



NEWS RELEASE



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Army Corps and Coast Guard Kick Off Barrier Safety Campaign

March 27, 2008 – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard will begin a campaign April 1st to advise boaters how to safely transit over the electric fish barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal near Romeoville, IL. A portion of the canal near the barrier system has been a Regulated Navigation Area for passage of vessels since 2005.

The Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard have expanded their safety information campaign following the findings of a draft report that indicates the effect of the barrier's electric field on a person immersed in the electrified water could result in serious injury or death. The Corps commissioned the report to determine the potential effects of the barrier's electric field should a person fall into the water.

“Public safety is our highest priority. Although the draft report indicates a wide array of possible impacts, it does show that serious injury or death is possible in worst case scenarios. Therefore, we feel that it is critically important to make sure that people know how to pass through the area safely. The safest thing is to keep people out of the water entirely,” said Col. Jack Drolet, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District, the office responsible for building and operating the electric barrier system.

The final report will not be available until later this Spring, but the Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard have decided to begin an expanded education and information campaign now in order to reach people before the start of the Chicago area boating season.

“Reaching out to commercial and recreational users we initiated a workgroup to address the hazard of a person falling in the water within the fish barrier,” said CDR Paul Mehler III, Commanding Officer of the U.S. Coast Guard, Marine Safety Unit Chicago. This partnership has resulted in a campaign involving distributing informational flyers at area locks, boat launches, bait shops, and fuel docks, and working with local and national boating groups to pass the information to as many boaters as possible. The key message is to inform boaters to use extreme caution while traveling in the Sanitary and Ship Canal between River Miles 296.1 to 296.7. This area is bounded approximately by the power plant near the Romeo Road bridge and an aerial pipeline arch.

While traveling through the area, boaters are advised to take the following precautions:

- Do not enter the water or place hands or feet in the water for any reason.
- Be sure to closely supervise children and pets or send them below deck if possible.
- Do not linger or attempt to moor in the area.

The Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard are working with representatives from commercial navigation and recreational boating groups and others to find ways to enhance safety features in the barrier area.

An electric barrier has been operating in the Sanitary and Ship Canal since 2002. The purpose of the barrier system is to stop the movement of invasive species of fish, such as the Asian carp, between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.

For additional information pertaining to the fish barrier please visit www.lrc.usace.army.mil/safety.

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For additional information pertaining to the fish barrier operation, please contact Lynne Whelan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District. For information regarding vessel safety, please contact Lt. Corey Gardner-Meeks with the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Chicago. Point of contact information is provided on the first page of this press release.