



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Walla Walla District

News Release

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Use extra caution and enjoy a safe Labor Day weekend on the water

WALLA WALLA, Wash. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reminds everyone to practice water safety while enjoying outdoor recreation during this last holiday of the summer.

Labor Day weekend is a busy time at recreation sites near area lakes and rivers. Water recreation enthusiasts should always use extra caution when near dams. These facilities provide navigation, power generation, irrigation and flood damage reduction benefits that can cause river flow conditions to fluctuate when operations are adjusted to meet regional needs. Be aware of strong currents below the dams, and respect the buoy-marked safety areas. To help ensure a safe recreation experience, the Corps' water safety team provides the following tips:

Boating Safety

* **KNOW THE BOATING RULES.** Educated boaters are less likely to be involved in accidents. Know what the state and local rules are where you go boating.

* **BOAT SAFE.** Make sure your boat has all the required safety equipment, including personal floatation devices, fire extinguishers, visual distress signals, sound-producing devices, first-aid kit, and a flashlight.

* **WEAR YOUR LIFEJACKET.** Each boat must have a life jacket in good shape and readily accessible for each person on board. Life jackets save lives, but they only work if they are worn.

* **USE CAUTION AND OBEY SIGNS.** Always obey the "5-mph, slow-no-wake" buoys or signs. Wakes can cause bank erosion and damage docks and other property. Remember to slow down within 200 feet of a dock, launch ramp, marina, moorage, floating home, pier or swim float. Boaters also need to operate at slow-no-wake speeds within 200 feet of a shoreline on a lake, bay or reservoir, and be especially cautious around swimmers, surfers, anglers and diving flags.

* **NEVER LAUNCH A DIRTY BOAT.** Prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species by inspecting your boat and trailer, draining your motor, wet well and bilge and emptying your bait bucket on land before leaving the area, thoroughly washing your boat and trailer with high-pressure, hot water if available and allowing your boat and trailer to air dry as long as possible. For additional information, check with your state's boat safety authority or department of ecology.

* **BE PREPARED.** File a float plan with someone who is not going with you to document where you are going and how long you will be gone. Check the weather forecast before you go. Perform a vessel systems checklist to ensure all parts of the vessel are in proper working order. View Coast Guard boating safety resources at <http://www.uscgboating.org/>.

* **BOAT SOBER.** The U.S. Coast Guard reports that alcohol is a major factor in a third of all recreational boating fatalities nationwide. Leave alcohol behind. Boat safe; boat sober.

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Anchoring in Navigable Waters

* Swift currents, high flows and cold water present unique boating and anchoring conditions on many rivers. To anchor safely, use anchor lines that are five to seven times the depth of the water. River depth may exceed 100 feet in some places, requiring long anchor lines.

* Be sure to use a float for the anchor line to serve as a buffer and to reduce the risk of getting the anchor line caught in the propeller. Lower, don't throw the anchor to avoid line tangles. Anchor only off the bow; anchoring off the stern or side can capsize your boat.

Swimming Safety

* **LEARN TO SWIM.** Make sure you and all your family members know how to swim. Most people drown within 10 to 30 feet of safety.

* **NEVER SWIM ALONE.** Always swim with a buddy, and if possible, only swim in a designated swim area.

* **WEAR A LIFE JACKET.** Never rely on inflatable toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat.

* **REACH OR THROW, BUT DON'T GO.** To help someone in trouble, reach something out to the person or throw an object that floats, but don't go in the water.

* **LOOK BEFORE YOUR LEAP.** Never dive head-first into lakes and rivers. All too often, rock outcrops or shallow water lead to tragic results.

* **ALCOHOL AND WATER DON'T MIX.** More than half of all drowning fatalities involve alcohol. When recreating on the water, play it safe and leave the alcohol behind.

* **WATCH CHILDREN AROUND WATER.** It only takes a few seconds for a child to wander away and they could easily get into trouble if they get into the water alone.

Cold Water Survival

Many suspected drowning victims actually die from cold exposure or hypothermia. Hypothermia is a condition in which the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. Violent shivering develops, which may give way to confusion and loss of body movement. Cold water survival tips are important, even in the summertime, as water temperatures in the Pacific Northwest can stay cold throughout the year.

* If you fall in the water, do not discard clothing that may keep you warm, including your shoes, hat and life jacket.

* Draw your limbs into your body and keep armpits and groin areas protected from unnecessary exposure.

* Remember, hypothermia from cold water may occur in any season.

The Corps is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor, water-based recreation. Nationwide, the Corps operates more than 2,500 recreation areas at 456 projects (mostly reservoirs) and leases an additional 1,800 sites to state or regional parks and recreation authorities or private interests. In fact, about 10 percent of the United States population visits a Corps park each year for hiking, fishing, camping, swimming, boating, hunting and other recreational opportunities.

For additional water safety tips and information, visit the Corps' National Water Safety Program Web site at <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil>. For more information about Corps recreational opportunities, visit our Web site at www.nww.usace.army.mil/corpsoutdoors/. Make your visit to any recreation area a safe and enjoyable one. And remember, water safety saves lives!

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