



**US Army Corps
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News Release

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SPRING BOAT MAINTENANCE

Lake Shelbyville, April 7, 1998 – Spring is here! The boating season is around the corner, and the time for spring clean up and maintenance is now. Paint, brushes, and tools are out to make that water vessel look good and to keep the engine working at its best. This is all very important, but equally important is the maintenance and care given to the safety and life saving equipment. Here are some tips from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Lake Shelbyville to help you care for this equipment so it will take care of you, should the need arise.

LIFE JACKETS: A life jacket must meet the personal flotation needs of the wearer. Individuals vary in many ways, as do their activities. Life jackets must meet these individual needs. First, a life jacket must be the right size. If it is too small, it may not float the wearer correctly or it may not have sufficient flotation material to float the wearer at all. If it is too large, the wearer may fall out of it. Check the life jacket's material and straps to make sure they are in good condition. Also, check for air leaks and mildew. Life jackets should be stored in a dry, cool place with some air circulation, out of the sunlight. While on or near the water, life jackets must be kept ready to use. Effective January 1, 1998, all children under the

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age of 13 must wear their life jackets at all times while the watercraft is in motion. Properly maintained life jackets will last for many years. Remember - All life jackets must be Coast Guard approved and so marked.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS: Your fire extinguishers must meet Federal requirements. They must be marked Coast Guard or UL approved. They must be of the proper type and size for your boat, and you must have at least the number required. Check the gauge to ensure that the pressure is adequate or have it weighed at the local fire station. Do not test a fire extinguisher by releasing a small amount of the agent. This breaks the seal and may cause it to leak. Shake a dry chemical fire extinguisher well before putting it away. This keeps the dry chemical from packing down in the canister.

NAVIGATION LIGHTS: If your boat has navigation lights, check the bulbs to see that they are bright and in good condition. If the bulb is corroded, appears dim, or the glass is loose from the base, replace it. This is also a good time to make sure that you have spare bulbs for each type and size you have aboard. Check the wiring, all the way from the socket to the power source. Be sure the wires, insulation, terminals, and switches are clean, free of corrosion, and in good condition. All wiring must be well secured and away from any area where any water may collect. Any splices should be soldered and well wrapped to make sure they are solid and watertight.

Lifelines, handrails, ground tackle, and electronics should be inspected to make sure that they are in good condition.

Spring is a good time to inspect your water vessel, but should not be the only time that you inspect your vessel! Periodic inspection should be made throughout the year as well. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Lake Shelbyville hopes you have a safe and enjoyable recreation season.