

## 2020 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING ACCIDENT ANALYSIS

By Ryan C. Walt – Boating Accident Review Officer

The total number of reported recreational boating accidents in Pennsylvania in 2020 increased by one from 2019. Boaters and Waterways Conservation Officers reported 58 recreational boating accidents of all types, an increase of 1 reported accident, or 2% more than 2019. The number of vessels involved in reported accidents totaled 73, an increase of 1 from 2019. Accident reports indicated 39 injuries requiring medical treatment, 2 more than in 2019. Property damage to vessels totaled \$145,791 which was \$28,211 less than the amount reported in the previous year. One accident comprised \$25,000 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 58 reported accidents in 2020, the most common type of accident was capsizing. The types of reported accidents were as follows:

Type	Quantity	Type	Quantity
Capsizing	15	Collision with floating obj.	3
Collision with vessel	11	Grounding	2
Falls overboard	11	Fire/explosion	1
Skier mishap	5	Swamping	1
Struck submerged/fixed obj.	4	Ejected from vessel	1
Sinking	3	Person leaves vessel	1
TOTAL 58			

In 2020, nine recreational boating accidents resulted in 11 fatalities. This is an increase of 3 fatalities from the previous year and below the last 10-year average of 12.5 victims. Factoring in the 2020 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 12.9 victims. None of the 11 victims in 2020 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Seven of the 11 victims (64%) were not wearing a life jacket but did have them onboard the boat.

The attached "Recap of 2020 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 2020'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 2020 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING FATALITIES

- |    |                           |                              |                       |
|----|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | 2 Fatalities<br>4-06-2020 | Conashaugh Lake<br>6:15 p.m. | Pike County<br>Monday |
|----|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|

Two males ages 26 and 28 (brothers) are deceased as a result of their canoe capsizing on Conashaugh Lake, Dingman, Pike County. Their overturned canoe was observed by their mother who notified emergency personnel. Area dive teams located and recovered the first victim the following day. The second victim was recovered 5 days later. Neither victim was wearing a lifejacket and none were found at the scene. The victims had not taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience and sudden coldwater immersion may have been factors.

- |    |                         |                             |                        |
|----|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 2. | 1 Fatality<br>4/24/2020 | Delaware River<br>4:02 p.m. | Bucks County<br>Friday |
|----|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|

A 37 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing a kayak on the Delaware River. A witness stated seeing the paddler capsize while he was walking the Delaware Canal Towpath. The witness saw the paddler struggle to get back into the kayak before going underwater. The paddler was not seen again. According to the witness the victim was not wearing a lifejacket and did not have one onboard. It is unknown if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience and sudden coldwater immersion may have been factors. The victim was later recovered the following week.

- |    |                           |                          |                           |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3. | 2 Fatalities<br>6/09/2020 | Wilmore Dam<br>5:34 p.m. | Cambria County<br>Tuesday |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|

A 68 year old male and a 78 year old male are deceased as a result of falling overboard a 16ft open motorboat on Wilmore Dam. There were no witnesses that observed how the victims ended up in the water. Two witnesses who were kayaking in the area observed the victims floating in the water unresponsive and immediately dialed 911. Both victims were not wearing lifejackets however lifejackets were onboard. There was no throwable device (Type IV) located on the boat at the time of recovery. It is unknown if the victims had any formal boating safety education. Medical conditions may have been a factor.

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|----|-------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 4. | 1 Fatality<br>6/24/2020 | Susquehanna River<br>3:45 p.m. | Columbia County<br>Wednesday |
|----|-------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|

A 24 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing or falling overboard on a sit-on-top kayak while paddling on the Susquehanna River. A group of five were paddling the Susquehanna River when the victim became submerged underwater and did not resurface. There were no lifejackets being worn or onboard the victims kayak or the other paddlers kayaks who were with him. It is unknown if the victim had any formal paddling or boating safety education. Drugs or alcohol may have been a factor.

5. 1 Fatality Conneaut Lake Crawford County  
7/5/2020 5:37 p.m. Sunday

A 33 year old female is deceased as a result of falling overboard while on a 19 ft open motorboat in Conneaut Lake. The victim was sitting in the transom seat of the moving motorboat when she fell overboard and did not resurface. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket but there were lifejackets onboard. The victim was later recovered. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

6. 1 Fatality Hopewell Lake Berks County  
7/26/2020 5:30 p.m. Sunday

A 27 year old male is deceased as a result of entering the water from a 14 ft open motorboat. Four people were on the boat on Hopewell Lake when the victim jumped out of the boat causing it to capsize and sending the other individuals in the water. While a child was being helped back into the righted boat, the victim got back into the vessel and then jumped out back into the water and did not resurface. A passing boat picked up the child, child's father, and other passenger. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and had not taken a formal boating safety education course. The victim was later recovered, and cause of death was ruled a drowning. Alcohol and drug use may have been factors.

7. 1 Fatality Allegheny River Allegheny County  
7/31/2020 9:45 p.m. Friday

A 28 year old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard from a 19 ft open motorboat while the operator was in the process of docking. Eight people were onboard the boat in the Allegheny River when the victim who was sitting on the engine cover facing aft with feet on the swim platform fell overboard and did not resurface. Witnesses stated that the victim appeared to fall head first off the swim platform into the water. Witnesses also stated that the victim was intoxicated. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and it is not known if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Alcohol use may have been a factor. The victim was later recovered.

8. 1 Fatality Big Elk Lake Susquehanna County  
10/15/2020 08:30 p.m. Wednesday

A 73 year old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard from a wooden homemade rowboat while fishing on Big Elk Lake. The victim had not returned home from his outing and a search began. The victim's rowboat was found drifting approximately 60 yards offshore. Multiple resources including dive teams were involved in search & recovery operations and the victim was later recovered. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket however there was one onboard. The victim had successfully completed a formal boating safety education course. Medical conditions and sudden coldwater immersion may have been factors.

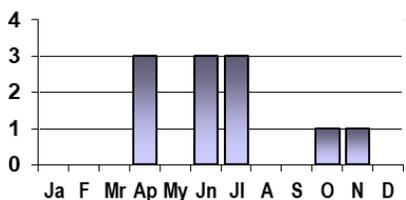
9. 1 Fatality Prompton Lake Wayne County  
 11/24/2020 11:37 p.m. Tuesday

An 82 year old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard from a 12 ft open motorboat while fishing on Prompton Lake. The victim had gone fishing earlier in the day and had not returned home before dark. Multiple resources were involved with search operations and the victim was later recovered. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket however there was one onboard. The victim had not taken a formal boating safety education course. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

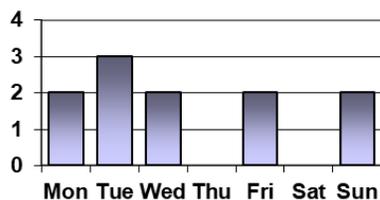
**TOTALS FOR 2020:** There were 58 reportable recreational boating accidents, 39 injuries requiring medical treatment, and 9 accidents resulting in 11 fatalities.

		<b>FATAL ACCIDENTS</b>	<b>FATALITIES</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	Rivers	3	3
	Lakes	6	8
<b>TYPE OF BOAT</b> (Carrying victim)	Motorboat	5	6
	Paddlecraft	4	5
<b>TYPE OF ACCIDENT</b>	Falls overboard	6	7
	Capsizing	3	4
<b>LIFE JACKETS</b>	Worn	0	0
	None/Insufficient units onboard	3	4
	Onboard but not worn	6	7
<b>HYPOTHERMIA OR COLD WATER SHOCK</b> (Possible factor)		4	5
<b>DRUGS/ALCOHOL</b> (Any proven use regardless of BAC)		3	3

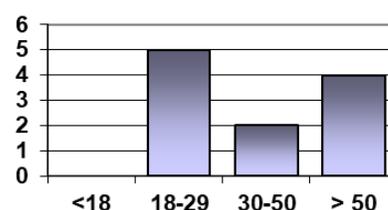
**FATALITIES by MONTH**



**FATALITIES by DAY**



**FATALITIES by AGE**



## COLD WEATHER DATA

The charts below show the number of accidents over the past 18 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.

