



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

# News Release

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## **Water Safety, Everyone's Responsibility**

St. Louis – Water safety must be a top priority for everyone using the nation's waterways and lakes this summer, emphasizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in St. Louis. An estimated 350 million people visit U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas nationwide annually, with nearly 15 million annual visits to St. Louis District lake and river facilities.

Corps statistics show that most drownings occur during peak visitation, on weekends during the months of April through September. Fifty percent of all incidents occur between June and July when the projects are the busiest and water temperatures are warmest. The Fourth of July weekend is one of the busiest visitor weekends.

Below are safety tips from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help recreation seekers stay safe in the water over the Fourth of July holiday weekend and through the rest of the summer. The Corps wants its guests to have a safe and enjoyable stay at its recreation areas or anywhere on the nation's waters. Taking water safety precautions seriously saves lives.

### **Life jackets: There's no reason not to wear it**

Gone are the days of bulky orange "horse collar" life jackets. Modern life jackets are available in a wide variety of compact, lightweight, and attractive styles suitable for constant wear. Many are partially or wholly inflatable, and resemble a wide set of suspenders or even a belt pack. Special varieties are made for anglers, hunters, skiers, and other sports enthusiasts.

According to U.S. Coast Guard statistics, 685 people died in water-related boating incidents in 2007. This is a drop from 710 in 2006 but boating accidents and injuries have both increased. Overall, two-thirds of all fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those who drowned, 90 percent were not wearing a life jacket.

Wearing a life jacket is the most important precaution recreational boaters can take to increase their chances of surviving an accident on the water. Accidents can happen at an alarming speed, allowing no time to grab a life jacket and put it on properly before entering the water. Wearing a life jacket can save a person's life and ensure they survive an accident and stick around for those they love.

### **Boaters**

Boaters should take appropriate safety classes, be familiar with governing state laws and have proper safety equipment onboard before boating. Eighty-six percent of reported fatalities occurred on boats for which the operator had not received boating safety instruction, according to USCG statistics.

Around St. Louis 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 an approved boating safety course.

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## SAFETY/2-2-2

Wear a life jacket – don't just carry one on board. Make sure it is U.S. 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.

### **Alcohol and Water Don't Mix**

Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal 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.

### **Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer**

Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, tasteless, and odorless gas that can be deadly for boaters. CO can accumulate anywhere in or around boats, and can remain at dangerous levels even if the engine is no longer running. It can also float on the surface of the water, a potential danger to people swimming around a boat.

Common sources of CO onboard vessels include engines, gas generators, cooking ranges, space and water heaters. Boaters can take the following steps to protect themselves and others from the dangers of carbon monoxide:

- Install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors on and inside the boat. Do not ignore the alarms and replace batteries and detectors as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Maintain a fresh circulation of air through and around the boat at all times.
- Treat symptoms of seasickness as possible carbon monoxide poisoning and quickly get the victim to a well ventilated area.
- Avoid any area of the boat where exhaust fumes may be present. If exhaust fumes are detected on the vessel take immediate action to ventilate the affected area.
- When making repairs to the boat's generator ensure that marine quality parts are used and not auto parts.

### **Swim Smartly**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for children ages 1-14. It is the third leading cause for 15-34 year olds. It takes an average of 20 seconds for a child to drown. Parents should watch their children at all times when around the water.

Of all swimming-related fatalities at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites, 87 percent of those were in non-designated swimming areas. Don't take chances by over-estimating swimming skills, and swim only in designated areas.

Additional swimming tips include: 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. Never swim alone.

### SAFETY/3-3-3

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 15 million visits per year. According to visitation reports, 60 percent of these visitors engage in aquatic recreational pursuits such as swimming, boating, or fishing.

Media interested in talking with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel about water safety initiatives at District projects can contact the offices below to talk with a staff member.

#### Illinois:

Carlyle Lake (Carlyle, Ill.)	618-594-2484
Lake Shelbyville (Shelbyville, Ill.)	217-774-3951
National Great Rivers Museum (Alton, Ill.)	618-462-6979
Rend Lake (Benton, Ill.)	618-724-2493

#### Missouri:

Mark Twain Lake (Monroe City, Mo.)	573-735-4097
Rivers Project Office (West Alton, Ill.)	636-899-2600
Wappapello Lake (Wappapello, Mo.)	573-222-8562

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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](http://www.recreation.gov).

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

Visit [www.cgaux.org](http://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\\_2007.pdf](http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/Boating_Statistics_2007.pdf)

More information concerning CO poisoning can be found online by visiting the U.S. Coast Guard website at <http://www.uscgboating.org/command/co.htm>

Visit [www.SafeBoatingCampaign.com](http://www.SafeBoatingCampaign.com) for additional safe boating resources.