Tips for boating near a dam

- Wear an approved personal flotation device
- Stay a safe distance away from the dam and do not cross protective barriers. Keep the boat’s motor running so you can quickly maneuver or leave
- Stay away from spill areas, where unpredictable water conditions make boat control difficult or impossible
- Do not anchor or tie your boat in any way that could let it be swamped or capsized if water currents or levels change rapidly
- Canoeists and kayakers should always stay clear of dams.
- Be alert for unseen currents such as undertows, eddies, and whirlpools, which can pull a boat into a dangerous situation
- Never boat alone near a dam
- Do not cross buoy lines

Tips for walkers or anglers near a dam

- Wear an approved personal flotation device
- Do not step past “no trespassing” signs or warning cables
- Do not cross, damage or remove fences
- Always maintain a safe distance from high voltage wires and apparatus
- Be aware that a fall into cold water could cause hypothermia, shock or loss of consciousness
- Know how to safely leave an area if conditions change or a siren and evacuation message sounds
- Never fish alone near a dam
- Never swim above or below a dam or dive from a dam structure. Water levels and currents can change very quickly and you may not be able to react in time to avoid the danger
- Be aware that ice that forms near a dam is often thin and unsafe
  
  If you have an emergency or see a situation that poses a danger to the public, please call 911 immediately.

Our safety commitment

The Prairie du Sac Hydro has a detailed Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with defined and specific actions that will be followed in the event of any emergency situation. The EAP is updated annually and Alliant Energy coordinates its safety planning with county, state and federal emergency management and regulatory agencies. In addition, our company continues to reinvest in the Hydro so that it will provide clean, renewable energy to our customers for years to come.
Safety is our first priority

At Alliant Energy, we deliver the energy and exceptional service that our customers and communities count on – safely, efficiently and responsibly. Safety is always our first priority. We are committed to the safety of anglers, boaters and visitors that gather in the area of our Prairie du Sac Hydroelectric Dam. We are proud of our excellent safety record at our Prairie du Sac facility. However, every year people are killed or seriously injured at dams and most of these accidents could be avoided by simply staying clear of the restricted zones, by understanding the dangers dams can create, and by obeying all warning devices. We encourage all that enjoy the beautiful Wisconsin River near our Prairie du Sac Hydro to take a few moments and read the following important safety information.

Be safe – use common sense
To minimize the risk of accidents, please:

- Understand the dangers near dams
- Stay away from hazardous areas
- Obey all warning devices such as signs, lights, sirens and verbal messages
- Obey typical warnings, and note changing conditions like:
  - Signs or announcements with warnings or messages about hazards
  - Sirens and audio warnings noting changes in water passing through a powerhouse or through a spill area
  - Changes in the sound of water or sudden changes in the current indicate changing conditions
  - The level of water on rocks, snags or structures also indicates changing conditions

Non-emergency sirens and audio warnings

Sirens and audio warnings at the Prairie du Sac Hydro are activated to provide notice to those in the area before changes are made in water flow through the dam and “spill gates” are opened. These sirens and audio warnings are sounded to let individuals that are on the river or shoreline know that water levels will go up below the dam and the force of water currents will strengthen nearby.

“Spilling” water through the dam is a fairly common practice during high-water periods, which is typically springtime but can occur anytime throughout the year. While additional caution should be used when the spillway gates are open, there is no need to evacuate the area. Similar sirens and audio warnings may also be sounded when there will be a river level and flow change at the dam.

Emergency and dangerous situations

While dam emergencies or failures are a rare occurrence and the Prairie du Sac Hydro has an excellent safety record, natural disasters and other situations can potentially arise that could cause a dangerous situation. If that were to happen, the energy of water coming through the dam and a rising Wisconsin River level is capable of potentially causing loss of life, injury and significant property damage. If you are in the immediate vicinity of the hydro, it is important to know what to be aware of and what to do if an emergency occurs.

In the event of an emergency at the Prairie du Sac Hydro, siren equipment will be activated. The siren will sound a ten-second steady tone, followed by the audio message:

“WARNING! WARNING! THERE IS AN EMERGENCY AT THE PRAIRIE DU SAC DAM. EVACUATE THIS AREA IMMEDIATELY AND GO TO HIGHER GROUND. REPEAT. THERE IS AN EMERGENCY AT THE PRAIRIE DU SAC DAM. EVACUATE THIS AREA IMMEDIATELY AND GO TO HIGHER GROUND.”

As you seek higher ground, you can evacuate to the clubhouse at Lake Wisconsin Country Club, or leave the area immediately. For those in the fishing/visitor area near the Hydro, evacuate as soon as possible via Dam Heights Road to Highway 78.

A. Hazard area marked by buoy lines
B. Sudden Water discharge from dam gates
C. Strong, unpredictable currents above and below dams
D. Sudden turbulent discharges from automatically operated powerhouse generators
E. Deceiving reverse currents below spillways
F. Slippery surfaces on dam structures and shorelines
G. Submerged hazards above and below dams
H. Open spillways which may not be visible from above the dam
I. Debris passing over or through the dam
J. Ice that forms near a dam is often thin and unsafe