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CHILDREN UNDER 13 MUST NOW WEAR LIFE JACKETS WHEN BOATING

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. - - - Beginning March 29, parents will need to make sure that children under the age of 13 have secured their personal floatation devices before taking off in a boat on federal waters. The new law, issued by the Department of Transportation, is designed to reduce the number of drowning fatalities among children.

By late 1999, 36 states had enacted statutes requiring children to wear lifejackets while aboard recreational vessels. A review of statistics during that year showed that the rate of children drowning in those states was lower than in states that had no such laws.

New Mexico and Colorado had no such laws, so this law will now represent a change for boaters in these states. Therefore boaters on Abiquiu, Cochiti, Conchas, Santa Rosa, John Martin and Trinidad Lakes, which fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Albuquerque District, will need to ensure children under the age of 13 are wearing a Coast Guard approved lifejacket.

The new law does not apply to children below the decks or in an enclosed cabin, or when the vehicle is not moving.