

2019 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING ACCIDENT ANALYSIS

By Ryan C. Walt – Boating Accident Review Officer

The total number of reported recreational boating accidents in Pennsylvania in 2019 decreased from 2018. Boaters and Waterways Conservation Officers reported 57 recreational boating accidents of all types, a decrease of 4 reported accidents, or 7% less than 2018. The number of vessels involved in reported accidents totaled 72, a decrease of 9 from 2018. Accident reports indicated 37 injuries requiring medical treatment, 4 more than in 2018. Property damage to vessels totaled \$117,580 which was \$89,204 less than the amount reported in the previous year. One accident comprised \$20,000 or 17% 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 57 reported accidents in 2019, the most common type of accident was capsizing. The types of reported accidents were as follows:

Capsizing	18	Struck by boat	4
Collision with vessel	10	Falls overboard	3
Skier mishap	8	Ejected from vessel	2
Struck submerged/fixed obj.	5	Collision with floating object	1
Fire/explosion	4	Dam	1
		Unknown	1

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In 2019, eight recreational boating accidents resulted in 8 fatalities. This is a decrease of 5 fatalities from the previous year and below the last 10-year average of 12.9 victims. Factoring in the 2019 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 12.5 victims. Only one of the 8 victims in 2019 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Three of the 8 victims (38%) were not wearing a life jacket but did have them onboard the boat.

The attached "Recap of 2019 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 2019'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 2019 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING FATALITIES

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| 1. | 1 Fatality
05/29/19 | Mill Creek
08:28 p.m. | Bucks County
Wednesday |
|----|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|

A 16-year-old male lost his life when the kayak he was paddling capsized in Mill Creek near Levittown, PA. The victim had been kayaking in a flooded grass field adjacent to the waterway, which was flooding an estimated 10 feet above normal stage and running very fast due to recent heavy rains. The victim paddled his kayak too close to the swift current and was pulled by the current into the main flow of the creek, where his kayak capsized. The victim was then swept a short distance downstream until he became pinned against a tree, where he remained until first responders were able to extricate him from the water after approximately 5 minutes of being submerged. Upon recovery, the victim was unresponsive and in cardiac arrest. Responders administered CPR and were able to restore pulse, transporting the victim to the hospital where he was later pronounced deceased. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and it is unknown at this time if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience and coldwater immersion may have been factors.

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| 2. | 1 Fatality
6/04/2019 | Lake Nockamixon
5:45 p.m. | Bucks County
Tuesday |
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A 43-year-old male is deceased as a result of potentially falling overboard in a 14 ft open motorboat on Lake Nockamixon. Kayakers on the lake noticed a boat on the shoreline with the engine still running. The kayakers signaled to an approaching vessel to inform them of the situation. The signaled vessel approached the victim's boat and determined that it was unoccupied, at which time they called 911. The victim was later found deceased after search efforts. Two wearable lifejackets and a throwable personal flotation device were found onboard the boat but none were worn. The victim had not taken a formal boating safety education course.

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| 3. | 1 Fatality
6/11/2019 | Churchhill Lake
8:10 p.m. | Susquehanna County
Tuesday |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|

A 62-year-old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 12 ft rowboat on Churchhill Lake. A family member returned home and noticed the victim's vehicle. Assuming the individual was out fishing, the family member went down to the lake (Churchhill Lake) and witnessed the victims rowboat capsized in the water. The family member attempted to reach the victim by cell phone and by calling out but was unable to get a response. The family member then contacted 911 dispatch. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket however there was one onboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Health issues and alcohol use may have been factors.

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| 4. | 1 Fatality
6/21/2019 | Greenwood Hunting Lodge Pond
1:00 p.m. | Lycoming County
Friday |
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A 68-year-old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 12 ft rowboat on a pond at the Greenwood Hunting Lodge. The operator and victim decided to switch positions in the boat. The operator and victim both stood up to switch positions causing a weight transfer and the boat capsized. The operator

was wearing a lifejacket, but the victim was not. The operator and the victim attempted to swim the capsized boat to an island in the middle of the pond. The operator was at the stern on the starboard side and the victim was on the port side of the bow. Both the operator and victim were talking while swimming. The operator stated that it got quiet and then he saw the victims feet. The operator called out and there was no response. The operator grabbed the victim, who was unresponsive, and swam him to the shoreline. He then performed CPR for an undetermined time and traveled back to the Lodge where a member called 911. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and did not have any formal boating safety education.

5.	1 Fatality 7/10/2019	Lake Wallenpaupack 3:43 p.m.	Wayne County Wednesday
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A 64-year-old male is deceased as a result of drowning while on a 20ft open motorboat. The vessel was found drifting on Lake Wallenpaupack with personal belongings onboard, but the operator was missing. The victim was found by local Dive & Rescue departments after searching for several weeks. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and it is unknown at this time if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Medical conditions may have been a factor.

6.	1 Fatality 7/11/2019	Private Pond 8:16 p.m.	Berks County Thursday
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A 5-year-old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 6 ft kayak on a small retention pond in Berks County. The victim was playing on the kayak in the pond that is usually less than a foot deep, due to strong thunderstorms earlier in the day the pond had an approximate depth of 4 feet when the kayak capsized. Lifesaving measures including CPR were performed on-scene however the victim was later pronounced deceased at the hospital. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket.

7.	1 Fatality 8/08/2019	Allegheny River 12:12 p.m.	Allegheny County Thursday
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A 76-year-old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard in an 18 ft pontoon boat on the Allegheny River. Allegheny County 911 was notified that a male fell into the Allegheny River near the Hulton Bridge, Harmar Township, and did not come back up. EMS and fire services responded to the incident. The pontoon boat was found running, with the key in the ignition. The boat was reported to be out of gear. A life jacket (reportedly thrown to the victim from a private dock) was found to be floating in the river with no one in the area. Fire crews deployed a boat and attempted to locate the victim. The victim was later discovered by using sonar and removed from the water. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and was said to not know how to swim. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

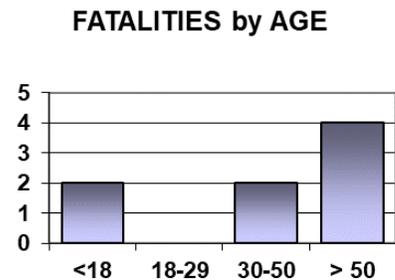
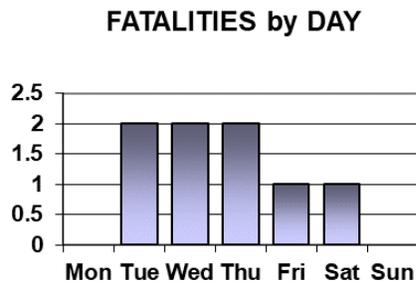
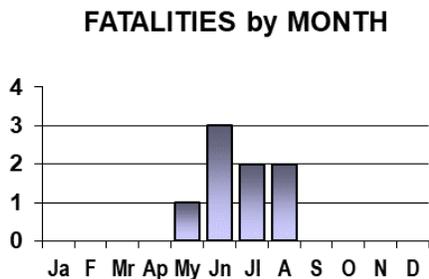
8.	1 Fatality 8/31/2019	Youghiogheny River 1:00 p.m.	Fayette County Saturday
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A 46-year-old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 12 ft inflatable raft on the Youghiogheny River while whitewater rafting. A group of four were whitewater rafting when their raft struck a rock and capsized in the area known as Flat Iron. Three of the individuals were able to make it through the rapids but the victim became trapped by his foot on the bottom of the river. Several attempts were

made to free the foot entrapment by individuals on-scene and local raft guides but where unsuccessful. First Responders and DCNR Rangers from the Ohiopyle Complex arrived on-scene and were able to release and transport the victim who was later pronounced deceased. The victim was believed to have been underwater for approximately 20-30 minutes. The victim was wearing a life jacket, but it is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

TOTALS FOR 2019: There were 57 reportable recreational boating accidents, 37 injuries requiring medical treatment, and 8 accidents resulting in 8 fatalities.

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



COLD WEATHER DATA

The charts below show the number of accidents over the past 17 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.

