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## U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stress vigilance due to low lake levels

*FORT WORTH, Texas* – Officials of the Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are hoping the remainder of the 2011 summer recreation season will be a safe one for those visiting their favorite Corps lake. As the “hot, lazy, dog days” of summer approach there are still reasons to be vigilant while on or near the water. “We want to encourage everyone to be familiar with the risks associated with operating a boat and to watch out for skiers, personal watercraft operators and others out enjoying our lakes,” said Col. Richard J. Muraski, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District. “In the event of an emergency, wearing a life jacket can be the difference between life and death.”

The Fort Worth District operates and maintains 25 lakes in Texas which draw an estimated 25 million visitors each year. “As we experience another hot Texas summer, thousands of people are coming to our lakes to cool off,” Muraski said. “We want everyone to have fun and enjoy our lakes, but we want them to be extremely careful so they can come back next year.”

For fiscal year 2011 there have been 25 deaths at Fort Worth District operated lakes. Statistics show that most drowning victims were not wearing personal flotation devices, which could have saved their lives. Many drowning victims never expected to be in the water, and most drown within 10 to 30 feet of safety. Since drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death in the United States, every member of the family should learn how to swim. Even good swimmers should never swim alone and then only in designated areas.

“We’ve found that some of the most unsafe practices at our lakes include failure to wear life jackets, alcohol use, diving from banks into unfamiliar waters, overexertion, temporary lapses in adult supervision of small children, attempting to catch a windblown boat or inflatable toy, swimming in undesignated areas and overcrowding of boats,” Muraski said.

Changing lake levels bring new hazards that did not previously exist. Drought conditions throughout the state have brought submerged hazards close to or above the water’s surface. At some lakes there are islands that were not there before and changing shore lines. The prudent boat operator must remain vigilant to all hazards. Lower lake levels also present challenges with stagnant water. An amoeba found commonly in all lakes, ponds, rivers or creek can cause primary amoebic meningoencephalitis or PAM. The amoeba thrives when water temperatures are higher. Health officials believe infections occur when water with the microorganism is forced into the nasal passages. Health officials say people should not swim, ski, dive or jump in any stagnant water. They should also use nose clips or hold their noses when jumping into any body of fresh water.

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About the Fort Worth District: The Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was established in 1950. The District is responsible for water resources development in two-thirds of Texas, and design and construction at military installations in Texas and parts of Louisiana and New Mexico. Visit the Fort Worth District Web site at: [www.swf.usace.army.mil](http://www.swf.usace.army.mil).