



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Fort Worth District

News Release

Release No. CESWF-PA-05-028 Contact: Judy Marsicano

For Release: Immediate 28 June 05 Phone: (817) 886-1517

Corps of Engineers encourages safe recreation practices during the holiday weekend

FORT WORTH, Texas – The Fourth of July is one of the busiest holiday weekends at recreation areas at America's rivers and lakes. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is encouraging recreation seekers to practice safety while enjoying the benefits of outdoor recreation. Here are some safety tips:

Boaters! Before Getting Underway:

Know your boat and know the rules of the road. Take a safe boating course. You can even take it online at <http://www.boat-ed.com/tx>.

Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Visit www.cgaux.org for information on free Vessel Safety Checks.

Consider the size of your boat, the number of passengers and the amount of extra equipment that will be on board. *Don't overload the boat!*

Follow manufacturer's suggested procedures *before* starting up the engine.

Wear your life jacket – don't just carry one on board.

Leave your alcohol behind. Increase your safety, not your risks!

Check the weather forecast.

File a float plan with a member of your family or friend.

Know the Coast Guard Federal Regulations governing boating and know Texas laws as well.

Swimmers!

Since most people drown within 10 to 30 feet of safety, it is important that you and your family *learn to swim*. Each year, approximately 6,000 people drown in the United States. Drowning is the *second* leading cause of accidental deaths for persons 15-44 years of age. What is really surprising is that two-thirds of the people who drown never intended to be in the water!

Please remember:

Wear a life jacket at all times when in or near the water.

Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat.

Don't take chances by overestimating your swimming skills.

Swim only in designated swimming areas.

Never swim alone.

Reach or throw, but don't go in the water to help someone in trouble.

Diving!

Never dive into lakes and rivers...the results can be tragic. Every year, diving accidents result in more than 8,000 people suffering paralyzing spinal cord injuries and another 5,000 dying before they reach the hospital. All too often, hidden dangers lurk beneath the surface of the water, including rock outcrops or shallow water.

Watch Small Children!

Each year about 200 children drown and several thousand others are treated in hospitals for submersion accidents, accidents that leave children with permanent brain damage and respiratory health problems. Remember, it only takes a few seconds for a small child to wander away and as little as 8 seconds for a child to drown. Children have a natural curiosity and attraction to water. Watch your children at all times when around the water.

Alcohol- The Fun Killer!

It's a fact, alcohol and water are not compatible. Unfortunately, many people ignore this and each year about 3,000 of them are wrong...dead wrong! More than half of all drowning fatalities involve alcohol. Just one beer will impair your balance, vision, judgment and reaction time, thus making you a potential danger to yourself and others. Research shows that four hours of boating, exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare and wind produces fatigue that makes you act as if you were legally intoxicated. If you combine alcohol consumption with this boating fatigue condition, it intensifies the effects and increases your accident risk. So remember, if you plan to have fun in, on, or near the water, don't drink alcohol.

Outdoor Recreation

The Corps is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, operating more than 2,500 recreation areas at 456 projects (mostly lakes) and leasing an additional 1,800 sites to state or local park and recreation authorities or private interests. The Corps hosts about 375

million visits each year at its lakes, beaches and other areas, and estimates that 25 million Americans (one in ten) visit a Corps project at least once a year to recreate. Additional information about the Corps recreation program is available at <http://www.usace.army.mil/recreation> .

The Corps offers this final thought: Please make your visit to any recreation area a safe and enjoyable one. And remember, water safety saves lives.

- 30 -

Check out the Fort Worth District Web Site at www.swf.usace.army.mil .