



United States Army Corps of Engineers
Wilmington District
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News Release

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Corps steps up efforts to ensure lakes have safe Memorial Day

WILMINGTON, North Carolina, May 21—"Visiting our lakes is a joyful family experience for literally millions of people each year," said COL Jim DeLony, Commander of the Wilmington District, US Army Corps of Engineers. "Sadly, for a few, visits end in the tragedy of drowning. That's why we are placing extra emphasis on safety now, when people are visiting our recreation areas in greater numbers."

Corps flood control projects within the Wilmington District have already seen two drownings this summer, including the heartbreaking death of a grandfather who drowned trying to save his grandson. The two had been fishing at Jordan Lake, and unused life jackets were found in their boat.

"We cannot be physically present every second with every member of the public," DeLony said, "but a life jacket can help to protect you every minute you're near water – **if you wear it!** The truth is, many people who drown never intended to go into the water. They just fall in, and can't get out safely. That's what happened to the nine year old boy who lost his granddad at one of our lakes. If both had been wearing a life jackets, he would still have fallen in, but the outcome could have been better."

"Our Operations Managers at the Projects live safety day and night. They each have thoughts they'd like the recreating public to be aware of as we move into the holiday weekend," DeLony said.

"**Watch your babies,**" said Joe Tanner, Operations Manager at John H. Kerr Lake. "A moment with your back turned can turn into a lifetime's pain. We all know those moments are a normal, natural part of every busy parent's life. So safeguard your children with a Life Jacket whenever they are NEAR water."

"**Water and alcohol don't mix!**" said Steve Brown, Operations Manager for Falls and Jordan Lakes. "Many adults and young people who drown have had a beer or two. It's enough to make a misstep or an error in judgement fatal, or to turn a confusing moment into desperation. We encourage folks to keep our recreation areas at Falls and Jordan alcohol-free. We hope everyone will stay sober and be safe!"

"**Monitor water and weather conditions carefully,**" said Carl Smith, Operations Manager for Philpott Lake. "It's wise to watch weather and get off the lake and out of the water at the first sign of an electrical storm."

"**Use ALL your safety equipment,**" said Eric Jeffcoat, of W. Kerr Scott Lake. "Wearing a Life Jacket is our personal favorite lifesaving measure here at Scott. We also strongly encourage

mountain bikers and others to wear their helmets, and ask that boaters use all lights and safety equipment. Darkness is a hazard all by itself!"

Other water safety programs available from the Corps include:

Life Jacket Loaner Program: Life Jackets DO save lives! Whether you or the children in your care are fishing from a dock or in a boat, or just playing near water, you are vulnerable. "Even strong swimmers can be knocked on the head and unable to swim," DeLony said. "Our Rangers and volunteer organizations in our lake communities are doing a tremendous job making Life Jackets available at our boat ramps and swim beaches or from gate attendants for use by children and adults. Bring your own well-fitting Life Jacket, or borrow one of ours for the day!"

Safety materials for the whole family: Each Corps Lake in the Wilmington District has a professionally-staffed Visitor Assistance Center, where you can talk with a Corps representative, receive safety information for boaters and get fun-to-use teaching materials for children. The Visitor Assistance Centers also feature wildlife exhibits, historical exhibits, and information about the Corps dams and water resources management missions carried on at each lake.

Ranger presence intensified: Corps of Engineer Rangers offer safety training throughout the year at area schools and other organizations. During the summer recreation season, and especially on high-use holiday weekends, extra Rangers are on site to offer assistance, ensure boating safety, and provide security and information. Rangers have rescue devices in their vehicles, and are available to help you check out your boat to ensure its safety on the water. The Coast Guard Auxiliary also helps with courtesy marine inspections for the boating public.

For more information, call the following:

W. Kerr Scott Lake: 336-921-3750

B. Everett Jordan Lake: 919-542-4507, ext. 29

Falls Lake 919-846-9332, ext. 35

John H. Kerr Lake 804-738-6143

Philpott Lake 540-629-4512, ext 224