



U.S. ARMY CORPS
OF ENGINEERS
SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: Editors, News Directors, and Assignment Editors

Synopsis: Tips before heading out to the lake.

A float plan could save your life

Each year the hot weather brings more than just sunshine to Corps of Engineers lakes. Thousands of people take to the water to enjoy water sports such as boating.

Each year rescuers have to look for lost or stranded boaters. It's easier for the rescuers when they know where to look. Boaters who are prepared always leave a detailed float plan with a friend or neighbor before they hit the water.

The plan should include a description of the boat, including the boat's brand name, registration number, length, type and color. The plan also should contain the names and addresses of all passengers aboard and list the numbers of nearby emergency agencies. The plan should give approximate arrival and departure times and location as well as the planned route of the trip.

It's also important for a responsible skipper to cancel the plan when he or she returns from a boat trip. Don't forget to let people know that you have returned safely. Forgetting to cancel the plan could waste rescue personnel's valuable time.



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Synopsis: Facts on why life jackets are so important.

Play it safe and wear your life jacket

The numbers don't lie. Each year about 700 people die in boating-related accidents. Nine out of every 10 of those victims were not wearing a life jacket at the time of the accident.

When boaters leave for a day on the water, they seldom expect to find themselves in the water or in an accident, but it happens all too often. The only way your life jacket is going to help is if you have it on when you hit the water. Life jackets stored below deck or jammed into a storage compartment are of no use to someone who has fallen or been thrown into the water.

Seventy percent of all boating deaths occur when someone unexpectedly falls in the water. Once in the water, even an experienced swimmer can lose coordination and drown. The problem is more complicated if the person has been drinking alcoholic beverages.

The motion, vibration of the boat, engine noise, sun, wind and waves all speed up the affects of alcohol. Experts say it only takes one-third the amount of alcohol to impair a boater that it takes to impair a driver on the highway.

Boating in the state's rivers and lakes is a favorite summer pastime, but don't turn summer fun into a game of chance. It's easier to avoid trouble than to get out of it. Don't play the odds with your life or the life of your loved ones. Play it safe and wear your life jacket.



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To: Editors, News Directors, and Assignment Editors

Synopsis: Safety precautions for jet skiers.

Personal watercraft: serious fun

Personal Watercraft are the fastest growing segment of the recreational boating market, with annual nation-wide sale reaching more than 200,000 units. With this growth in popularity has come an increase in the number of accidents directly related to the unsafe and reckless operation of these easily maneuverable small watercraft with water-jet drives.

The cause of most accidents is that most operators of PWC are first-time boaters who are not fully aware of the dangers of unsafe operation or do not know the rules of the road.

It is the responsibility of all PWC operators to know the rules, regulations and safety procedures before they step on board. The following are several important precautionary steps to take when operating a PWC.

- ?? Make sure you are aware of your surroundings. Keep a watchful eye on other boaters and look before making any sudden changes in direction.
- ?? Avoid jumping in the wake of larger vessels. You can easily collide with a boat that is travelling in the opposite direction.
- ?? Obey all posted speed limits.
- ?? Keep a safe distance away from other boats, piers, bridges and swimmers.
- ?? When operating your PWC, be aware of the environmental impact your craft may have in certain areas.
- ?? Use common sense and courtesy to make your ride enjoyable for everyone.

The Army Corps of Engineers also wants you to remember that with a PWC, when there is no power, there is no steerage. A PWC is water-jet driven, and without the thrust of water through the steerable nozzle, it cannot be steered.

When approaching another vessel or object, it is important to know this vessel-specific characteristic to avoid collision. Approximately 80 percent of PWC accidents involve a collision with another vessel.



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Synopsis: Alcohol and boating should not be mixed

Booze and boating just don't mix

Boaters need to remember that booze and boating do not mix. Alcohol impairs your ability to operate a vessel safely in the same way that it impairs your ability to drive a car safely. However, there are other factors that add to the intensity of your impairment when on the water, including the motion of the boat and dehydration.

Balance is one of the first things you lose when you consume alcohol, and when you combine this with the rocking of a boat, the chance of falling overboard increases.

The sun causes you to perspire, which removes the water from your body but leaves the alcohol. This can cause impairment to happen more quickly. In a study of boating fatalities in four states, 51 percent of the people who died had a blood alcohol content of .04 or more. A blood alcohol content of .10 or more was found in 30 percent of the fatalities.

There are several myths about alcohol that boaters should know:

- ? Beer is not less intoxicating than any other alcoholic beverage.
- ? Only time will sober a person, not black coffee or a cold shower.
- ? It is not easy to tell if someone is impaired. Many experienced drinkers can hide their impairment.
- ? You are not the best person to judge if you are fit to drive. Your judgement is one of the first things you lose when you drink.

Outdoor recreation in, on or around the water is one of America's favorite pastimes. The Army Corps of Engineers wants you to remember that it's much easier to avoid problems than to get out of trouble once it occurs.