

Are You Next?

**Expect the Unexpected
Wear Your Life Jacket**



This is what you need to know to... Avoid Being Next!

Wearing a Life Jacket Can Save Your Life

To ensure that you survive any unexpected slips or falls overboard wear your life jacket, because it buys you time to be rescued. It only takes an adult an average of 60 seconds to drown and on average it takes 10 minutes for a strong swimmer to put on a life jacket after entering the water. If you will not wear it for yourself then wear it for those who love you. Great information on life jackets can be found at www.pfdma.org/.

Never Exceed Your Swimming Abilities or Swim Alone

Regardless of how well you swim you could have to fight for your life due to unexpected conditions such as waves, current, or exhaustion. A fellow swimmer can help you out when you encounter the unexpected. Remember your swimming abilities are likely to decrease with age so don't overdo it.

Alcohol and Water are a Deadly Combination

When underwater and under the influence of alcohol or drugs you can suffer from an inner ear condition (caloric labyrinthitis) that causes you to become disoriented and not know which way is up. Also, boaters can develop "boater's hypnosis" a condition in response to sun, wind, noise, vibration and motion which causes fatigue and slows your reaction time. Combining that condition with alcohol or drugs greatly reduces your coordination, judgment and reaction time, which could lead to deadly consequences. www.boatus.com/seaworthy/magazine/2011/july/alcohol.asp

Your Involuntary Gasp Reflex Can Kill You

A sudden unexpected fall into cold water causes an involuntary gasp (or torso) reflex. It takes less than ½ cup of water in your lungs to drown. Your gasp reflex is delayed when you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, which can lead to a last breath of water, instead of air. Falls contribute to 19% of all water-related fatalities on Corps-managed waters.

www.oregon.gov/OSMB/safety/coldwaterimmersion.shtml



Proper Rescue of a Person Overboard

Many drowning victims are within 10 feet of safety, having unintentionally entered the water. You should never go near anybody struggling to stay afloat because you could drown too! To help rescue someone extend a pole, stick, line, or clothing to reach them or throw something floatable to them. The "Reach, Throw, Row, Go for Help" rescue method is used to avoid multiple drownings.

www.army.mil/article/51402/reach-throw-row-dont-go

Drowning is a Silent Killer

An estimated 60% of all drownings are witnessed, because people are unable to identify the four signs of a drowning victim. Signs are head back (bobs up and down above/below the surface), mouth open, **no sound** and arms outstretched moving simultaneously in an above-the-water, up and down stroke that appears as if they are slapping or playing in the water.

<http://mariovittone.com/2010/05/154/>

Be Aware of Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

CO is a colorless, odorless gas that can harm and even kill you while you are inside or swimming outside of a boat. CO is lighter than water so it can sit on the water's surface. Prevent the unexpected by learning more about where CO may accumulate and CO poisoning symptoms.

Take a Boating Course

Learn valuable tips that can help save your life in unexpected situations by taking a NASBLA (National Association of Boating Law Administrators) approved boating safety course. Many insurance companies provide a discount to boating safety course graduates. In addition, many states require a boating class for operators under a certain age. These are offered by the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadron, state agencies, and on-line at www.boatus.org/onlinecourse/default.asp or www.americasboatingcourse.com.

Learn to Swim Well and Practice Floating

Learning to swim well is one of your best defenses against drowning, besides wearing a life jacket. Also, teaching those you love simple survival floating skills can help, because hopefully when your swimming ability is reduced from exhaustion, remembering how to relax and float could save your life. The USA Swimming Foundation works with local partners to offer free swimming lessons. Find a location near you at <http://swimfoundation.org/Page.aspx?pid=347>.

Watch Your Children

You may not expect your child to reach overboard or turn the boat key to see what might happen so be alert. It takes an average of 20 seconds for a child to drown so always make them wear a life jacket and keep your eyes on them constantly around water.

Never Dive in Lakes & Rivers (Open Waters)

Open water situations where water depth is unknown and conditions are constantly changing with floating or underwater debris can be very dangerous. You never know what might lie unseen below open waters so diving should only be done in the deep end of a swimming pool.

Don't Depend on Floating or Air-filled Toys

There is no substitute for a life jacket, especially if you are a weak or non-swimmer. Inflatable toys like water wings are not dependable to keep children afloat. Inflatable rafts or inner tubes can easily float into deep waters and might slip away from you or your child unexpectedly. The consequences could be fatal.

Cold-Water Immersion-HELP Response Can Save You

Cold-water immersion is the cause of many boating-related fatalities. The danger increases as water temperature decreases below normal body temperature (98.6 degrees F). Cold-water immersion follows four stages, starting with cold shock, followed by swimming failure, then hypothermia and finally post-rescue collapse. Most cold-water drowning fatalities are attributed to the first two stages, not hypothermia. All boaters should wear a life jacket and dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature. If self-rescue is not possible, actions to minimize heat loss should be initiated by remaining as still as possible in the Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP), where your knees are drawn to your chest with your arms grasping them together, or simply huddling with your arms around other survivors in a circle. Additional layers of clothing can help you stay afloat by trapping air. Wet clothes will not weigh you down in the water as many people perceive, because water does not weigh more than water. A report on cold-water immersion can be found at

www.bordeninstitute.army.mil/published_volumes/harshEnv1/Ch17-ColdWaterImmersion.pdf



Boat with Consideration for Others

You are responsible for any damage that your vessel or your wake causes. Be cautious and aware of your surroundings at all times. Obey all signs and posted restrictions. Typically, irresponsible actions of boat operators lead to accidents, so boat responsibly. www.uscgboating.org

Inspect Your Equipment

Before every trip you should perform a safety check of your vessel. Make sure you have all the required equipment on board such as life jackets, throwable PFD, certificate of number (state registration), fire extinguisher, visual distress signals, sound producing devices, and whatever additional items Federal and your state's laws require. Check your engine, ventilation, backfire flame arrestor, electrical systems and trailer before you go. Take advantage of courtesy vessel safety checks that are offered by the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and the US Army Corps of Engineers. See Federal Boating Requirements at <http://nyss.com/federal>.

Steer Clear of Commercial Vessels

Commercial vessels have to stay within the navigation channel on rivers. An average tow boat pushing barges can take $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to come to a stop. If you can't see the pilot, he or she can't see you, because a commercial pilot's blind spot can extend for several hundred feet to the front and sides of the vessel. To learn more about how to properly lock through visit

www.youtube.com/user/TeamSaintLouis?feature=mhum#p/a/u/0/YdbuzJiehm8

Watch for Dangerous Waves or Signs of Rip Currents

Rip currents are powerful flows of water that pull you away from the shore, even if you are a strong swimmer. These can occur in any body of water with breaking waves, including the Great Lakes. Swimming or even wading can turn into a tragedy if you don't know how to identify and respond to rip currents. These are identified by water that is discolored, unusually choppy, foamy, or filled with debris. If you are caught in a rip current it is important to stay calm and not panic. These are usually narrow currents and swimming parallel to the shore should get you out of them. Once out of the current, swim toward the shore. www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov/overview.shtml

Prepare for Sudden Weather Changes

It is best to check the weather conditions and file a float plan (See sample at www.boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/boating/float1.htm) with a responsible person before you go boating. Take a weather radio with you so you can check weather conditions while boating. If you are caught in an unexpected storm make sure everyone still has on their life jackets and have them sit on the bottom of the boat close to the centerline. Reduce speed and head the bow of your boat into the waves at a 45-degree angle. Personal watercraft should head directly into the waves.

Wade with Caution

Watch for unexpected drop-offs and currents while wading in open water situations. The safest places to wade at US Army Corps of Engineers' lakes are those designated as swimming areas because they are inspected for these types of dangers.

Obey All Signs and Buoys

Many times accidents, injuries and fatalities could have been prevented if the person just followed the posted signs or buoys. Staying within the buoys marking designated swim beaches is the safest places to swim, especially where rescue equipment or life guards are located. Eighty percent of those who drown while swimming at US Army Corps of Engineers managed waters are outside of a designated swim beach.

Don't Rock Your Boat

Standing up in your boat can increase the risk of an unexpected fall overboard while your boat is underway, adrift or at anchor. Many falls overboard result in death, so to increase your chance of survival wear your life jacket!



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
www.CorpsLakes.us/AreYouNext