Office	618-724-2493
Mark Twain Lake Project Office	573-735-4097
Shelbyville Lake Project Office	217-774-3951
Wappapello Lake Project Office	573-222-8562

The St. Louis District takes pride in its role of providing visitors with safe recreational opportunities. It is important that recreationists play their part in the safety equation by being knowledgeable, responsible and considerate of others.