

## **Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns National Water Safety Campaign**

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) National Operations Center for Water Safety in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers Natural Resources and Education Foundation (The Corps Foundation) developed the Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns National Water Safety Campaign that is targeted towards adults, primarily adult males. Over the past ten years (2008-2017) 88 percent of all USACE water-related public recreation fatalities were men and 60 percent were between the ages of 20 and 60. Also, 84 percent were not wearing life jackets and 27 percent of boating fatalities were from falls overboard. In addition to boating falls, the activity that caused the most water-related fatalities was swimming in undesignated areas.

Input from the target audience of adult males was used to develop this campaign. The input received identified how to more effectively communicate and attract the attention of adult males. Reaching this target audience with messages about the importance of wearing life jackets has been a challenge over the years. Part of the problem is that many are unaware that the new styles of life jackets are comfortable and easy to care for. Also, most do not perceive calm water as a risk and they are unaware of the reasons why even good swimmers can drown from falls overboard or how easy it is to overestimate their swimming abilities.

The Corps Foundation has received grants from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard to develop and continue enhancing this campaign. A total of two grants (2014-2015, 2016-2017) have been completed, one grant (2017-2018) is in progress, and another grant proposal (2018-2019) has been submitted.

In the first grant, the Corps Foundation and USACE partnered to conduct five focus group sessions with 39 adult males between the ages of 20 and 60 at three different locations to identify effective public service announcements (PSAs) messages for the high-risk target audience of adult men. Participants provided feedback on the types of messages that would change their behavior after viewing existing PSAs. Participants identified that the most effective types of safety messages for them were realistic, factual (statistics), positive, and somewhat humorous (without being corny), especially when they stimulate an emotional response. These adult male boaters informed us that spokespersons, actors, and law enforcement do not influence their behavior. They also said that messages from anyone that stimulates sexual thoughts were very distracting. Focus group participant feedback was instrumental in the development of all of the campaign products.

Utilizing grant funds a total of 15 video PSAs and 3 audio PSAs have been created. The video PSAs are 60, 30, and 15 seconds in length. Additional audio PSAs have been created by the USACE. All of the PSAs are available to view and download on [www.PleaseWearIt.com](http://www.PleaseWearIt.com).

A mobile game "Lake Guard" was created and it is available free through the Apple and Google Play app stores so it can be played on Apple and Android smart devices, including smartphones and tablets. Grant funds also funded the placement of Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns campaign banners and truck tailgates vinyl wraps at USACE lake and river offices nationwide. A total of 1,447 three by eight feet campaign banners were placed at 246 locations and 125 truck tailgates vinyl wraps were placed at 47 locations nationwide.

The current grant is continuing to provoke life jacket use through the development and implementation of a digital marketing plan to promote this outreach campaign. Campaign promotion is being advanced by purchasing additional materials to include banners and shirts. A new campaign mobile game is being created called LJ vs. The Lake, targeting the millennial generation. This game incorporates the catchy LJ (short for Life Jacket) Song PSA tune. In the game, LJ is an animated character that saves others with his magical banjo dispensing a variety of styles of life jackets to those participating in a variety of boating activities (i.e. fishing, hunting, tubing, human-propelled boating etc.).

In addition to USACE nationwide, many organizations have started using the campaign PSAs. They include the U.S. Army, Air National Guard, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Oregon State Marine Board, Mitchell Creek Marina and Resort in TN, Captain Bob on KRMS radio in Lake of the Ozarks in MO, YMCA-Rogue Valley Family in Medford Oregon, Lake Regional Health System in Orange Beach MO, and Parkview Health in Fort Wayne IN. Campaign materials are also available in the BoatBeat Media Toolbox, which is an online resource for the media developed by National Safe Boating Council and National Association of Boating Law Administrators.

All of the Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns campaign products including the video and audio PSAs, campaign logo, social media ads, tailgate wrap and banner art, etc. are available for you to use and can be downloaded for at [www.PleaseWearIt.com](http://www.PleaseWearIt.com).

The target audience of adult males has always been a difficult one to reach. The Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns National Water Safety Campaign has met that challenge by creating effective products that provoke adult males to wear life jackets. This campaign, if used effectively, captures the attention of the adult male audience and can change their attitudes about wearing life jackets, resulting in saving lives. The campaign materials can assist you in interacting face-to-face with adult males and encouraging behavioral and cultural change. This campaign depends on you. What you do to promote water safety is very much appreciated, so go forth and do what you do best in helping to save lives on our nation's waterways.