

# Electronic Message Boards

One of the easiest to obtain and most visible water safety techniques is the electronic message boards. Many overlook this information item, and most importantly they do not cost you anything!

Just in case you forgot what an electronic message board is, let me refresh your memory. They are usually large, with lights and the message moves from one side to the other or up and down. Some move around the top of buildings. You may find them in front of banks, restaurants, stores, or at high school and college campuses. Remember the message board we watch as the New Year arrives in New York City's Times Square? The message moves up and down.

Simply locate all the moving electronic message boards in your area. Ask every person in the office where others might be. Draft the messages you want them to put up, and when. Then stop and get your message up. Try to keep the messages short and to the point. Like, "Wear Your Life Jacket."

It is important to locate the correct person who gives the approval for the messages. Try to get the information to them a week before you want it up. Since the business will not want to run your message all the time, try to select the most important dates to have it up; probably Memorial, Independence and Labor Day weekends.

Most of the board owners are happy to get your message up as it shows they are interested in the community's welfare. It is simply good business to put up your data. When the person says "yes", have your list of messages and dates handy. Jot down when the person says they will be up. If the official wants to put it up immediately, do it. This way you can watch it go up and take a photograph. Exchange business cards, so you can call and thank them after the first one goes up and a day before the second one is to go up call again, thank the person and

ever so gently remind them of the upcoming weekend message.

If you have a good contact at the newspaper you might ask the reporter to photograph the message as it first appears...it's soft news. The approving official might be in the photo, looking over the words, with you or your boss. A photo in the local paper will help you obtain approval for future messages. If the newspaper reporters will not help you, and it is a possibility since the message is not hard news, you could take the photo and get it published somewhere. The business, say a bank, might have an internal publication that would print it. Others who might publish it are fishing and outdoors magazines, or your faithful District newspaper. Ensure to get a clipping to the approving officer.

At many sports stadiums, high schools and universities, there are very large scoreboards equipped with moving messages. You might be the lucky one to have a professional sports stadium in your area. Baseball is the summer sport when most drownings occur.

Here is when your date is so important. Let's say a dome stadium football game is going to be played on Sunday afternoon. This will be the only time to get the message up, inside.

Some indoor sporting arenas have large advertising electronic message boards outside their establishment. They are excellent for your messages. When the official says "yes", put on your creative hat. If the sign has special effects, use them to get people's attention. Let's say your message is: "Alcohol and Boating Don't Mix." You could spell out "Alcohol and Boating" at one time and fill the entire message board with DON'T, hold it longer than normal, then spell M-I-X one letter at a time until the "X" appears. Then flash MJX on and off three or four times.

Take a photograph of each message. You might need to create a slide for a presentation or pass it on to the next person.

Everyone loves to see their name in lights, and

sometimes you can gain support for your water safety campaign by publicizing influential visitors. Let's say you want to welcome an important visitor to your lake, like the governor or senator. Imagine your guest seeing "Welcome to Dale Hollow Lake, Senator Jim Sasser." If you are not driving, inform the escort where the sign is located so it can be pointed out to the visitor. If there is no traffic, the driver might pull over to the side and surprise the visitor.

Some Districts have installed electronic message boards on the face of their power plants as a safety precaution. When the turbines are getting ready to come on line, special messages flash, horns sound and red lights turn. This way, anglers in the tail water and farther downstream will be alerted to the change in water turbulence, by sight and/or hearing. Water safety messages may be added, too.

How many water safety messages are you going to get up? Is it electronic message board contest time? Good luck in your board hunting.