

# Ice Bags

What method can you think of that will place your water safety message at the target location...on board the boat? Think on that for a moment or two.

The ice bag is one approach. These bags are on board the craft as the brew is “iced down,” drunk, and after the ice is gone many boaters use the empty bags as a container for litter. A colorful water safety message emblazoned across the front of the ice bag and/or maybe the backside is a good way to get the safety word out on the water, and keep it there. In addition, it may deter some from drinking that one last brew before heading home.

You are probably saying, “That’s all well and good, but I don’t have any idea of where to start.

Don’t worry, help is on the way. Answer this question: “When do I want ice bags to appear around the lake?” Then, back your planning calendar up at least eight months. If you want them to arrive by summer, probably Columbus Day is the time to begin.

Check to see where your marinas, docks, and stores are buying their ice bags. Ask the manager a question along these lines, “Would you like to have a water safety message on these ice bags?” If a manager says “yes”, store that tidbit of information in your gray matter. It will be used later. If however, the manager says “no”, store that data away, too.

Draw a schematic showing which icehouse services each facility around the lake. If you fail at one place, you’ll know how many options remain.

Jot down the address and telephone numbers of each icehouse. There may be three or four icehouses. Select which ice store you are going to try first, second, etc., then call and check to see when the boss will be in. If possible, make an appointment. Do not try to “sell” the ice bag project over the phone. It is too easy for the boss to say “no.” You need a face-to-face meeting.

Take some ice bags with water safety messages already printed on them as examples. Have the locations around the lake where the ice company delivers the bags. Now you are “armed” and ready.

Try and get the ice bag boss alone. Usually they are extremely busy and you will be taking time away from their work. Be cheerful, but get to the point of your visit quickly and professionally. You want this person to either take off the message on the ice bags, or add your message to one or both sides. By doing this, you want to save lives on the lake. That’s your reason for being there ... saving lives! Again, it will be good for business to show the customers the ice company is concerned about the public.

Your suggestion is going to cost the icehouse money. Many will have a generic logo on one side of the bag and will be happy to change it. Also, many companies use only one side of the bags ... it saves money. That’s great. Try to get your message on the other side.

You are going to show the boss how he or she will not spend nearly the amount to get the water safety message on the bags they may think. There will be NO charge to use the existing ice bag art and NO charge to use the ice bag plates. They are already owned by the Corps’ Nashville District. Nashville has extra ice bag samples with the water safety messages and will be more than happy to mail you two different examples. Yes, there will be a printing charge. Probably the same charge the boss is paying for printing now.

Usually the ice companies order thousands of bags once or twice a year. About 150,000 to 200,000 bags is a normal order for a fairly small operation.

If the icehouse boss says “yes”, you need to find when the next order will be made and from which ice bag producer.

Failure strikes. You went to every icehouse and they said “no.” Now what should you do?

Check back with your marinas, docks and stores. Convince them to buy the ice bags, and let the icehouse simply fill the bags with ice and deliver them to the marina, dock or store. One lake resource manager worked with three marinas and they collectively bought 60,000 bags for the summer. Even the icehouse boss was happy because he did not have to pay the shipping bill to his store.

There is another ice bag “wrinkle” you may want to try. It’s the small space on the bottom of the bag called the gusset. Normally, the gusset space is 2-1(2 x 9 inches. It fits inside a 3 x 10 inch border. Gusset space is a great, unusual place to put your message. Why? Because, when the ice bags are filled and ready, the first message the buyer sees is on the bottom of the bag ... stating him or her in the face. Since it’s in an unusual place you have a better chance of the boater taking a second look to see what type of information is on the “bottom” of the bag ... on the water.

Okay, your ice bags are scheduled to arrive at one of your lake outlets soon. It’s time to switch into a publicizing mode. Your news reporter might write about the new bags coming off the ice truck, or being placed in the icebox. It’s soft news, again, but it’s news. Remember to take a photograph, anyway, even if the reporter will not come out and cover the first bags. Release the photo with an in-depth caption or an article about the ice bags to the radio and television stations, newspapers, outdoor and fishing magazines. The District newsletter is always looking for items such as this.

Make sure to get extra ice bags with the water safety message on them to help others, around this great nation.

Are you asking yourself about now, “I wonder which place around the lake will help bring this ice bag project to fruition?”

Good luck, but remember to protect your soon to be “cold ‘ice bag’ fingers!”