

Hazardous Waters

Knowing and avoiding the dangers surrounding dams and powerhouses

Dangerous areas surrounding dams

If you like fishing or enjoy recreating on the lower Saluda River, you need to be aware of hazards surrounding dams and their operations.

A large amount of water can be discharged through a dam without warning at any time. For example, when Saluda is called upon to provide its electrical capacity, the turbines that generate the electricity may start immediately (Operations actually are controlled from downtown Columbia.), resulting in a significant increase in the flow of water within only a matter of seconds.

The cold water released through the dam even during the summer also can be a hazard. Cold-water temperatures can result in shock and hypothermia, and slippery rocks and hidden holes can cause an unexpected fall. When rocks used as stepping stones for access to in-stream reaches become covered by rising water, recreators may find themselves stranded with no apparent path to retreat to the riverbank and waters continuing to rise.

Even if you're an experienced boater, angler, or swimmer, it pays to know the signs of rising water and the rules you should follow to ensure your safety.

Hazardous Waters

Knowing and avoiding the dangers downstream of dams and powerhouses.

Play it safe!

Your safety depends on obeying all posted safety notices and warnings.

Please follow these simple rules when you are fishing, swimming, or wading in the lower Saluda River:

- Never go into the water alone, and always wear a personal flotation device.
- Inspect waders for signs of wear, and use ties to prevent water from entering boots. Wetsuits are an excellent substitute for waders, especially in the cold water of the lower Saluda River.
- Fish, swim, or wade below dams only during low-flow periods.
- Stay out of restricted areas.
- Be aware of your surroundings and plan a quick exit from the water to the nearest bank in case of an emergency.
- Move to a safer area **immediately** if a siren sounds or strobe lights flash or if you simply notice the river level rising.

Agencies responsible for boater safety advise boaters to take special precautions when fishing below a dam by boat. The water can boil up suddenly, trapping or capsizing unprepared boaters. Always wear a personal flotation device, and leave the motor running—even if drift fishing. A stalled or hard-to-start motor can result in disaster.

Never anchor your boat in the area below a dam

A sudden surge of water can pull a boat under and sink it before you have a chance to pull up the anchor and move to safety.

Do not enter restricted areas marked by buoys, booms, cables, or signs. The closer you get to a dam, the more hazardous it can be. Exploring these areas too closely is not worth the gamble.

If you are caught in surging water

Any moving water can be dangerous. If you are caught in the water and swept off your feet, remember the following:

- Drop any items that can weigh you down.
- Stay calm, lie on your back, and keep your feet up and pointed downstream to avoid rocks and foot entrapment.
- Swim on your back **with** the current and then diagonally across the stream until you reach the shore.
- Do not attempt to stand up until you are in shallow, slow-moving water.
- If you get trapped on an island, stay there and signal for help