



St. Louis District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Urges Boaters To Be Smart While On Water

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ST. LOUIS - The St. Louis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is celebrating National Safe Boating Week, May 22- 28 by urging boaters to be smart while on the water.

U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that drowning was the reported cause of death in four out of every five recreational boating fatalities in 2019, and that 86 percent of those who drowned were not wearing life jackets.

New life jackets are much more comfortable, lightweight, and stylish than the bulky orange style most boaters know. There are innovative options, such as inflatable life jackets, allowing mobility and flexibility for activities like boating, fishing, paddling or hunting, and are much cooler in the warmer weather.

To help ensure that individuals stay safe on America's waterways, the U. S. Coast Guard urges boaters to take basic safety precautions such as wearing a life jacket, participating in a boat safety course, getting a vessel check, and never boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. By practicing responsible boating habits, people can help contribute to a safer, more enjoyable experience on the water. Here are some safety tips to help recreation seekers stay safe in the water at federal recreation areas.

Watch your children

It only takes a child an average of 20 seconds to drown, according to water safety officials. Watch your children at all times when around the water. Don't let them wander very far from adult supervision and never let them go near or into the water unless someone responsible is watching them.

Alcohol and water activities don't mix

Alcohol use is a leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents, according to the U. S. Coast Guard. Just one beer can impair balance, vision, judgment and reaction time. Research shows that about four hours of boating – with exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare and wind – produces fatigue that simulates drunkenness. Boating fatigue combined with alcohol consumption intensifies the effects of both and increases accident risks.

Boaters should know the rules

There are approximately 11.8 million recreational vessels registered in the U.S. Boaters should take appropriate safety classes, be familiar with state laws and have proper safety equipment onboard. 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. While boating make sure you and your passengers 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 require children under the age of

13 to wear life jackets. Know your state law! Don't overload the boat (consider boat size, 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 boat plan with family or friends who are not on the vessel so in case something does happen, or you are late returning someone will know your approximate whereabouts.

Learn to swim/know your limits

Surprisingly, about two-thirds of those who drown never had the intention of being in the water. Never dive headfirst into lakes and rivers – the results can be tragic. Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat. Don't take chances by over-estimating your swimming skills or give in to peer pressure. Reach or throw a floatation device to help someone in trouble; don't go in the water! Swim only in designated swimming areas. Use the buddy system and never swim alone. About half of all drowning victims are alone when they drown. It's smart to take swimming lessons and learn to swim.

Water safety should be a top priority for everyone using the nation's waterways and lakes this upcoming holiday weekend and through the summer. Millions of people visit Corps recreation areas nationwide annually (<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/visitors/visitors.cfm>). Make your visit to a recreation area a safe and enjoyable one. Water safety precautions save lives – maybe even your own. The water safety campaign “Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns” helps people become more aware of the importance of water safety practices.

For more information on our water safety program, please visit <https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Recreation/Water-Safety/> or <http://bobber.info> for water safety educational materials.