



# NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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## Corps offers water safety programs at Richard B. Russell Lake

**SAVANNAH, GEORGIA** –The [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District](#) urges the public to pay close attention to safety on the lake this summer, especially in light of two recreation-related fatalities that have occurred at [Richard B. Russell Lake](#) since the Memorial Day weekend.

“We usually don’t experience drownings since we don’t have boat docks on the lake,” said Glenn Kowalski, natural resource manager. “We haven’t had any fatalities since 2009, so it’s quite unusual to have two water-related deaths occur within such a short time.”

The first fatality was the drowning of an adult male who was swimming alone at night at Richard B. Russell State Park on May 30. The second occurred June 5 when an adult male jumped from a 50-foot train trestle into the lake without a life jacket.

“The two fatalities that occurred on Memorial Day weekend and the following weekend could have been prevented with the use of a personal flotation device,” said Keith Crowe, project manager. “The Corps strongly encourages our community members to attend a water safety program this summer—for the sake of you and your family.”

Corps park rangers at Russell Lake strive to reach all audiences with water safety programs year round—especially during the summer recreation season. The Corps offers on-site and off-site water safety programs upon request. The public is encouraged to call the Russell Project at 1-800-944-7207 for additional information on water safety events.

“We have increased our water safety outreach tenfold since last year, and we are specifically targeting children at a young age to make them aware of the dangers associated with water recreation,” said Erin Parnell, park ranger. “Children retain this information a lot better when we get them involved in activities that demonstrate the importance of wearing a life jacket before getting on or near water.”

In her water safety program, Parnell teaches the slogan “**Reach, Throw, Row, Don’t Go**” as a way to remember the order of preference of rescue methods when someone is in trouble in the water.

**REACH** – If someone falls into the water, the first thing you should do is try to reach for them. If you can’t reach them with your arms, use other items like a boat paddle, a pole, a towel, or a noodle-toy.

**THROW** – If the person is too far away for you to reach, throw a flotation device to them. This can be a life ring or life jacket, but you could also use a basketball or an inflatable swim toy if a life ring is not available to you. Scan your area for items such as an empty milk jug, cooler, or ring buoys that can be thrown to someone in the water.

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**ROW** – Use the oars to bring the boat close enough to reach or throw. It's not safe to go near a swimmer with the boat motor running.

**DON'T GO** – Don't go into the water to try and save someone, because chances are that both people will drown. Without expert training and experience in lifesaving techniques, you could put yourself in danger along with the person you are trying to help. Instead call for help from park rangers, law enforcement, or others who are nearby.

For more information on water safety, contact the Richard B. Russell project office toll-free at 1-800-944-7207.

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**PHOTO CAPTION:**

Park Ranger Erin Parnell gives a water safety presentation to the public at Richard B. Russell Lake during the annual Kid's Fishing Day event in April. Photo by Tracy Robillard.



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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