

News Release from the Army Corps of Engineers (UNCLASSIFIED)

Written by Allen Marshall
Friday, 22 July 2011 22:33

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Rock Island, Ill. -- (July 20, 2011) The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Rock Island District is continuing to concentrate on water safety outreach at its lake and river projects after a deadly start to the recreation season at USACE parks nationwide.

As of May 31, 57 people have died on Corps-owned property nationwide this year, compared to 39 at this time last year - a more than 32 percent increase. Most of these fatalities were from drowning. USACE officials report that more than 90 percent of drowning victims at USACE parks were not wearing a life jacket.

"Public safety is our number one priority," said Maj. Gen. Merdith W.B. Temple, acting commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "The increase in deaths at USACE parks this year is of great concern to us. We want to do everything we can to make people aware of potential risks when they visit one of our recreation areas, and how to make good decisions that will improve safety for themselves, families and friends."

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District Recreation Projects include: Saylorville Lake near Des Moines, Iowa; Lake Red Rock, Pella, Iowa; Coralville Lake, Iowa City, Iowa; the Mississippi River Project from Potosi, Wis., to Saverton, Mo.; and the Illinois Waterway from T.J. O'Brien Lock and Dam to La Grange Lock and Dam.

The Corps wants to remind its visitors to put safety first while recreating on its lands and waters. Swim only in designated areas, learn to swim, use the buddy system, and do not exceed your abilities. Over half of the Rock Island District water related fatalities over the last 18 years have been swimming related. If you are using your boat as a swim platform and jumping into the water to cool off do not forget to wear a life jacket. Limit your alcohol use and remember operating under the influence in a boat in Iowa and Illinois is .08, just as it is in your automobile on the road.

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"Wearing a suitable life jacket is the single most important measure boaters and swimmers can take to decrease their risk of a water-related fatality. Just like wearing your seat belt in your car decreases your risk of serious injury or death," said Mike Cox, assistant operations manager, Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

USACE officials encourage visitors to check local water and weather conditions and pay attention to recreation warnings, such as river closures from local emergency services offices prior to entering the water. Know your water and weather conditions before you go and let family and friends know where you are going and when you expect to return from your outing. You can find lake and river level information at www.Rivergages.com . Officials stress the single most important item a person can do on the water to reduce risk is to wear a life jacket. USACE will continue its efforts to promote boating and water safety and with the public's support we will work to reduce the risk and save lives.

USACE is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, hosting more than 370 million visits per year at 422 recreation parks in 43 states and we want our visitors to return to enjoy our sites again.

For the USACE recreation area near you visit www.CorpsLakes.us .

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