



Recap of 2010 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities

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Six recreational boating accidents resulted in seven fatalities. This is the lowest number of fatalities since 1968 and is five less fatalities than the number reported in 2009. In addition, it is below the last 10-year average of 12.1 victims. Factoring in the 2010 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 12 victims. Only one of the seven victims in 2010 was wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in his death. However, the victim was wearing a manually inflatable life jacket that was never deployed. In five of the accidents, there were wearable life jackets onboard the boat, but the victims were not wearing them.

The recap below illustrates the importance of safe boating practices. It provides a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in Pennsylvania last year and is intended to provide information to help improve boating safety in the Commonwealth.

1. 1 Fatality

Red Moshannon Creek, Clearfield County
3/27/10, 2:00 p.m., Saturday

A 62-year-old male paddler lost his life when his 9-foot kayak capsized. The victim was competing in a down-river race when his boat capsized, and he was ejected. A witness on the water stated that the victim struggled, trying to maintain contact with his boat and paddle. The witness threw a rope to the victim who made no attempt to grab it. Another person threw a rope, and it was also ignored. The victim tried to swim to a bridge pier in the middle of the creek, rather than towards shore. He stopped and lost consciousness, rolling to a facedown position. Very quickly, rescue personnel retrieved him and took him to shore. Emergency response performed CPR and administered oxygen. The victim was transported to Clearfield Hospital by EMS. Then, he was moved to University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Pittsburgh by air medical transport where he passed away on March 30. The victim could swim and was a very experienced boater. It is unknown if he had any formal instruction in boating safety. The water temperature was 36 degrees, so sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) was a major factor. The victim was wearing a manually inflatable life jacket, but it was not deployed.

2. 2 Fatalities

Allegheny River, Allegheny County
4/10/10, 2:30 p.m., Saturday

A 26-year-old male angler and a 59-year-old male angler lost their lives when their 16-foot open motorboat capsized when it was drawn into a low head dam by

the recirculating current. There were three men onboard the boat when they approached the Lock #3 dam from downstream and got too close. The boat slipped sideways and began to take on water over the bow. It soon capsized putting all three men into the hydraulic below the dam. The boat's operator made it to shore, but the two passengers drowned. There were no buoys marking the dam at this time of year. Emergency response personnel recovered the victims' bodies the same day. The older victim was a poor swimmer, the younger one was an average swimmer. The water temperature was 58 degrees, so hypothermia or sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) may have been factors. The boat was legally equipped with wearable life jackets, but the victims were not wearing them. The operator was an experienced boater who had no formal instruction in boating safety.

3. 1 Fatality

Lake Winola, Wyoming County
5/7/10, 1:00 p.m., Friday

A 16-year-old female lost her life when the 18-foot open motorboat in which she was a passenger collided with a 25-foot barge used for pile driving on the lake. The operator was the father of the victim and did not see the barge until the last moment when it was too late to avoid the collision. There were four people onboard the motorboat. The operator was on plane, travelling at a high rate of speed when the collision occurred. The barge was moving slowly around the lake when the operator saw the motorboat turn and head directly toward him. He tried to wave the approaching boat off with no success. Upon impact, the victim was ejected from the vessel and struck the water, never resurfacing. The autopsy report indicated that the victim had drowned. She

was an average swimmer, but the water temperature was 64 degrees, so sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) may have been a factor. The victim suffered a head injury in the impact, which may also have been a factor. Dive personnel found the victim's body the same day. The operator and another passenger (his son) were both seriously injured. The boat was legally equipped with life jackets, but they were not worn by anyone onboard. The operator was an inexperienced boater who had very little time at the helm of this newly purchased boat. The operator and his children (including the victim) had recently completed an approved U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary classroom boating course.

4. 1 Fatality
Memorial Lake, Lebanon County
5/15/10, 1:30 p.m., Saturday

A 67-year-old female paddler lost her life when the 16-foot canoe she and her husband were paddling capsized. The couple struggled to stay afloat. A couple in a fishing boat on the lake noticed the struggling couple and arrived about five minutes after the paddlers entered the water. The rescuers pulled the victim into their boat and began CPR on the now unconscious paddler. Emergency response was waiting on shore, and the victim was transported to the hospital where she passed away two days later. The water temperature was 61 degrees, so sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) was a factor. The boat was adequately equipped with wearable life jackets, but the victim was not wearing one. Both paddlers could swim but were very inexperienced boaters and had no formal instruction in boating safety. They had purchased the boat two days before the accident.

5. 1 Fatality
Lake Galena, Bucks County
5/25/10, time unknown, Tuesday

A 63-year-old male paddler lost his life when he apparently fell overboard while fishing from his 10-foot kayak. His boat was found floating in the lake, upright and dry, but unoccupied. The victim was an experienced boater who was reported missing after not returning from his fishing trip. The victim's body was recovered three days later. The victim could swim. It is unknown if the victim had any formal instruction in boating safety. The boat was legally equipped with life jackets, but the victim was not wearing one. Alcohol was a probable factor in this accident.

6. 1 Fatality
Lake Arthur, Butler County
7/24/10, 2:15 p.m., Saturday

A 37-year-old male lost his life when he drowned while swimming from his 22-foot auxiliary sailboat. Wind moved the drifting boat away from the swimmer and the victim

began having trouble staying afloat. As he called for help, his wife unsuccessfully tried to throw him a type IV personal flotation device. She did not know how to start the boat's motor or sail the vessel. She called for help, and a nearby boat responded. The victim was brought onboard the responders' boat and CPR was started. Emergency personnel administered CPR on shore. The victim was then moved by air medical transport to the hospital but did not recover. The boat was legally equipped with life jackets, but the victim was not wearing one. He could swim, but was an inexperienced boater with no formal instruction in boating safety. ☐

