

**The main objective of this brochure is YOUR SAFETY when “locking through”!**

Navigation locks and dams on Mobile District’s four river systems – Alabama, Black Warrior/Tombigbee, Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, and Apalachicola/Chattahoochee/Flint – are operated and maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The lockmaster has full authority over the immediate management and control of the lock and lock area and for the enforcement of all laws, rules, and regulations for the use of the lock. He is authorized to give all necessary and appropriate orders and instructions to every person in the lock area, whether navigating the lock or not. No one shall cause any movement of any vessel within the lock area unless instructed to do so by the lockmaster.

Please do not get impatient on busy boating days when traffic through the locks is heavy. The lock crews are interested in locking you through safely and in your turn. Allow yourself enough time for your trip on days when traffic is heavy.

**LOCKAGE PRIORITY**

Here is how the Secretary of the Army has ordered us to pass shipping through the locks:

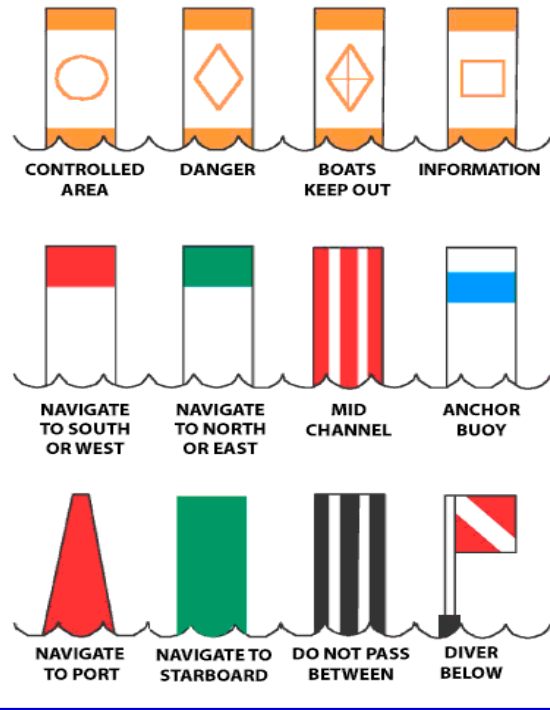
- ⚙ U.S. Military Craft
- ⚙ Commercial Passenger Vessels
- ⚙ Commercial Tows
- ⚙ Commercial Fishermen
- ⚙ Recreation/Pleasure Craft

Sometimes small craft are required to wait and lock through with other craft.

**THE LAW: CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS**

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 33 “Navigation and Navigable Waters,” Ch. 2, Part 207 “Navigation Regulations,” Section 180 is the governing authority for the waterways of the Mobile District. This regulation lays the definitions, rules, authorities, and proper actions for the use of the inland waterways. This brochure touches on the main points on passing through a lock as set forth in the above regulation. However, if you wish to have a copy of the full regulation governing lockages, you may request a copy from the Mobile District Office or download the regulation from the following website: [http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr\\_2011/julqtr/pdf/33cfr207.180.pdf](http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2011/julqtr/pdf/33cfr207.180.pdf)

**FOR YOUR SAFETY, RECOGNIZE AND OBEY ALL BUOY MARKERS**



**SIGNALS USED AT LOCKS**

**Traffic Light Signals**



**Constant Red**  
Lock is closed.  
Stand clear. Do not enter.

**Constant Green**  
Lock is open. Approach lock.  
Await lockmaster instruction.

**Air Horn Signals**



**3 Long Blasts**  
Lock is ready. Permission to enter.

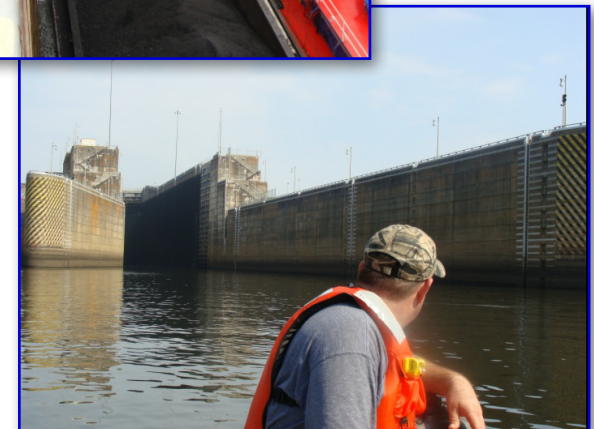
**4 Short Blasts**  
Lock is not ready. Stop and await lockmaster instruction.

**1 Long Blasts**  
Permission to leave the lock.

# LOCKING THROUGH

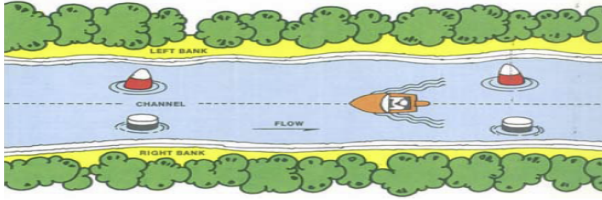


**THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW IF YOU USE NAVIGATION LOCKS**



## HOW TO LOCK THROUGH

1. Stay between red and green buoys. They mark the river's navigable channel.



2. Personal watercraft of the "sit down" variety are allowed to lock through but must enter and depart according to the lock operator's instructions. The craft must remain stable. The operator must wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) at all times and must remain seated when the craft is not in motion. The "stand up" variety of personal watercraft must be tied-off to an approved vessel during approach, lockage, and departure, with the operator remaining on-board the approved vessel until clear of the lock walls.

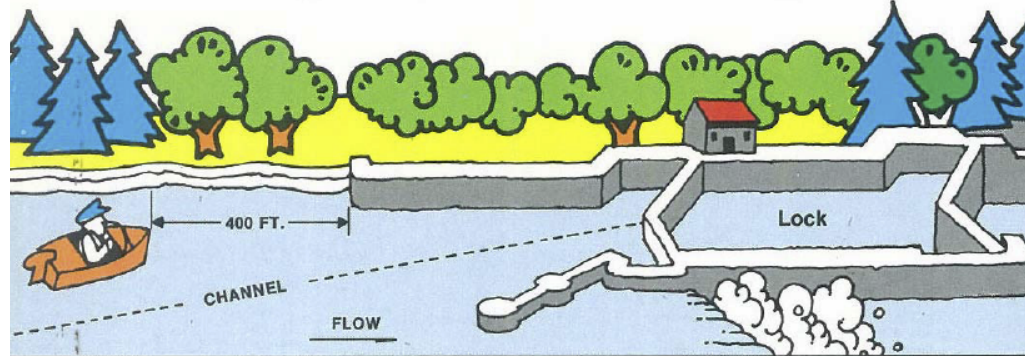
3. On approaching the lock, boats desiring lockage shall give the following signal at a distance of not more than one mile from the lock: three long blasts of the whistle. For smaller pleasure craft, pull ropes—which sound an alarm letting the lock operator know that you desire lockage—are provided at the upstream and downstream ends of the lock guide wall. A fixed-crest dam is difficult to see from small boats moving downriver since the crest (top of the concrete) is normally covered with flowing water. Be **DAM CONSCIOUS** and know your location on the river with regard to each dam and lock. Keep a lookout for the "**DANGER DAM**" signs and the white and orange pillar buoys which mark the dam. But be aware that the buoys are not in the river year round, and they can move off-station because of river flows. All water immediately above and below each dam is **DANGER** areas. It is recommended that boaters use navigation charts which provide valuable information on the location of the dams and other structures in the river.

4. Follow these procedures when you have arrived at a lock:
  - a. Commercial and large vessels are to radio the lock on VHF channel 16; smaller pleasure craft are to pull up to the guide wall and pull the small craft signal rope.
  - b. Wait for the green light and the whistle signal from the lock operator to enter. Large vessels and tows shall stay in the clear 400 feet out from the end of the guide wall while awaiting lockage. Smaller pleasure craft shall follow the lockmaster's instruction regarding where to wait. This procedure provides room for any large vessels to pass as they leave the lock in your direction.

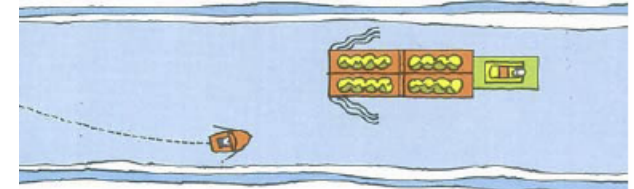
5. Traffic signal lights guide you at all navigation locks on the four distinct river systems in the Mobile District. They can look like automobile traffic lights or standard marine navigation lights.
6. The lock operator may, in addition to the traffic lights and air horn, signal you with a megaphone or the lock public address system. When given permission to enter, head directly for the lock. **DO NOT** approach the spillway sections of the dam! Currents may draw your vessel into or over the dam.
7. Carry aboard at least 75 feet of mooring line. You will need it during lockage to tie your boat safely to the lock wall. If you do not have a proper mooring line, you may not be locked. Do not tie up to ladders or recessed mooring pins along the wall. Follow the instructions of the lock operator regarding the location where you will moor.
8. Make sure there is a mooring ring or similar device on your boat to which a mooring line can be tied.



9. Small boats with only one person aboard may use one long line securely fastened at one end of the boat with the bight of the line around the mooring post on the lock wall and the free end of the line around a cleat at the other end of the boat. This procedure will allow the person at the free end of the line to pay out or take in mooring as the water level changes.
10. Larger boats should use two separate mooring lines leading from bow to stern to separate mooring posts on the lock wall. This procedure will require a person at each end of the boat to pay out or take in mooring lines as the water level changes.



11. Stand by to pay out or take in mooring line as the water level in the lock rises or falls.
12. In locks with floating mooring bits, you should place your mooring line around the mooring posts on the floating mooring bitt. It will not be necessary for the lock operator to handle your line.
13. Use fenders to save damage to your boat and to lock walls. (Old rope makes good fenders!)
14. Passengers and operators of small pleasure craft should remain seated in your boat during lockage.
15. **ALWAYS** wear a PFD when it is necessary to handle lines on deck or in rough weather.
16. Lock operators have been given the same authority over your boat in the lock as traffic policemen have over your car at intersections. For your own safety, you must obey their instructions.
17. Wait for the lock operator's signal to leave the lock. Travel at reduced speed on entering and leaving the lock.
18. Keep away from the stern of passing tows. The stern waves are apt to capsize small boats.
19. Avoid passing across the head or line of travel of tows. Tows cannot be maneuvered to change course quickly.



20. Keep away from the head of barges moored along the shore. Small boats may be carried under the barges by the undertow.

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**US Army Corps of Engineers**  
Mobile District