

Colorado River Fact Sheet

The Colorado River System is one of the most popular recreational boating systems in the United States. Although commercial travel is sparse, the lakes, reservoirs and river stretches that make up the Colorado River system attract recreational boaters in staggering numbers. This popularity unfortunately results in significant numbers of boating accidents and fatalities every year.

There are many factors for the accidents and deaths, but one thing is shared – lack of knowledge. Through partnerships, among state and local governments and businesses along the river system, we can turn these statistics around. The numbers and facts below do not tell the whole story, but with increased education and awareness, we can make a difference.

- **In 2007, 275 accidents, 176 injuries and 12 fatalities occurred on the river in AZ, CA and NV.**
- **Life jackets** are the **best** way to save lives.
 - In more than 80% of boating deaths, the victim did not wear a life jacket.
 - Kids 12 and younger in CA and AZ are required to wear life jackets.
 - Kids 13 and younger in NV are required to wear life jackets.
 - Kids have to wear them, but adults *should* too.
- **Contributing factors** for accidents on the Colorado River
 - Inattention and speed in congested space leads to accidents.
 - Crowded or blocked navigation areas reduce maneuvering space.
 - A “party atmosphere” creates an environment of distraction and danger.
- **Alcohol** adds problems
 - The effects of alcohol while boating are amplified by motion and heat.
 - Drunken boaters die each year, usually from falls overboard.
- **Carbon Monoxide** issues: Carbon Monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that accumulates around motorboats. Although carbon monoxide is always a danger in a marine environment, some activities have proven more hazardous than others. Some risky and illegal activities include:
 - Rafting up with other vessels with engines running.
 - Teak surfing or body surfing in the vessel’s wake
 - Swimming around vessels or sitting on the swim step with engines running.
- **Inexperience** is a factor on the Colorado River
 - Many boaters know little about safety or boating laws of the state.
 - Boating laws often differ from state to state, but safety is universal.
- **Quagga Mussels** in the Colorado River system:
 - On January 6, live Quagga mussels were discovered in Lake Mead and have been confirmed in other waters of the Colorado River system. Quagga mussels are small mollusks that attach themselves (and can clog) boat hulls, engine intakes, livewells, bilges, water intake valves, canals, pipes, aqueducts and dams.
 - The Quagga presence **DOES NOT** mean you have to stop using the affected bodies of water, but precautions to prevent spreading must be taken by all boaters. Before leaving any lake or river, boaters should DRAIN the water from the boat, livewell and the lower unit; CLEAN the hull and remove all plant and animal material; DRY the boat and INSPECT all exposed surfaces.
 - For precautions and more information on the Quagga mussel visit <http://www.BoatColoradoRiver.com> or www.protectyourwaters.com.