

# Building Night Message

There are not many companies across the country that “light up” their building each night, but there are some. Feel fortunate if you are lucky enough to have such a building in your area.

Many of these buildings are owned by insurance companies and use this approach as a community service. Naturally, the messages appear in the evenings and cost you nothing.

One company lights three floors near the top of their office building. Open and closed blinds spell out the message on the east and west sides of the building. Another company uses 35mm slides and projects them on the side of a building with a special lens.

Before contacting the building director, take a look at the message one evening and count the letters and number of lines. Next, draft two or three water safety messages. Have the dates you want your messages to appear and then make the telephone call for an appointment. Your times will probably be around the three “bad” weekends: Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. If you get the opportunity, get your message up Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings. Try to get all three holidays booked the first visit. A request letter may be required.

What should your message say? Usually, you have three lines with five letters each to work with. Here are a few suggestions: “Learn to Swim Well”, “Wear A PFD”, “Boat Safe”, or “Boat Sober.” It is not as easy as it seems.

The key to getting your exact dates is prior planning. Three or four months are a good time to start. Most companies have a schedule and once a theme is approved it is nearly impossible to change.

Remember to give the person your business card and try to obtain their card. This way you will have the correct spelling of the name, address and telephone number.

Take a photo of the message and try to get it published. The District newsletter is one such publication. Think of your Division publication

and the *Engineer Update*. Weekly newspapers, outdoor, boating or fishing magazines will print it most of the time, if you get the photo, caption and news release to them in a timely fashion. Larger metro dailies have seen messages on the building and to them it is not news. However, since it is around one of the holidays, and if a drowning recently occurred, you will have a better chance of getting a reporter out to take a photo. If you are planning other events that weekend, or more law enforcement officials on the lake, this might be the pre-photo to go with your news release. Do not ask the reporter to come out on the last evening, always the first night. It’s news then, but not the second night

As a reminder, there are three types of news coverage: pre-, during, and post-. Normally, you send out pre-releases, local reporters cover during action, and you take care of post-coverage.

Take pictures for future programs. Send the building person a “thank you” note. Add a photograph and any news clippings. If by chance your message is going to appear on the nightly TV news, or on a radio program, call the building representative immediately so they can inform their leaders. Inform the appropriate Corps of Engineers personnel, too. This is simply a good public relations policy.