

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



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Alert for boaters: High water on lakes means wake restrictions

May 27, 2011 (Minneapolis) – During the Memorial Day holiday weekend, many area lakes will have minimum wake restrictions due to high water levels. The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is urging boaters to manage their wake during the busy holiday weekend on the lakes. The restrictions are in place until further notice.

Among the lakes with wake restrictions for boating:

Lake Minnetonka: Minimum wake restrictions are in place within 600 feet of the shoreline and in several bays.

Lake Independence (Independence/Maple Plain): Minimum wake restrictions are in place within 250 feet of the shoreline.

Lake Sarah (Greenfield): Minimum wake restrictions for the entire lake.

Twin Lakes (Robbinsdale): Minimum wake restrictions for the entire lake.

Crystal Lake (Robbinsdale): Minimum wake restrictions for the entire lake.

Outside of restricted areas, activities such as water skiing and tubing are allowed on Lake Minnetonka and on other lakes with shoreline-only wake restrictions. However, on Lake Minnetonka, boat operators with watercraft that create large wakes, such as larger cruisers, are being asked to voluntarily travel at minimum wake speed for the entire lake.

“The high water levels and the holiday crowds are two reasons why boaters should slow down and keep safety in mind this weekend,” said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek.

Wake restrictions are implemented to protect the shoreline and to help prevent damage to boat lifts and other structures. In minimum wake areas on Lake Minnetonka, it is unlawful for a person to operate a watercraft at a speed of more than five miles per hour or a speed that results in more than a minimum wake.

For restrictions that apply to other lakes, boat operators should learn about restrictions that are in effect, prior to boating. For more information, go to www.hennepinsheriff.org

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Boating safety:

Boaters should ensure they designate a sober boat operator, they should have valid registration, and they should have required safety equipment on board including:

- Lifejackets must be worn by children under age 10 when the boat is underway.
- Lifejackets must be readily available for all persons on board.
- A throwable device must be readily available.
- A fire extinguisher.

Water temperatures are chilly on all area lakes and rivers (approximately 50- degrees to 60-degrees) and people in the water are at risk of hypothermia. It is especially important to use lifejackets during this time of year.

Swimming safety

In addition to boating, the unofficial start of summer will mean swimming in indoor and outdoor pools. Parents are urged to create a swim safety plan for their families. In Hennepin County in recent years, most drownings and near drownings have taken place in swimming pools and hot tubs.

In 70% of cases where toddlers drowned, one or both parents were nearby when the drowning took place. Being nearby isn't enough to prevent death and injury. Parents and caregivers should use "Active Supervision" which includes the following:

- A responsible adult focuses on children when they are in the water or near the water.
- The assigned adult should not be talking on a cell phone, reading a magazine, or closing their eyes for sunbathing.
- Parents and caregivers may rotate this responsibility to have a "fresh set of eyes" on the children.
- Active Supervision is needed even when there are lifeguards on duty and even when children are wearing life jackets.

The recommendations generally apply to children under age 12 but parents should also put appropriate safety measures in place for teens, based on swimming ability.

In addition to Active Supervision, the Sheriff's Office recommends that parents and caregivers use several safety measures to reduce the risk of drowning, including:

- Teach your kids to swim – starting as early as age one, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- The American Red Cross recommends that inexperienced swimmers wear lifejackets in swimming pools. Parents must use active supervision even when children are wearing lifejackets.
- Do not rely on water wings or other devices.
- Learn CPR.
- Keep safety equipment near swimming pools such as a shepherd's hook and a telephone to call for help, if needed.
- Check drain covers and learn about drain cover safety.
- Maintain needed fencing, alarms, and barriers around swimming pools.
- Swim in areas with lifeguards on duty for added safety. However, do not rely on life guards to watch your children.
- If a child is missing, first search any area of water.

For more information about regulations on Hennepin County lakes, go to the Sheriff's Office website, www.hennepinsheriff.org. For a map of Lake Minnetonka and more information, go to the LMCD website, www.lmcd.org

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