



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

# Press Release

Release No. 08-05

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For Release: **IMMEDIATE – May 20, 2005**

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## Memorial Day Weekend Calls For Water Safety

St. Louis – Drowning remains the number one cause of death in recreational boating accidents. Ninety percent of those who drowned in 2004 were NOT wearing their life jackets.

President George W. Bush signed a proclamation Thursday making May 21-27 National Safe Boating Week. He urged all Americans to learn more about safe boating practices, wear life jackets, take advantage of boating safety programs throughout the year, and always engage in proper and responsible conduct while on the water.

Saturday, May 21, marks the start of National Safe Boating Week, an annual nationwide event dedicated to raising the awareness of boating safety prior to Memorial Day weekend, the traditional start of the summer boating season. The campaign's theme, "Boat Smart. Boat Safe. Wear It!" is designed to emphasize the importance of each boater wearing a life jacket.

Water safety must be a top priority for everyone using the nation's waterways and lakes this summer. An estimated 360 million people visit U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas each year. Below are safety tips from the Corps of Engineers to help recreation seekers stay safe in the water over the Memorial Day holiday weekend and into the summer.

### **Alcohol and water don't mix**

More than half of all drowning fatalities involve alcohol. 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!**

Boaters should take appropriate safety classes, be familiar with governing state laws and have proper safety equipment onboard before boating.

Within the St. Louis regional area it is important for boaters to know the state laws for Missouri and Illinois. 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.

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

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**Swimmers! LEARN TO SWIM...LEARN TO SWIM WELL!**

Drowning is the second leading cause of all accidental deaths in persons 15-44 years of age. Surprisingly, two-thirds of those who drown never had the intention of being in the water. Watch your children at all times when around the water. Never dive into lakes and rivers. 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. Never swim alone.

Please make your visit to any recreation area a safe and enjoyable one. Taking water safety precautions saves lives – maybe your own.

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	618-462-6979
Wappapello Lake	573-222-8562

*For more tips on water safety, visit the Corps' water safety web site at*

*<http://watersafety.usace.army.mil/>*

*Visit <http://www.cgaux.org> for information on boating classes.*

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