



RECAP OF 2023 BOATING FATALITIES

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Life jacket loaner sites:



boatingsafety.com/page/life-jacket-loaner-program#life-jacket-map

The “Recap of 2023 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities” is a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in the Commonwealth that year. This recap is intended to provide information to illustrate the importance of safe boating practices and help improve boating safety in Pennsylvania.

1. 1 Fatality

Lake Henry, Wayne County
3/18/23, 1:45 a.m., Saturday

An 18-year-old male is deceased after the 10-foot rowboat he was operating capsized in 37-degree F water. The victim and two others launched the boat without any life jackets onboard and none were worn. The boat began taking on water and capsized, leaving all three individuals in the water. After failed attempts to upright the boat, two of the individuals held on to the boat and noticed the victim was face down in the water. The local fire department rescued the two individuals, and the victim was recovered a few hours later. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden coldwater immersion and alcohol use may have been factors.

2. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Dauphin County
4/13/23, 7:16 a.m., Thursday

A 65-year-old male is deceased after the 12-foot open motorboat he was operating went over the Dock Street Dam and capsized. The boat had drifted too close to the dam after the engine stalled, and it went over the dam. The victim and passenger fell into the water. The passenger was wearing a life jacket and was rescued by another boater who happened to be in the area. He was transported to the hospital. The victim was wearing a life jacket when he went over the dam. However, when recovered approximately 6 hours later and nearly 5 miles from the site of the incident, the victim no longer had the life jacket on. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

3. 1 Fatality

Wisecarver Reservoir, Greene County
5/18/23, unknown time, Thursday

A 65-year-old male is deceased after not returning home from a fishing trip. His 10-foot kayak was found adrift on the lake. An extensive search ensued, and the victim's body was recovered 10 days later. The victim was not wearing a life jacket nor was there one onboard. The operator was an experienced paddler but did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden coldwater immersion and alcohol use may have been a factor.

4. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Dauphin County
6/28/23, 3:45 p.m., Wednesday

An 82-year-old male is deceased after capsizing his 12-foot canoe while paddling in high water. The victim was not wearing a life jacket; however, there was one onboard. The victim was an experienced paddler but did not have any formal boating safety education.

5. 1 Fatality

Dresser Lake, Monroe County
8/19/23, 12:33 p.m., Saturday

A 26-year-old male is deceased after capsizing an 8-foot kayak. At some point, he ended up in the water and was seen struggling to stay above the water. He eventually went under the water and did not resurface. The victim's body was recovered approximately 3 hours later. He was not wearing a life jacket at the time of the incident and had no formal boating safety education. Drugs or alcohol may have been a factor.

6. 2 Fatalities

Private Pond, Clinton County
8/19/23, 8:56 p.m., Saturday

A 41-year-old male and an 11-year-old male are deceased after their 6-foot homemade unpowered boat capsized while fishing. Two other children were onboard at the time of the incident and swam to shore to get help. The victims' bodies were recovered a short time later. The victims were not wearing life jackets and had no formal boating safety.

7. 1 Fatality

Mountain Top Lake, Monroe County
11/23/23, 2:40 p.m., Thursday

A 31-year-old male is deceased after leaving his kayak to assist another kayaker. The victim and two children were onboard a 13-foot kayak. The victim left his kayak to assist a third child whose 8-foot kayak had capsized. After several attempts to right the third child's kayak, the victim disappeared under the water. The three children were all wearing life jackets and made it to shore safely. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and his body was recovered a short time later. The victim was reported to be a good swimmer and had previous kayak experience. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor. ☐



When boating, remember to . . .

- Wear your life jacket. It floats, even if you don't. Wear it buckled and/or zipped.
- Never operate your boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Look around. Avoid a collision by keeping a proper lookout.
- Watch your wake. It is the wave behind your boat and can cause damage.
- Stay away from manmade and natural hazards like dams and strainers (trees in the water).
- Never overload your boat. Keep your weight and gear centered.
- Stop that prop. Turn off your engine before picking up a skier or swimmer.
- Never anchor from the stern (back) of your boat—always at the bow (front).
- Stay with your boat on the upstream side if you capsize.
- Carry onboard a wearable life jacket for each person on a boat.
- Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Never take your boat over a low-head dam.
- Carry a whistle that is audible for ½-mile.

