Duke to check piers, other lake structures

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Visitors will be knocking on doors around Lake Keowee beginning this month to take a look at piers, seawalls and other structures on the lake.

Homeowners who have delayed repairs might want to get busy before they hear from survey crews in Duke Energy's lake structure renovation and removal program.

The same license that allows permitting of structures including piers and seawalls to enhance recreational use of the lake also requires Duke to ensure that all structures remain in good repair and comply with state and local health and safety requirements, said Joe Hall, director of Duke Energy's lake services.

"Program results show about 5 percent of the piers on Duke Energy's lakes are in need of major repair," Hall said.

Duke will begin to survey, identify and correct problem structures on lakes Keowee and Jocassee this month, and should complete the task by the end of the year, said Sandra Magee, a Duke spokeswoman.

Duke employees performing the surveys will have proper Duke Energy identification, Magee said.

Duke survey crews will look for signs of obvious neglect like missing planks, inadequate flotation or clear structural failure. All structures within the lake boundary will be surveyed and abandoned boats will also be identified.

When unsafe conditions are found, owners are notified and asked to contact Duke Energy with a plan for repair or removal. If repairs aren't made, structures and abandoned boats can be removed at the owner's expense and any previous permits revoked.

While some lake property owners may be inconvenienced, the bottom line should be a safer, cleaner lake for everyone to enjoy, said Ben Turetzky, executive director of FOLKS, the Friends of Lake Keowee Society.

Turetzky said he hopes this will rid the lake of some old docks that are half sinking in water and will begin to address a problem of unencapsulated foam that creates navigational and environmental hazards as well as being unsightly.