

2017 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING ACCIDENT ANALYSIS

By Ryan C. Walt – Boating Accident Review Officer

The total number of reported recreational boating accidents in Pennsylvania in 2017 decreased from 2016. Boaters and Waterways Conservation Officers reported 69 recreational boating accidents of all types, a decrease of 1 reported accidents, or 1% less than 2016. The number of vessels involved in reported accidents totaled 96, an increase of 16 from 2016. Accident reports indicated 51 injuries requiring medical treatment, 9 more than in 2016. Property damage to vessels totaled \$250,230 which was \$48,224 more than the amount reported in the previous year. Two accidents comprised \$111,000 or 44% of that total. Federal and state law requires that accidents involving death, disappearance, injuries requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, and property damage exceeding \$2,000 be reported to the state. Accidents with lesser property damage and/or minor injuries are not required to be reported.

Of the 69 reported accidents in 2017, the most common type of accident was capsizing. The types of reported accidents were as follows:

Capsizing	23	Struck submerged/fixed obj.	3
Collision with vessel	17	Fall in boat	2
Skier mishap	7	Collision with floating obj.	2
Falls overboard	6	Dam	1
Grounding/Sinking	3	Flooding/Swamping	1
Struck by prop	3	Fire/explosion	1

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In 2017, fourteen recreational boating accidents resulted in 15 fatalities. This is an increase of 4 fatalities that occurred in 2016 and above the last 10-year average of 11.9 victims. Factoring in the 2017 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 12.3 victims. Only four of the 15 victims in 2017 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Eight of the 15 victims (53%) were not wearing a life jacket but did have them onboard the boat.

The attached "Recap of 2017 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities" is a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in the Commonwealth that year. The recap's last page details statistical information about 2016's fatal boating accidents. This recap is intended to provide information to illustrate the importance of safe boating practices and to help improve boating safety in the Commonwealth.

RECAP OF 2017 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING FATALITIES

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|----|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | 1 Fatality
04/02/17 | Private Pond
01:50 p.m. | Crawford County
Sunday |
|----|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|

An 18-year-old male drowned as a result of capsizing a 10-foot kayak. Two friends had been racing their kayaks on a private pond in Sprint Township, while trying to talk to each other the kayaks made contact. The victims kayak capsized and the victim attempted to grabbed onto his friends kayak which also then capsized. The victim went under the surface of the water and did not resurface. The surface of the water had a temperature of 40 degrees. The friend was able to get on top of his kayak and paddle to shore were EMS was activated. No lifejackets were onboard or worn. The victim had no formal boating safety education. Operator inexperience and cold water immersion may have been factors.

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| 2. | 1 Fatality
04/08/17 | Pine Creek
02:41 p.m. | Tioga County
Saturday |
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A 46-year-old male drowned as a result of capsizing a 10-foot kayak. The victim and three other boaters were paddling in a group on Pine Creek from Ansonia to Blackwell. Pine Creek water levels were running higher than normal due to recent rains in the area. During the trip, the victim appeared to have capsized his kayak in a set of rapids near the Turkey Path Trail Area. The victim was wearing a lifejacket but it was not fastened properly. It is unknown if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience, cold water immersion, and alcohol may have been factors.

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|----|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3. | 1 Fatality
04/18/17 | Allegheny Reservoir
11:30 a.m. | Warren County
Tuesday |
|----|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|

A dog wearing a lifejacket was found swimming in the Allegheny Reservoir near Roper Hollow as reported to the Warren County 911 center. This prompted the dispatch center to initiate a response to search for a capsized boat off shore. Scandia VFD directed a boat to Roper Hollow area and found the deceased individual and the kayak. The 58-year-old deceased male was found wearing a lifejacket that had worked its way up around the head area of the victim. There are no known witnesses to the accident. The victim had not taking a formal boating safety course. Operator inexperience and cold water immersion may have been factors.

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|----|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4. | 1 Fatality
05/06/17 | Blue Marsh Lake
12:15 a.m. | Berks County
Saturday |
|----|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|

A 56-year-old male drowned as a result of swamping a 12-foot open motorboat. The victim and two friends had just left the shoreline and traveled approximately 25ft offshore when the overloaded boat began to take on water over the bow. The victim tried to increase speed with the outboard motor but the entire boat swamped. All three of the occupants were wearing chest waders. Two of the occupants made it to shore. Only two lifejackets were onboard but were inaccessible. The victim had no formal boating safety education. Operator inexperience and cold water immersion may have been factors.

5.	1 Fatality 05/07/17	Pine Creek 07:25 p.m.	Tioga County Sunday
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A 64-year-old male drowned as a result of capsizing a Bi-Yak pontoon in a rain swollen Pine Creek. The victim and occupant were paddling downstream when the boat made contact with a strainer and capsized. The approximate water temperature was 42 degrees. The occupant was entrapped in the strainer momentarily and then re-surfaced. Aided by his lifejacket, he was rescued. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and was recovered 3 days later downstream of the incident. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education. Operator inexperience, hazardous waters, and cold water immersion may have been factors.

6.	2 Fatalities 05/20/2017	Ohio River 06:23 p.m.	Allegheny County Saturday
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Two 25-year-old females were paddling on the Ohio River in separate kayaks when they went over the Deshields Lock and Dam. The victims drowned as a result of going over the Lock and Dam. Both victims were wearing a lifejacket at the time of the accident. Neither of the victims had completed a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience may have been a factor.

7.	1 Fatality 05/29/17	Shawnee Lake 12:43 p.m.	Bedford County Monday
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A 21-year-old male was attempting to secure two kayaks together while sitting on the aft area of his kayak when it capsized. The victim was paddling with a 19-year-old female who attempted to assist the victim when her kayak capsized. The female continued to render assistance while in the water until the victim slipped from her grasp. Neither kayak had a lifejacket onboard and the victim was a non-swimmer. The victim had not taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience may have been a factor.

8.	1 Fatality 6/22/17	Unnamed private pond 5:34 PM	Indiana County Thursday
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A 30-year old male was attempting to clear debris from the ponds overflow pipe (15" vertical pipe which releases at the bottom of the dam) during a high water event when his kayak capsized and he was pulled into the outlet pipe and drowned. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and had no formal boating safety education.

9.	1 Fatality 7/01/17	Swatara Creek 5:08 PM	Lebanon County Thursday
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A 36 year old male was with a group paddling the rain swollen Swatara Creek. The victim attempted to traverse, a posted no boating, wading or trespassing, low head dam at Jonestown. Upon crossing the dam, the victims kayak swamped and the paddler was swept over the dam and did not return to the surface. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and had never taken a formal boating safety education course.

10. 1 Fatality Delaware River Monroe County
7/16/17 5:15 PM Sunday

A 35 year old male lost his life when the canoe he and three other individuals were in capsized on the Delaware River in the area of the Sambo Rapids. One of the individuals, a 5 year old was the only one wearing a life jacket and was quickly rescued along with two other adults by a good Samaritan. The remaining adult was found the next day by divers. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and witnesses indicate that he could not swim. Alcohol might also have been a factor.

11. 1 Fatality Susquehanna River Luzerne County
08/08/17 10:18 PM Tuesday

At 10:18PM the Luzerne County Communications Center was informed of a missing 54 year old male victim who had not returned home. Earlier in the day the victim had gone fishing on his boat near Nesbitt Park on the Susquehanna River. Wilkes-Barre City Fire Department located the victims vehicle and trailer in the parking lot. A hasty search was performed by Wilkes-Barre City Water Rescue and the victims boat was located approximately 2 miles downstream. Crews searched the immediate area until approximately 2:00AM, before halting the search. Incident command was initiated, and an organized search of the river began at 8:00AM, on August 09, 2017. Search efforts lasted until 7:00PM, and were unsuccessful. The victim was recovered the following day on August 10th. The water temperature at the time of incident, was estimated to be 72 degrees with a depth of 28ft were the victims boat was located. The victim was an experienced boater however had never taken a formal boating safety education course and was not wearing a lifejacket. Alcohol may have been a factor.

12. 1 Fatality Susquehanna River Northumberland County
09/12/17 02:00PM Tuesday

A 71 year old male lost his life when he and another male where on a small open motorboat and went fishing below the PPL dam on the Susquehanna River inside the exclusion zone. The victim directed the boat from river right at a course that caused the boat to collide with the dam. The boat swamped and capsized. Both individuals struggled to stay afloat. The victim was under the water for approximately 10 minutes until rescue. The victim was transported to a hospital and later passed away. The other male onboard sustained no injuries. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket. The other male passenger was not wearing a lifejacket during the time of the incident but managed to put one on while in the water. The victim was an experienced boater however had never taken a formal boating safety education course.

13. 1 Fatality Newton Lake Lackawanna County
9/26/2017 01:51PM Tuesday

A 17 year old female lost her life after she was ejected/fell from the bow of the 17 foot motor boat she was a passenger on and was then struck by the boat and prop. The juvenile operator stopped the boat and attempted to reach her friends body but was unsuccessful. Her body was recovered by divers on Wednesday. The victim and operator were not wearing lifejackets however they were onboard. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

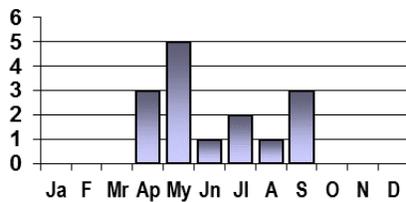
14.	1 Fatality 9/30/2017	Leaser Lake 09:00AM	Lehigh County Saturday
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An 82 year old male lost his life when the canoe he was fishing from capsized. The operator and passenger/victim boarded a 16ft Plastic (Polyethylene) canoe from a dock on the west shore launch of Leaser Lake and started to paddle North across the lake roughly 50ft from the shoreline. The victim was seated in the front of the canoe and fishing; the operator was seated in the rear and was paddling the canoe. Approximately 1000ft from the dock the victims seat broke causing the seat to drop on the left side causing the victims weight to shift. The operator tried to counter balance the canoe but was unable and the canoe capsized approximately 30ft from the shoreline. The operator was unable to rescue the victim but made it to shore and signaled for help. Nearby anglers called 911 to dispatch emergency personnel. Local Firefighters arrived on scene shortly and pulled the victim out of the water. The victim was found face down floating in the water unconscious. He was resuscitated and transported by ambulance to the hospital. The victim later passed away while being treated at the hospital. The victim and operator were not wearing lifejackets however they were onboard. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

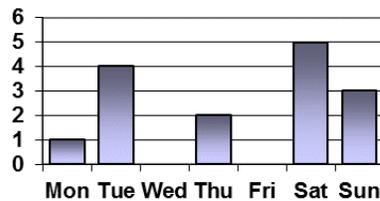
TOTALS FOR 2017: There were 69 reportable recreational boating accidents, 51 injuries requiring medical treatment, and 14 accidents resulting in 15 fatalities.

		FATAL ACCIDENTS	FATALITIES
LOCATION	Rivers	7	8
	Lakes	7	7
TYPE OF BOAT (Carrying victim)	Motorboat	4	4
	Paddlecraft	10	11
TYPE OF ACCIDENT	Grounding	1	3
	Falls Overboard	3	3
	Depart vessel voluntarily	2	2
	Capsizing	3	3
LIFE JACKETS	Worn	3	4
	None/Insufficient units onboard	3	3
	Onboard but not worn	8	8
HYPOTHERMIA OR COLD WATER SHOCK (Possible factor)		5	5
ALCOHOL (Any proven use regardless of BAC)		3	3

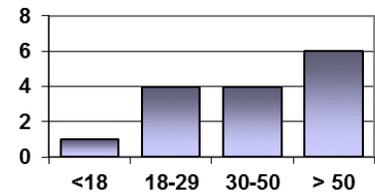
FATALITIES by MONTH



FATALITIES by DAY



FATALITIES by AGE



COLD WEATHER DATA

The charts below show the number of accidents over the past 15 years and accidents since 2012 when the mandatory coldwater lifejacket wear regulation was enacted. The percentage of accident resulting in fatalities is higher from November thru April due to cold water temperatures resulting in cold water shock to victims of accidents.

