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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ALABAMA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Agencies warn of hidden hazards in Alabama lakes and rivers

CLANTON--Memorial Day weekend typically kicks off the summer recreational boating season on our Alabama lakes and rivers. This season, swimmers and boaters will need to be especially aware of their surroundings. As a result of the recent tornado outbreak, a large amount of debris; including trees, building materials, docks and boats were deposited in our waterways. Swimmers and boaters must be aware that debris may be floating just under the surface of the water and can cause injury or damage to their watercraft.

The Alabama Marine Police and Alabama Emergency Management Agency advise boaters to take special care while boating on the areas of Lake Martin and Lake Neely Henry that were affected by recent storms. Debris is still in the lakes, and some of it is not immediately visible because it's below the water line. "Whenever possible, these areas are being marked with hazard buoys so boaters will avoid them," said Lieutenant Erica Shipman. "The marked areas are not safe places to ski or tube, but there are plenty of other areas on those waterways that boaters can go to enjoy these activities."

When boating:

- Keep a careful watch ahead for any debris in the water.
- Keep your speed slow enough to be able to safely avoid any hazards that you encounter.
- Watch out for other boaters and swimmers.
- Remember, always pass to the right (just like when driving a car) when you approach another boat.

When swimming or wading:

- Be especially careful in areas where sediment makes it difficult to see hazards in the water.
- Never jump or dive into murky water since logs and other heavy debris may have become waterlogged and be suspended just beneath the surface.
- When wading, be careful of sharp debris, including nails and glass, which may be resting on the bottom.

The most important thing to do when enjoying our rivers and lakes is to use common sense. Think about what you are doing, plan ahead, know the rules and obey them. Be careful and have a safe holiday weekend.

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For more information contact the AEMA Public Information Office
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