

## 2021 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING ACCIDENT ANALYSIS

By Ryan C. Walt – Boating Accident Review Officer

The total number of reported recreational boating accidents in Pennsylvania in 2021 decreased by two from 2020. Boaters and Waterways Conservation Officers reported 56 recreational boating accidents of all types, 3% less than 2020. The number of vessels involved in reported accidents totaled 86, an increase of thirteen from 2020. Accident reports indicated 37 injuries requiring medical treatment, which was two less than in 2020. Property damage to vessels totaled \$382,253 which was \$236,462 more than the amount reported in the previous year. One multiple vessel accident comprised \$285,000 or 75% of that total. Federal and state law requires that accidents involving death, disappearance, injuries requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, and/or 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 56 reported accidents in 2021, the most common types of accidents were collisions with vessels and capsizing. The types of reported accidents were as follows:

Type	Quantity	Type	Quantity
Collision with vessel	17	Other	2
Capsizing	16	Person leaves vessel	2
Falls overboard	5	Struck by prop	2
Struck submerged/fixed object	4	Fire/explosion	1
Skier mishap	3	Swamping	1
Fall in boat	2	Hazardous waters	1
TOTAL 56			

In 2021, nine recreational boating accidents resulted in nine fatalities. This is a decrease of two fatalities from the previous year and below the last 10-year average of 12.9 victims. Factoring in the 2021 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 11.6 victims. Two of the nine victims in 2021 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Four of the nine victims (44%) were not wearing a life jacket but did have them onboard the boat.

The attached "Recap of 2021 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 2021'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 2021 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING FATALITIES

- |    |                         |                              |                       |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | 1 Fatality<br>2/21/2021 | Private Pond<br>Time unknown | Erie County<br>Sunday |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|

A 70-year-old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard a kayak on a private pond. The victim observed his dogs having problems swimming in an area of open water on his private pond and attempted to rescue them. There were no witnesses but the PA State Police that were on scene believe the victim saw the dogs struggling then went to his garage and took his kayak out to the pond with his utility vehicle. They then believe the victim dragged the kayak across the ice to the open water where the dogs were and entered the kayak to reach the dogs, then capsized. The victim was later found deceased along with the two dogs. The victim had no formal boating safety education and was not wearing a lifejacket nor were there any onboard or at the scene. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

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|----|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2. | 1 Fatality<br>3/20/2021 | Private Pond<br>3:37 P.M. | Mercer County<br>Saturday |
|----|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|

A 44-year-old male is deceased as a result of capsizing a 6-foot kayak while fishing on a private pond. The victim had no formal boating safety education was not wearing a lifejacket nor were there any onboard. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

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|----|------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 3. | 1 Fatality<br>4/3/2021 | Private Pond<br>Time unknown | Lancaster County<br>Saturday |
|----|------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|

An 84-year-old male is deceased as a result of capsizing a 12-foot open motorboat on a private pond. The victim was reported missing late in the day and his boat was discovered adrift on the pond. The victim was recovered the following day. The victim had no formal boating safety education was not wearing a lifejacket nor were there any onboard. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

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|----|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 4. | 1 Fatality<br>5/24/2021 | Muddy Creek<br>5:00 p.m. | York County<br>Monday |
|----|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|

A 53-year-old male is deceased as a result of capsizing a 9 ½-foot kayak on Muddy Creek. The victim was drifting in the kayak when it capsized. Hazardous water conditions forced the victim under the water where he was pinned against rocks and drowned. The victim was wearing a lifejacket at the time of the incident but had no formal boating safety education. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

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|----|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 5. | 1 Fatality<br>5/29/2021 | Pymatuning Reservoir<br>10:30 a.m. | Crawford County<br>Saturday |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|

A 55-year-old male is deceased after presumably falling overboard from a 23-foot pontoon boat on Pymatuning Reservoir. The victim had gone fishing by himself and the boat came aground, empty,

with the engine still running and fishing lines out. There were no witnesses to the incident. The victim had no formal boating safety education. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket at the time of the incident and his body was recovered the next day. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

6.	1 Fatality 7/3/2021	Lake Marburg 5:54 p.m.	York County Saturday
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A 24-year-old male is deceased after departing the 16-foot pontoon boat on which he was a passenger. The operator had brought the boat close to shore and did not beach or anchor it. At that time three passengers disembarked to be in the water while two remained on the boat. When the party was ready to reboard the boat and depart, they noticed the victim was missing. After looking around, they saw him face down in the water. Attempts at resuscitation were unsuccessful and the victim was later pronounced dead. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and was an inexperienced swimmer. Alcohol was a factor.

7.	1 Fatality 9/7/2021	Susquehanna River Unknown	Clearfield County Tuesday
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A 52-year-old male is deceased after his 15-foot canoe was found capsized on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. The victim was dropped off by a friend and then launched his canoe for a multi-day float beginning Saturday, September 4th, at the Cherry Tree Access. He was supposed to call his friend when he wanted to be picked up. The friend returned two days later to find a capsized canoe and several of the victim's belongings including fishing gear and a life jacket. The friend did not immediately report the findings and waited until the following day to contact emergency services. An extensive search ensued, and the victim's body was recovered in a remote section of the river approximately 1 mile downstream of the recovered canoe. The victim did have a lifejacket onboard but was not wearing it. The victim had no formal boating safety education. High water conditions in addition to drugs and/or alcohol may have been factors.

8.	1 Fatality 10/20/2021	Allegheny River 4:30 p.m.	Allegheny County Wednesday
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A 64-year-old male is deceased after a 14-foot motorized canoe, which he and another passenger were operating, capsized on the Allegheny River. The operator was rescued by a passing boater and taken to a hospital for care. An extensive search ensued to find the victim and his body was recovered approximately four hours later. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and had not taken a formal boating safety education course. Alcohol may have been a factor.

9.	1 Fatality 10/21/2021	Susquehanna River 8:53 p.m.	Lancaster County Thursday
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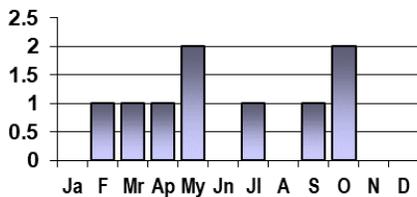
A 42-year-old female is deceased after a 14-foot open motorboat, in which she was a passenger, capsized. The boat was operating in close proximity to a high-flow discharge from a powerplant. Water came over the transom which caused the boat to capsize with its three occupants. The operator was not wearing a life jacket at the time of the incident, but the two passengers were. The operator and one passenger were able to get to shore. The victim was washed downriver where she was found.

unresponsive and CPR was administered. She was pronounced deceased at a local hospital. The operator had no formal boating safety education. The victim was wearing a lifejacket and sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

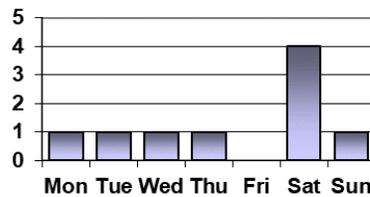
**TOTALS FOR 2021:** There were 56 recreational boating accidents reported, 37 of which involved injuries requiring medical treatment and nine accidents resulted in nine fatalities.

		<b>FATAL ACCIDENTS</b>	<b>FATALITIES</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	Rivers	4	4
	Lakes	5	5
<b>TYPE OF BOAT</b> (Carrying victim)	Motorboat	4	4
	Paddlecraft	5	5
<b>TYPE OF ACCIDENT</b>	Falls overboard	2	2
	Capsizing	6	6
	Person leaves vessel	1	1
<b>LIFE JACKETS</b>	Worn	2	2
	None/Insufficient units onboard	3	3
	Onboard but not worn	4	4
<b>HYPOTHERMIA OR COLDWATER SHOCK</b> (Possible factor)		6	6
<b>DRUGS/ALCOHOL</b> (Any proven use regardless of BAC)		3	3

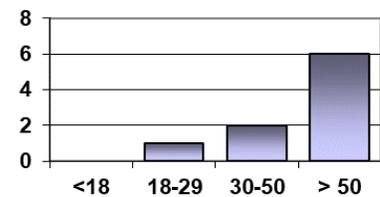
**FATALITIES by MONTH**



**FATALITIES by DAY**



**FATALITIES by AGE**



## COLD WEATHER DATA

The first chart below shows the total number of accidents and percentage of accidents resulting in fatalities from 2002 to 2011. The percentage of accidents resulting in fatalities was higher from November through April due to colder water temperatures resulting in coldwater shock to victims who ended up in the water as a result of the mishap. In 2012, a new regulation went into effect that required all boaters on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak to wear a life jacket from November 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The second chart below compares the same statistics from 2012 to present, to show the impact of the regulation change over a 10-year timeframe.

