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ALEA's Marine Patrol Division Reminds Everyone to Play it Safe on the Water this Fourth of July Weekend

MONTGOMERY – Fourth of July is always a busy time on waterways as Alabamians of all ages gather for fireworks, parades and other water-related activities. This year is expected to be no different, especially since the holiday falls on a Saturday.

The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency's (ALEA) Marine Patrol Division reminds everyone planning to spend time on the water to play it safe and make the best of the extended weekend. ALEA's goal is to prevent any boating fatalities or injuries.

ALEA's Secretary Hal Taylor said, "The last thing we want to do is take the fun out of the Fourth. We ask boaters of all ages to work with us to ensure everyone makes it home safely at the end of the day, particularly following fireworks displays planned on several of the state's more popular waterways."

In 2019, the official Fourth of July holiday travel period was from 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, July 3, to midnight Sunday, July 7. This year, with July 3 being a state holiday, the holiday travel period is shorter, beginning at 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 3, and ending at midnight Sunday, July 5. Like in previous years, all available Troopers will work throughout the weekend, patrolling waterways, enforcing the law and assisting boaters in distress. In addition, they will be on the lookout for individuals boating under the influence, as their counterparts assigned to Highway Patrol will be looking for drivers under the influence.

To curb the spread of COVID-19, ALEA Troopers remind everyone to practice social distancing when they come into contact with other boats and boaters, and to adhere to the Alabama Department of Public Health's safety guidelines.

Troopers encourage everyone to familiarize themselves with the following water safety tips prior to leaving for the lake, beach or other water destination:

- The designated driver practice works just as well on the water as it does on the road. If boaters insist on having alcohol on board, make sure there is a designated driver.
- Be courteous and cautious.

- Follow boating rules. Know what to do in a head-to-head meeting and know the right-of-way rules and regulations.
- Make sure life jackets are accessible, in good condition, sized for the intended individual and U.S. Coast Guard-approved. There must be one personal flotation device (PFD) on board for each person on the boat that is sized and intended for that individual. Children younger than the age of 8 must wear PFDs.
- Keep an eye on the sky: Monitor local weather throughout the day and adjust plans accordingly.
- Give other boaters plenty of room. Don't operate too closely to private docks or the shoreline and give skiers and swimmers a wide berth.
- Never overload a vessel. Follow the capacity plate guidelines.
- Make it a habit to check the vessel's safety equipment before using the vessel -- every time.

Another key safety tip concerns boating at night, which often is the case on the Fourth of July because of fireworks displays on or near the water. When boating at night, make sure the required navigation lights are on and in good working order. Operate at slower speeds and don't venture into unfamiliar territory.

Below is a list of locations which have obtained permits for their annual celebratory fireworks shows during the Fourth of July weekend. Please check with local presenters for times and exact locations.

Permitted Fireworks Shows

- Coosa River, Wetumpka
- Point Clear
- Lake Mitchell
- Lake Martin – Parker Creek
- Cooper Riverside Park, Mobile
- Turquoise Resort, Orange Beach
- Mobile Bay, Daphne
- Lay Lake (4)
- Perdido Beach
- Fairhope Pier
- Fish River
- Fowl River
- Tombigbee River – City of Jackson
- Lake Jordan
- Lake Wedowee
- Lake Martin - Kowaliga
- Lake Martin - Blue Creek

- Orange Beach (3)
- Gulf Shores
- Neely Henry Lake
- Lake Logan Martin
- Dauphin Island
- Lake Guntersville, Goose Pond Colony
- Smith Lake, Devil's Branch

Cancelled Fireworks Shows

- Mobile River – City of Mobile
- Mobile Bay – City of Mobile
- Mobile Bay – City of Fairhope
- Lake Harding
- Smith Lake – Cullman County (Smith Lake Park)
- Smith Lake – Rock Creek
- Lake Guntersville – City of Guntersville
- Pickwick Lake – City of Florence
- Wheeler Lake – City of Huntsville
- Wheeler Lake – City of Decatur
- Bear Creek Watershed – Franklin County