



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

News Release

News Release 08-56

Contact: Public Affairs Office

Date: July 3, 2008

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Corps stresses safety on Independence Day

WALLA WALLA, Wash. – As the nation's largest federal provider of water-based recreation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stresses water safety and urges extra caution while in or around water during the upcoming Independence Day holiday.

Many people enjoy water-based recreation as part of their Fourth of July celebration. Outdoors enthusiasts can enjoy scenic river views while taking advantage of picnicking, camping, fishing, boating and swimming opportunities. Unfortunately, some celebrations end tragically due to accidents in, on and around the water.

"Lakes and rivers are full and cold this year," said Scott Ross, Walla Walla District's Operations Division chief. "Outdoor recreation can make the Fourth of July weekend even more fun. Make sure it stays fun by keeping safety in mind if you decide to go boating or swimming. Safety is a primary concern for the Corps, and it's important to us that all visitors use caution while playing in, on or near the water."

The Corps urges the public to practice the following water safety tips to ensure a safer recreation experience over the holiday and throughout the year.

Leave fireworks at home – using pyrotechnics poses a high risk of starting fires in parks and habitat areas, and are not allowed on Corps lands in the Walla Walla District. Recreation officials encourage visitors to attend local fireworks displays in communities near the parks.

Campfires and barbecues are only allowed in designated areas.

Wear your life jacket: Each year about 6,000 people drown in the United States. This is the second leading cause of accidental deaths for persons 15 to 44 years of age. The majority of these tragedies could have been prevented by simply wearing a life jacket. Please do your friends and loved ones a favor -- wear your lifejacket.

Watch for floating hazards in the water. Because of high spring flows, an unusually large amount of floating wood – ranging in size from small twigs to telephone pole-sized logs – has swept into the river from high-flowing streams and tributaries. The debris can pose a danger to boaters, swimmers and others out enjoying the water.

Learn to swim and don't overestimate your skill: Once you know how to swim, ensure that you always swim with a buddy. Don't rely on inner tubes or water toys to keep you afloat. Know your limits. Each year many people drown by overestimating their swimming skills and swimming beyond their limits.

Beware of cold water temperatures: Hypothermia occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. This can happen in any season, especially in the Pacific Northwest, where water temperatures remain low all year.

Don't drink and boat: About half of adolescent and adult deaths associated with water recreation involve alcohol use. This is about one in five reported boating fatalities. Just one beer can impair your balance, vision, judgment and reaction time, thus making you a potential danger to yourself and others. Don't include alcohol in your outing if you are planning to have fun in, on, or near the water.

Be sure to check the information kiosks at recreation areas for additional fire restriction and safety notices.

For more information on these and other water safety tips please visit the Corps' water safety Web site at <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil/safetytips.htm>. For information about outdoor recreation opportunities in the Walla Walla District, go to www.nww.usace.army.mil/corpsoutdoors/.

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