



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

CECW-ON

MAY 27 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS
AND DISTRICT COMMANDS, CHIEFS, CONSTRUCTION-OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Corps Partnership in
Investigation of Elevated Carbon Monoxide Levels Among Recreational Boaters

1. The hazard of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning related to recreational boating has become a significant concern in the boating industry. Originally, CO poisonings were considered to occur only in enclosed, poorly vented areas such as houseboats and cabin cruisers. However, an alarming number of poisonings are occurring to boaters in open-air situations.
2. The U.S. Coast Guard has identified over 100 incidents of CO poisonings that have resulted in 67 fatalities and 316 non-fatal injuries. Seventeen of these incidents occurred on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects and resulted in 12 fatalities and 59 non-fatal CO poisonings. The total number of CO related fatalities and non-fatal poisonings is generally assumed to be greatly underreported due to a lack of recognition of the hazard and that many boat-related CO deaths are commonly classified as drownings without mention of CO, because autopsies are often times not performed.
3. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Department of Interior have completed several studies to measure CO emissions from recreational boats and various emission control devices. However, no studies have been conducted to determine the specific exposure of boaters to CO while actually participating in their normal, routine recreational boating activities.
4. Beginning in June 2003 and potentially continuing through September 2005, the CDC, in cooperation with the Corps, will be conducting on-site sampling of recreational boaters to better document the number of cases with clinically elevated levels of CO and CO poisoning that result from exposure to boat exhaust. Data will be voluntarily collected from boaters during weekdays twice a month during the 2003 – 2005 recreation seasons, at the following Corps lakes: Center Hill Lake; Tennessee; Youghiogheny River Lake, Pennsylvania; Lake Sidney Lanier; Georgia; and Grapevine Lake; Texas. These lakes were selected in order to obtain a statistically accurate national sample. The results of the study will be provided to regulators, manufacturers, and others interested in improving boater safety by reducing CO exposure.

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5. A project delivery team (PDT) has been established to coordinate the Corps involvement. The team includes: Scott Jackson (ERDC), Brenda Warren (LRD), Steve Austin (HQ), and Brad Keshlear, Project Manager (SAD). On-site project personnel will have minimal involvement in the study beyond being aware of initiative and providing local logistical support. The PDT will make contact with the staff at each lake to coordinate the dates for the surveys and to discuss any issues specific to the project.

6. I anticipate and appreciate your cooperation with this worthwhile endeavor. Should you have any questions, please contact Brad Keshlear at (404) 562-5134.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


LAWRENCE A. LANG, Ph.D., P.E.
Acting Chief, Operations Division
Directorate of Civil Works

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