



# Disregarding lake rules can be deadly

Memorial Day has become one of the busiest boating days of the year in South Carolina. KEN RUINARD/INDEPENDENT MAIL

## Expert: When life jackets are worn, nobody mourns

**Jake Grove** Greenville News USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

**J**ust one fatality on Lake Hartwell and the other waterways around the Upstate is too much for anyone, but for Scott Lusk and the rest of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the 2017 lake season was a particularly rough one. ■ “You never want a fatality, but last year we had six or seven recreation-based fatalities on Lake Hartwell,” said Lusk, the natural resource specialist and park ranger with the Savannah District and Hartwell Lake Project for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. “And half of those fatalities happened in one spot and all of them came in a short period of time. Once you got through one, it seemed like another came behind it.”

It's why Lusk and the rest of the Corp try their hardest to instill the importance of water safety in people who use the lake, especially during Memorial Day weekend, which has become known as the deadliest weekend of the year for water recreation in South Carolina.

Lusk said that Memorial Day has eclipsed July 4 as the busiest lake day of the year. And even when the weather

forecast doesn't look great, like this weekend, water lovers still find their way on boats, jet skis and along the coastlines of area lakes.

“Bad weather can come up quick, especially with a tropical-type weather forecast like we may see this weekend,” Lusk said. “You want to be aware of your surroundings, look for lightning,

## Boating safety tips

- Life jackets can save a life
- Never exceed swimming abilities
- Alcohol, water a deadly combination
- Involuntary gasp reflex can kill
- Proper rescue of a person overboard
- Drowning is a silent killer
- Be aware of Carbon Monoxide
- Take a boating course
- Learn to swim well, practice floating
- Watch your children
- Never dive in open waters
- Don't depend on floating toys
- Boat with consideration for others
- Inspect your equipment
- Steer clear of commercial vessels
- Watch for dangerous waves
- Prepare for sudden weather changes
- Wade with caution
- Obey all signs and buoys
- Don't rock your boat

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wind and heavy rain, and always know where your life jackets are.”

Nothing is more frustrating for the Corp of Engineers than people not wearing life jackets — even though children 10 and younger are required to wear them at all times in South Carolina and those 12 and under are in Georgia. And even those who have the required number of life jackets on the boat often don't know where to find them.

“It can take some people five to 10 minutes to find all the life jackets they need for the number of people on a boat,” Lusk said. “And when they finally do, I always take a minute to show them that if it took them that long to do it on the boat, what happens if they are thrown from the boat in an accident.”

Alcohol is another major factor for water accidents as the weather warms up. Lusk suggests that no one drinks on the water if the weather looks bad since choppy waters can come up out of nowhere from approaching storms.

As for preventing disasters if someone is thrown overboard from the boat or is in distress while swimming, Lusk suggests the obvious life jacket route, or investing in the new inflatable life jackets that can be worn all the time and inflated if something happens.

“The great thing about those inflatable life jackets is they have great range of motion when you don't need them, but if you fall in they can be inflated immediately,” he said. “And even if you are unconscious, the inflatable kind will self-inflate within moments of it getting wet.”