



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DNR, IDPH and Polk County Health partner to share tips for safe Fourth of July holiday weekend

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DES MOINES, Iowa – As the Fourth of July holiday weekend quickly approaches the forecast predicts very warm weather which will draw thousands of people to state parks, beaches, lakes and rivers. The DNR along with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Polk County Health Department are partnering to share some safety tips to help keep you safe this holiday weekend.

No matter what activities you partake in this weekend, the DNR, IDPH and Polk County Health Department want to remind you to abide all social distancing guidelines to help minimize the spread of Covid-19. Try to maintain six feet distance from others, cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, and wash your hands or use a hand sanitizer frequently. Stay home if you or someone in your household is sick.

BEACH & SWIMMING SAFETY:

Wherever you choose to swim this weekend or this summer, whether it's a backyard pool, a pond or lake, or a public pool, please follow these safety tips:

- Remember to keep young children at arm's reach at all times. Arm's reach supervision means your child is no more than an arm's reach at all times. Never, even for a moment, leave small children alone or in the care of another young child while swimming.
- Drowning is silent.
- Take swimming lessons ahead of time to learn to swim.
- Learn how to perform CPR.
- Avoid alcohol use while swimming.
- Alcohol is prohibited at some public beaches.
- Glass bottles are prohibited on beaches.
- Stay within the roped in area of the lake
- Swim with a buddy

- Obey posted signs and flags
- Wear a life jacket or some kind of personal flotation device if needed
- Use sunscreen and drink plenty of water as needed
- Iowa's public beaches do not have lifeguards on duty

Because the beaches are busier this summer, staff are encouraging visitors to utilize the non-peak times and days. For the busier beaches/parks, the non-peak days usually include Sundays through Thursdays, and Fridays before 5:00 pm. If you plan to go to the beaches on Saturdays, the non-peak hours are usually before noon.

Parks staff may temporarily close parking lots when they become full and limit the number of visitors at that point. The DNR recommends visitors go to another nearby park or beach that is not as heavily populated. Visitors are reminded to only park in designated parking spaces. All violators will be cited by staff.

BOATING SAFETY:

Operation Dry Water will take place July 3-5, 2020. Operation Dry Water is a nationwide campaign aimed at stopping boating under the influence (BUI), especially focused on the Fourth of July holiday weekend. Heightened enforcement will be present on Iowa's lakes and rivers in hopes to reduce the number of injuries and fatal crashes caused by boating under the influence. Last year during Iowa's Operation Dry Water efforts, 120 officers participated, issuing 554 citations/warnings, making 16 BWI arrests and stopping nearly 2,000 vessels and making contact with over 7,500 individuals. In all of 2019, there were 66 BWI arrests on Iowa waters. Boaters should also adhere to the following safety tips:

- Plan ahead and avoid peak hours and large crowds of boating.
 - Park your vehicles and trailers in designated parking spaces NOT in grass areas or they will be ticketed and towed.
 - Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol, hindering the operator's ability to make necessary decisions.
 - The same limit of .08 for operating a vehicle under the influence applies to boating.
 - Always have a designated operator that avoids consuming alcohol.
 - Wear your life jacket, it floats, you don't! Any children 12 and under must wear a lifejacket at all times on a vessel underway in Iowa.
 - Every boat or vessel must have a wearable life jacket for everyone on board; a USCG approved throw-able flotation device is also required on vessels 16' or longer.
 - Make sure there is a charged fire extinguisher on board, as well as a horn/whistle.
 - Slow down and watch for other boaters or personal watercraft, have patience.
 - Avoid dams and other hazards on waterways.
 - Obey all posted warning signs and rules.
 - Drain plugs and other water draining devices must be removed and/or remain open during transport to avoid spreading of invasive species.
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STATE PARKS/CAMPGROUNDS SAFETY:

Our state parks have never been more utilized than they have this year. This weekend will be another very busy one if you plan to visit one, use these safety tips to ensure an enjoyable time:

- Pack snacks, food, water and personal hygiene products, including hand sanitizer, to bring along for hiking and utilizing the state parks.
- Stay hydrated with plenty of fluids.
- Don't hike alone and always have some way to communicate if you get lost and need help.
- Wear proper outdoor attire for hiking.
- Plan ahead for your visit to our parks and campgrounds. If a parking lot becomes full at a park or campground, staff may temporarily close the parking lots and limit the number of visitors at that point.
- If there is no parking available, do not park in the grass areas or any other area that is not a designated parking spot. All violators will be cited.
- Utilize the parks during non-peak times, which often include mornings and evenings.
- If a park is heavily populated, find another nearby state park that is less populated.
- Don't transport firewood, buy it locally.
- Be respectful of your neighbors camping around you.
- Slow down on park roadways and obey posted speed limit signs. Families and kids are often walking or biking on the roads!
- "Carry In, Carry Out"—please pick up any trash and carry out what you carry into the park. Be respectful and care for our natural resources.
- Campers should dispose of trash in receptacles, not burn it in the campfires.
- The Maquoketa Caves remain closed.
- Check [the DNR website for all of the latest closures](#).
- If you plan to fish, be sure to have a current fishing license. You can purchase one by visiting: GoOutdoorsIowa.com, or by downloading the Go Outdoors Iowa app on your smartphone through the Google Play store or the App Store. You can also purchase your fishing license at some local retailers in your area.

PADDLING SAFETY:

Paddling is becoming one of the most popular outdoor recreational activities nowadays. Whether it be tubing, kayaking or canoeing, paddlers are enjoying the splash of the water, scenic views, and wildlife viewing from Iowa's rivers, rapids and streams. Many new paddlers are getting out on the water for the first time this summer. Stay safe each time you paddle with these simple safety tips:

- Always wear your life jacket. Kids 12 and under must wear a life jacket at all times. The vessel must have enough life jackets for all members on board.

- Let others know where you will be paddling, including what access to what access, and when you are expected to return.
 - Avoid sandbar crowds and “rafting” up together. Tubers are reminded not to go in groups larger than 10 and don’t tie tubes to one another.
 - Always know your river conditions before you go paddling. For the latest river conditions, visit [this link](#).
 - Check the Iowa DNR’s interactive paddler’s map at iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Where-to-Paddle for updates on real-time hazards like downed trees and log jams, strainers and bridge construction. Pay attention to the dam warning signs and know where dams are located before you head out on the water.
 - Find individual water trail maps, including access points, visit: iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures.
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FIREWORKS SAFETY:

COVID-19 safety precautions have caused fireworks displays to be canceled or modified this year. Whether attending a display or celebrating in your backyard, keep these four safety tips in mind.

- **Fireworks are strictly prohibited in state parks, only sparklers are allowed.**
- Remember that fireworks can cause serious burns and eye injuries. The Iowa Department of Public Health encourages families to make sure an adult supervises fireworks and keeps young children from playing with or igniting them.
- Keep fireworks pointed away from you and others when igniting them, and back up quickly after lighting. If fireworks don’t ignite or burn fully, don’t try to relight them or pick them up. Keep a bucket of water or hose on hand to respond to a fire or mishap.
- The Iowa Department of Public Health reports there were 13 inpatient hospitalizations and 121 outpatient hospitalizations related to fireworks injuries last year. Check for more safety tips from the [Consumer Product and Safety Commission](#). Check with local authorities for restrictions on shooting fireworks inside city limits.
- [Dispose of your unused fireworks](#) Safe storage and disposal protects you, your family and your waste haulers. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has [fireworks guidelines for businesses](#).

The annual fireworks shows at Lake Macbride and Lake Manawa have both been cancelled this year due to safety concerns with large crowds and the spread of Covid-19.