



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

2 May 2012

CECW-CO-N

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE AND DISTRICT  
COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Life Jacket Mandatory-Wear Policy Selective Expansion

1. In support of my goal to reducing public recreation fatalities as stipulated in my April 2012, memorandum, "Public Fatality Reduction Initiative," I am requesting you consider selectively expanding life jacket mandatory-wear policy at locations within your division.
2. I have attached the Life Jacket Policy Study Report (Encl 1). In 2008, this office tasked the HQUSACE National Operations Center for Water Safety (NOC) to study the feasibility of establishing a mandatory life jacket policy on Corps-managed waters. This report consolidates the findings of the three-year field test, and provides information on the impacts, challenges, and stakeholders' reactions, as well as presenting the final recommendations from the Life Jacket Policy Study PDT.
3. During this policy study, wear rates at the test lakes significantly increased and fatalities decreased. A summary of the measurements from all regions is provided below, and further discussed in each of the individual summaries in the Life Jacket Policy Study Report.
  - a. Vicksburg District. Wear rates over the course of the three-year policy test not only increased, but the high levels of compliance held consistent in the 70 percentile during the primary months of the recreation season. Staff reports show that man hours and boat patrols did not change significantly, and project staff messaging changed from solely educational to a combination of educational and enforcement. Fatalities reduced by 75% (from four in the baseline year to only one in each of the test years). Vicksburg District Commander Colonel Jeffrey Eckstein was so pleased with the test outcome that he recently directed the Mississippi Lakes Project to adopt the very same policies indefinitely.
  - b. Pittsburgh District. Wear rates in the regulated group of motorized vessels less than 16 feet in length increased from the baseline of 7.3% in 2008 to nearly 20% in 2009. Wear rates were generally low among boaters on waters where a life jacket policy has been in place since 1990.

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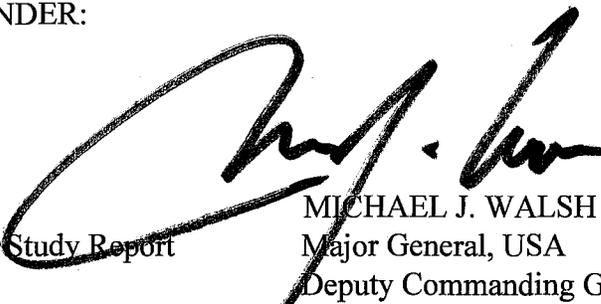
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c. Sacramento District. Despite the controversy of conducting the test at Pine Flat Lake, public compliance with the posted restrictions was high early in the recreation season, reaching nearly 88% wear rates in the high visitation month of June.

4. In considering a MSC life jacket policy, you should use a statistical analysis that identifies which projects have high boating fatality rates. Focusing on these projects could be one step to meet the goals set by the fatality reduction initiative, and a proactive approach to reducing public fatalities at our lake and river projects beyond 2014. The NOC is available to assist each MSC to select the best candidates for the policy to optimize success in meeting the goal of reducing fatalities by 50% by the end of FY14.

5. Additional information regarding life jacket mandatory-wear policy guidance can be found on the NRM Gateway Water Safety web site and by contacting the National Operations Center for Water Safety, attn: Jonathan Carlisle at (816) 308-6250, [jonathan.m.carlisle@usace.army.mil](mailto:jonathan.m.carlisle@usace.army.mil).

FOR THE COMMANDER:



Encl

1. Life Jacket Policy Study Report

MICHAEL J. WALSH  
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Deputy Commanding General  
for Civil and Emergency Operations