

FATALITY



AFZF-GA-SAFE

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS III CORPS AND FORT HOOD
1001 761st Tank Battalion Avenue
FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5056



JUN 04 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Recreational Boating Drowning - Fatality Memo 03-15

1. A tragic boating accident over the Memorial Day weekend took the lives of a III Corps sergeant and his young son. The sergeant and his son were canoeing close to the family's property. The sergeant had consumed some beer. When they did not return to the house, the family checked on them and found only the canoe. The weather conditions that day were described as being windy. Two days later, the two bodies were found – without life jackets on.
2. Boating safety experts believe that education can prevent recreational water related injuries and fatalities. All government and private organizations having jurisdiction or interest in boating safety promulgate and unanimously recommend the following boating safety procedures:

- a. Wear life jackets while boating as the first line of defense against accidental drowning. Drowning from capsizing and falls overboard result in the majority of recreational boating deaths, with 90% not wearing life jackets. Most states have mandatory life jacket laws, though they vary and some only pertain to children under a specific age. Boaters should be familiar with applicable state boating laws (Kansas - <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/boating/boatinglaws.html>; Oklahoma - <http://www.boat-ed.com/ok/handbook/>; Texas - <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/boat/wsdigest.htm>; Colorado – http://parks.state.co.us/home/publications/Boating_statutes_2001.pdf).



- b. Avoid alcoholic beverages while boating. U.S. Coast Guard data show that in fatalities involving alcohol use, over half of the victims capsized their boat and/or fell overboard. One-third of all fatalities resulting from collisions involved alcohol. Just as in operating a POV, alcohol also effects the judgment, vision, balance, and coordination of the boat operator.



- c. Complete a boater education course. About 70% of incidents involve operator controllable factors –inattention, recklessness, inexperience and speeding.

3. Commanders must ensure that their soldiers are briefed on this tragic fatal accident and incorporate lessons learned into their summer safety programs. Caring leaders can make a difference when they convey accident prevention measures for recreational water activities.

ENSURE WIDEST DISSEMINATION AND POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS


THOMAS F. METZ
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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