



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Army Corps of Engineers concerned with rise in deaths at Corps parks

SAVANNAH, Ga. – The [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers \(USACE\) Savannah District](#) continues to concentrate on water safety outreach at its three reservoir projects on the upper Savannah River after a deadly start to the recreation season at USACE parks nationwide.

As of May 31, 57 people have died on Corps-owned property across the nation this year, compared to 39 at that time last year – a more than 32 percent increase. Most of these fatalities were from drowning. USACE officials report that more than 90 percent of drowning victims at USACE parks were not wearing a life jacket.

The Savannah District has recorded nine recreation-related fatalities so far this fiscal year on the district's three reservoirs—[Hartwell](#), [Richard B. Russell](#) and [J. Strom Thurmond](#). At this time last year, the Savannah District had recorded eight fatalities.

“Public safety is our number one priority,” said [Maj. Gen. Merdith W.B. \(Bo\) Temple](#), acting commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “The increase in deaths at USACE parks this year is of great concern to us. We want to do everything we can to make people aware of potential risks when they visit one of our recreation areas, and how to make good decisions that will improve safety for themselves, families and friends.”

Park rangers from Savannah District's reservoirs engage in public outreach and water safety education programs year-round. To schedule a water safety program, contact the specific project office to speak with a park ranger. Contact numbers can be found on the Savannah District's website at <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/hydrodat.html>

Additionally, the Savannah District offers a Life Jacket Loaner program, which offers visitors a lifejacket to borrow while recreating at the lake. Contact the lake visitor's center for more information.

“It truly saddens everyone on the Corps team when a precious life is lost at one of our reservoirs and someone doesn't return home to their family,” said Peggy O'Bryan, chief of the Operations Division for the Savannah District. “We want everyone to have fun at our lakes, but safety must be the priority. The Corps strongly urges everyone to wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket while recreating in, on or near the water.”

USACE officials encourage visitors to check local water and weather conditions and pay attention to recreation warnings, such as river closures from local emergency services offices before entering the water. Officials stress the single most important thing a person can do on the water to reduce risk is to wear a life jacket. USACE will continue its efforts to promote boating and water safety—and with the public's support—we will work to save lives.

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USACE is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, hosting more than 370 million visits per year at 422 recreation parks in 43 states.

For the USACE recreation area near you visit www.CorpsLakes.us.

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Savannah District Park Ranger Tanya Grant distributes life jackets at Hartwell Lake as part of the Corps of Engineers' Life Jacket Loaner Program. Photo by J. Weaver.

ABOUT US: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' [Savannah District](#) manages [three lakes and hydroelectric dams](#) along the Savannah River. It also oversees a multi-billion dollar [military construction](#) program at 11 Army and Air Force installations in Georgia and North Carolina. Corps' projects range from barracks, hospitals and clinics to equipment shops, headquarters buildings and aircraft hangars. The Savannah District also has oversight and maintains additional civil works projects – from the Savannah and Brunswick harbors to the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.

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