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Contact: Karen L. Auer, 412-395-7106

Karen.L.Auer@usace.army.mil

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District Be a Survivor – Wear Your Life Jacket!

PITTSBURGH – President George W. Bush has [proclaimed](#) May 20 through May 26, 2006, as “*National Safe Boating Week*”. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers joins the President in urging all Americans to learn more about safe boating practices, wear life jackets, take advantage of boating safety programs throughout the year, and to always engage in proper and responsible conduct while on the water.

Nationwide, in 2004, there were 4,904 boating accidents, 3,363 injuries and 676 fatalities including 484 drownings. Drowning is the Nation’s second leading cause of accidental death, yet it is possible – just by wearing a life jacket – to reduce drowning deaths. Statistics show that 90 percent of those who drown at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes may have survived if they had worn a life jacket. Here are safety tips from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help recreation seekers keep safe in water-based activities over the Memorial Day holiday weekend and throughout the summer.

For your safety, the Pittsburgh District encourages everyone to observe the rules and regulations at Corps [navigation locks and dams](#) and flood control projects including [Berlin Lake](#), [Conemaugh Lake](#), [Crooked Creek Lake](#), [East Branch Clarion River Lake](#), [Kinzua Dam/Allegheny Reservoir](#), [Loyalhanna Lake](#), [Mahoning Creek Lake](#), [Michael J. Kirwan Dam](#), [Mosquito Lake](#), [Shenango Lake](#), [Stonewall Jackson Lake](#), [Tionesta Lake](#), [Tygart Lake](#), [Woodcock Creek Lake](#) and [Youghiogheny River Lake](#).

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 and increases accident risk. So remember, if fun is planned in, on or near the water, don't drink alcohol.

Boaters!

- ❖ Know your boat and know the rules of the road. Take a safe boating course. Visit www.cgaux.org and www.usps.org for information on boating classes and water safety training.
- ❖ View the U.S. Coast Guard federal regulations governing boating at www.uscgboating.org and know your state laws.
- ❖ Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Visit www.cgaux.org.
- ❖ Carry a set of navigational charts on board.
- ❖ Don't overload the boat (consider boat size, the number passengers and extra equipment before loading).

The four major causes of drownings are:

- ✓ Not wearing a life jacket;
- ✓ Abuse of alcohol;
- ✓ Lack of sufficient swimming skills;
- ✓ Hypothermia

*Wear your
life jacket!*



- ❖ Follow manufacturer's suggested procedures before starting the engine.
- ❖ Wear a life jacket (Personal Flotation Device, PFD) – don't just carry one on board. Make sure it is U.S. Coast Guard approved and appropriately sized.
- ❖ Check the weather forecast.
- ❖ File a float plan with family or friends who are not on the vessel.

U.S. Coast Guard approved Personal Flotation Devices must be carried on board all boats operating on Corps of Engineers project waters. They must be worn by all people on board all boats in accordance with all federal and state regulations.

- **All people onboard:**
 - All boats less than 16 feet in length**
 - All canoes**
- **All children on all boats:**
 - Under thirteen (13) in Pennsylvania and Maryland**
 - Under twelve (12) in New York, Ohio and West Virginia**
- **All non-swimmers**

A Life Jacket Loaner Program for children is available at Tionesta Lake and Tygart Dam. Loaner life jackets are available to any child should you forget to bring one. For details on the Life Jacket Loaner program, contact Tionesta Lake at 814-755-3512 or Tygart Dam at 304-265-3974.

It's too hot! It doesn't look cool!! I know how to swim!!! Nothing is going to help me!!!! These are just some of many reasons people give for not wearing their life jackets. But with nearly 500 people drowning each year from recreational boating accidents, it is imperative to wear your life jacket at all time while on the water. Life jackets are no longer the orange, hot and bulky vests that are commonly associated with water safety gear. New innovations and developments in life jackets have produced smaller, sleeker and much more comfortable versions, leaving no reason not to **WEAR IT!**

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

- ❖ Watch your children at all times when around the water.
- ❖ Never dive into lakes and rivers...the results can be tragic.
- ❖ 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.



Freddie the Fish, the water safety mascot for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Pittsburgh District, delivers his water safety message in a coloring book available at www.lrp.usace.army.mil/kids/kids.htm. For more tips on how to be water safe, visit the Corps' water safety web site at <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil>.