



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:
Tim Dugan, 978-318-8264
timothy.j.dugan@usace.army.mil

Think safety over Fourth of July holiday

Corps emphasizes water safety at federal recreation areas during the holiday weekend, summer months

CONCORD, Mass. – As the Fourth of July holiday weekend approaches and summer vacation is here for many and the temperatures climb higher, more and more people will be recreating near or in the water in New England. Now is the time to think about water safety and boating safety.

Each year, approximately 4,000 people drown in the United States. In fact, drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death for children. Yet, it is possible – just by wearing a life jacket or taking other precautions – to reduce drowning deaths.

In boating-related fatalities, 91 percent involve boat operators who had not received any boating safety instruction, according to U.S. Coast Guard statistics. In 2010, of the 672 recreational boating fatalities, nearly three-fourths were drownings, and 88 percent of those victims were not wearing life jackets. In 2010, the Coast Guard counted 4,604 accidents that involved 672 deaths, 3,153 injuries and approximately \$35.5 million in damage to property as a result of recreational boating accidents. These USGS statistics are available at: <http://www.uscgboating.org> under statistics.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages nearly 12 million acres of public lands and waters nationwide, offers the following safety tips to help recreation seekers and their families stay safe in water over the Fourth of July holiday weekend and through the hot summer months.

Alcohol and water activities don't mix

Alcohol is a leading contributing factor to fatal boating accidents, according to water safety officials. Just one beer can impair balance, vision, judgment and reaction time. Research shows that four hours of boating – 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

Boaters should take appropriate safety classes, be familiar with governing state laws and have proper safety equipment onboard before boating. Many states require boater education or boat operator licenses. As an added incentive, many 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 life jackets are U.S. Coast Guard-approved and appropriately sized. Most states require children under age 13 to wear life jackets. Know your state law! Don't

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT
696 VIRGINIA ROAD, CONCORD, MA 01742-2751
<http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>



July 4th water safety at Corps of Engineers recreation areas/2-2-2-2-2

overload the boat (consider boat size, the number passengers and extra equipment before loading). Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Carry a set of navigational charts. Follow the manufacturer's suggested procedures before starting the engine. Check the weather forecast and get updates. File a float plan with family or friends who are not on the boat so someone will know if you are late to return or missing.

Watch your children

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

Learn to swim/know your limits

Surprisingly, about two-thirds of those who drown never had the intention of being in the water. It makes sense to learn to swim if you will be around water. Never dive 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. Reach or throw a floatation device to help someone in trouble. Don't go in the water! Swim only in designated swimming areas and never swim alone.

Water safety must be a top priority for everyone using the nation's waterways and lakes this upcoming holiday weekend and throughout the summer. An estimated 360 million people visit U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas nationwide annually. Make your visit to any recreation area a safe and enjoyable one. Taking water safety precautions saves lives – maybe your own.

Federal Recreation Areas in New England

There are numerous opportunities to enjoy recreation at the 31 Corps-managed federal flood risk management protection reservoirs and the Cape Cod Canal in New England this Fourth of July holiday weekend and throughout the summer. Most areas feature small lakes with facilities designed for day use such as picnicking, swimming, boating, fishing and hunting. There are also a few facilities for overnight camping. Most Corps-managed recreation areas in New England are open through the middle of September.

There are beaches and boat ramps available at reservoirs and lakes in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont. For more information go to the Corps' New England District web site at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil> and select "recreation" and then select your state and location on the map to find out what recreation areas are available near you or go directly to the recreation webpage at <http://www.nae.usace.mil/recreati/recreati.htm>. More information on what is offered at each location is available from the park manager listed on the webpage of the specific reservoir or lake of interest.

For those who want to camp, the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) makes it possible for campers to make reservations for campsites at New England District's campgrounds, as well as nearly 40,000 Corps of Engineers and Forest Service campsites nationwide. The toll free number is (877) 444-6777 and the website is www.recreation.gov.

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