



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

News Release

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www.mvs.usace.army.mil

Army Corps says, Let's Finish Summer Safely

St. Louis – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Louis District ramped up efforts this summer to halt drownings at its projects. Eight water-related fatalities occurred at St. Louis District projects in 2007. District employees were challenged in 2008 to incorporate water safety messages into all aspects of education and outreach to try and curb water-related fatalities. To date there has only been one fatality at a District project, and the Army Corps wants to finish the summer safely without any additional ones.

“Labor Day weekend is typically viewed as the end of the summer recreation season,” explained Peg O’Bryan, chief of the District’s Operations Division. “Corps statistics show that most drownings occur during peak visitation, on weekends during the months of April through September. Our goal is that everyone has a safe, enjoyable visit at our projects and return home safely.

“Throughout the year our staff does everything possible to emphasize the importance of water safety,” O’Bryan said, “and I’d like to especially thank the businesses, marinas and partners that help us deliver water safety messages. It is vital though that our visitors do their part and practice personal boating and water safety and remain vigilant both in and around the water.”

Advice O’Bryan gave included telling parents to watch their children and never let them swim outside of designated swimming areas – especially in coves. She also cautioned young people not to dare one another to swim outside the buoy line or jump into water of unknown depth or locations of possible underwater obstructions.

One preventive measure taken at a District project this year was the implementation of a new rafting policy at Lake Shelbyville in Illinois. The policy went into effect July 18 and limited the number of boats that could be tied together. A raft is defined as two or more boats tied together.

The impetus was two drownings in 2007 and one in June 2008 in an area informally known as “Party Cove,” where rafts of up to 75 boats had been observed. Limiting the size of boat rafts allows patrol boats access to enforce public safety.

The policy states that no more than five boats may be tied together and no more than 50 people may be on any given raft of boats. The new policy also requires a minimum of 150 feet between rafts. Special Use Permits can be arranged through the lake’s project office for rafts of vessels up to a limit of twenty.

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SAFETY/2-2-2

“The new policy was instituted to provide a safer environment for visiting boaters on Lake Shelbyville,” said Ricky Raymond, the lake’s Operations Manager. “We want everyone to have a safe, fun visit and most importantly return home safely. Public safety is our top priority, and we are committed to taking the necessary steps to promote safe recreation.”

Below are safety tips from the Army Corps of Engineers to help recreation seekers stay safe in the water over the Labor Day weekend.

Alcohol and water don't mix

Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in nearly 20 percent of all boating accidents. Just one beer can impair balance, vision, judgment, and reaction time. Research shows that four hours of boating produces fatigue that simulates drunkenness. Boating fatigue combined with alcohol consumption intensifies the effects of both and increases accident risks.

Boaters

Boaters should take appropriate safety classes, be familiar with governing state laws and have proper safety equipment onboard before boating. Seventy percent of reported fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction, according to U.S. Coast Guard statistics.

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

Wear a life jacket – don’t just carry one on board. Make sure it is Coast Guard approved and appropriately sized. Most states, including Illinois, require children under the age of 13 to wear life jackets. In Missouri, the state law requires children under 7 to wear life jackets.

Don't overload the boat (consider boat size, the number of passengers, and extra equipment before loading). Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Carry a set of navigational charts. Check the weather forecast. File a float plan with family or friends who are not on the vessel.

Swimming and Knowing Your Limits

At Army Corps of Engineers sites, swimming in non-designated areas is the highest (47 percent) cause for all water-related fatalities nationwide. Don't take chances by over-estimating swimming skills, and swim only in designated areas.

Watch your children at all times when around the water. It takes an average of 20 seconds for a child to drown.

Never dive into lakes and rivers. Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat. Reach or throw a flotation device to help someone in trouble. Don't go in the water! Never swim alone.

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Water Safety, Everyone's Responsibility

Water safety must be a top priority for everyone using the nation's waterways and lakes. An estimated 360 million people visit U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas annually. The Corps emphasizes that taking water safety precautions saves lives – possibly your own.

For additional information about Corps projects, visit <http://www.corpslakes.us> . Reservations for camping may be made at 1-877-444-6777, or on the internet at: www.recreation.gov.

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

Illinois:

Carlyle Lake	618-594-2484
Lake Shelbyville	217-774-3951
National Great Rivers Museum	618-462-6979
Rend Lake	618-724-2493

Missouri:

Mark Twain Lake	573-735-4097
Rivers Project Office	636-899-2600
Wappapello Lake	573-222-8562

The St. Louis District is federal steward to over 300,000 acres of public lands and waters. This includes 5 multipurpose reservoirs, 5 navigational projects, 80 miles on the Illinois River, 36 miles on the Kaskaskia River, and 300 miles on the Mississippi River. Carlyle, Rend, and Shelbyville lakes are in Illinois. Mark Twain and Wappapello lakes are in Missouri. The district hosts more than 17 million visits per year. According to visitation reports, 60 percent of these visitors engage in aquatic recreational pursuits such as swimming, boating, or fishing.

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For more tips on water safety, visit the Corps' water safety web site:
<http://watersafety.usace.army.mil/>

Public Safety Announcements recorded by Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, Mississippi Valley Division Commander are available online at:
<http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil/rec-edu/recreation.html>

Visit www.cgaux.org for information on boating classes.

View the Coast Guard federal regulations governing boating at:
<http://www.uscgboating.org/>

U.S. Coast Guard statistics are available online:
http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/Boating_Statistics_2006.pdf