



News Release

US Army Corps of Engineers

Kansas City District

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Eight fatalities at Kansas City District Lakes in 2007

Corps Looks Back at Lake Safety Record

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Of all fatalities at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes, swimming and boating incidents were almost equally lethal. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, concerned about drowning fatalities this year, urges recreation seekers to follow safety tips while enjoying water-based activities to lower the risk of accidental death.

According to the National Safety Council, drowning is the nation's fifth leading cause of accidental death. Greg Miller, natural resource specialist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers offers these tips on how to prevent drowning accidents in the future:

- Non-swimmers should never wade in an area not designated for swimming. Always wear a life jacket.
- Always use the designated beach areas and stay within the boundaries.
- Know your swimming ability and don't push the limits.
- For boaters the best action to take is to wear a life jacket and don't overload your boat with people or equipment. Most who drown didn't intend to be in the water.
- While underway, be courteous, closely observe other boat traffic and proceed at reasonable speeds.
- Be aware of changing weather patterns.
- Let friends and family know where you're going, how long you'll be gone and who you're taking with you.
- Lastly, this message is clear, if you're going to be in the water – don't drink alcohol.

In an effort to improve public and water safety education, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers collects public safety accident statistics that become part of a nationwide database. This data is analyzed for trends that are helpful in preventing future accidents. These statistics show that the typical recreational visitor fatally injured at Corps lakes is:

- Male, 18-35
- swimming or boating
- on a weekend
- not wearing a life jacket

- consuming alcohol

In looking at the local statistics for the four States that comprise the Kansas City District, 75 percent of the fatalities were related to swimming. Miller said, “Many swimming fatalities occur when people overestimate their swimming ability. They are often trying to swim across a cove or they don’t have adequate swimming experience to know their limits. Others are non-swimmers who are wading from shore to cool off. They usually get into trouble because the shoreline has drop-offs and other hidden hazards”.

Nationwide, swimming and boating fatalities constitute the two largest categories at Corps lakes. Approximately half of the deaths were swimming-related and half were boating-related. Falling overboard or the vessel capsizing is the number one cause of boating-related fatalities. Most swimming-related drownings occur outside designated beach areas.

There is one simple way to keep from becoming a Corps lake statistic – never give safety a day off.

For the past 100 years, the Kansas City District has been providing flood damage reduction and related support to the heartland. For more information, call the Kansas City District Public Affairs Office at (816) 389-3486. www.nwk.usace.army.mil

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