

This is important information that I believe needs to be shared with every member of a TBF club and even those tournament anglers who do not belong to a bass club.

On March 26th of this year the annual IBM Open tournament was held on Brownlee Reservoir out of Woodhead Park. The event had a field of 47 boats and all went well during blast off and the first part of the day. At around noon one of the boats had mechanical problems near Mountain Man Lodge. The contestants in the boat were lightly seasoned tournament anglers and unsure of what they needed to do. They approached another tournament boat and were advised to turn the motor band over and someone would be sure to help them. The anglers in this boat then began a slow drift in the direction of Woodhead Park. Over the next couple of hours three additional sets of anglers spoke with them and stated that they would notify tournament officials on their return for weigh-in. End result, no one advised tournament officials of the problem with this boat and the anglers spent the night on the reservoir. Although tournament officials inquired of the remaining anglers if they knew anyone who was stranded no response came and the truck and trailer for this boat was parked in the upper lot and no one saw it on their way out of the launch area. It can only be assumed that everyone who had spoken with the stranded boat had already left the launch site and in the preoccupation that we all share, with preparing to travel, notifying a tournament official was completely forgotten. Early the next morning the anglers made contact with the owners of a cabin who were able to assist them in finding their way to safety. All of us are aware of the weather conditions that night so we know that it was very uncomfortable and that the angler's families were no doubt out of their mind wondering what the situation was.

With the occurrence of this fresh in our minds I think we need to refresh all tournament anglers on the protocol and etiquette used in these situations and I will highlight a few.

Even though most of our waters have little or no cell phone service it is imperative that every boat have the phone number of the tournament director. If the boater can pick up any type of signal he can call the tournament director and leave a message with their current location and probable plan of returning to safe harbor. Even if the director does not get the message until reaching a cell phone power area it will allow the opportunity to return to the water and help the stranded boat.

I believe that all tournaments now utilize motor bands not only because it is required on some waters but it also makes good sense. Once a boater determines that they cannot resolve the problems on their own the motor band should be turned to display the orange side. It then becomes the **ABSOLUTE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY OTHER TOURNAMENT ANGLER TO ASSURE THAT THE BOAT REACHES SAFE HARBOR.** In some cases it means that the second boat will have to forfeit their days fishing to assure the safety of the distressed boat. If that is the case, so be it. There is no excuse for anyone to ever pass another boater in distress.

In most instances one of the anglers on a distressed boat can place their catch in to another boat and return to the weigh-in. Following the weigh-in someone would then take the angler back to the stranded boat and assure the safe return of the boat and the anglers.

Often anglers depart immediately following weigh-in if they know they will not be receiving a check. In many cases anglers simply leave the tournament site without weighing fish leaving tournament officials pondering the safety of those individuals. Part of the tournament experience is the camaraderie shared by the anglers during the weigh-in process and all are encouraged to stay until final presentations are made. For those who leave immediately it may be that they are very disappointed with their day's performance and don't want to face their peers. Try to forget it and enjoy the remainder of the day. Each of us has had those no catch days and certainly don't want to brag about them but every attempt must be made to advise tournament officials that they will not be weighing fish.

This is meant as a prompter to assure that any event like this one does not occur again and will assure the safety of everyone involved in the tournament.