



Recap of 2012 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities

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In 2012, nine recreational boating accidents resulted in 11 fatalities. This is 11 fewer fatalities than the number reported in 2011 and below the last 10-year average of 12.8 victims. Factoring in the 2012 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 13 victims. Only three of the 11 victims were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Seven of the 11 victims were not wearing a life jacket but did have one onboard the boat.

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

1. 1 Fatality

**Susquehanna River, Lancaster County, 1/28/12,
10:45 p.m., Saturday**

A 24-year-old male paddler lost his life when his kayak capsized. The victim was paddling with a friend to an island on the Susquehanna River where they had previously camped. They encountered rough waters, and the victim's kayak overturned. His friend tried to assist, but the victim panicked and pulled his friend into the water. The friend then swam to shore and called 911 and last witnessed the victim holding onto his kayak as it floated downstream. The victim's body was recovered March 11. Both paddlers were wearing approved life jackets and had over 500 hours of paddling experience but had no formal instruction in boating safety. The water temperature was 38 degrees F, so hypothermia or sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) may have been factors.

2. 1 Fatality

**Driscoll Pond, Sullivan County, 3/20/12,
8:30 p.m., Tuesday**

A 31-year-old male lost his life when he fell overboard off his 12-foot open motorboat while standing up in the boat. The passengers onboard tried pulling the victim from the water and into the bow of the small craft. Due to the increased weight in the bow of the boat and improper loading, the vessel took on water and capsized within seconds. When the vessel capsized, the victim and the other two passengers entered the water. One of the passengers attempted to save the victim, a reported non-swimmer, but was unable to swim to the boat while aiding the victim. The



During last year's National Safe Boating Week Celebration at the State Capitol Building, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission promoted the importance of wearing life jackets. Each year, on average, 700 people die in boating-related accidents nationwide. Nearly 80 percent of the victims were not wearing life jackets. Pictured are (left to right) Board President Steven M. Ketterer, PFBC Executive Director John A. Arway, State Representative Keith Gillespie and PFBC Bureau of Boating & Outreach Director Laurel Anders.

victim was not wearing a life jacket, and there were no life jackets found on board the vessel. Alcohol use and sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) may have been factors. The victim was an experienced boater but had no formal instruction in boating safety.

3. 1 Fatality

**Allegheny River, Warren County, 5/19/12,
5:30 p.m., Saturday**

A 32-year-old male lost his life after the rented 10-foot kayak he was paddling capsized. The victim was unable to recover and started screaming for help. The three other kayakers with whom he was paddling were approximately 150 yards away and unable to assist due to the swift current. The victim was last seen going under the water. His body was recovered six days later. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, but there was a life jacket on board the vessel. Alcohol use and sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) may have been factors. The victim was a novice boater and had no formal instruction in boating safety.

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4. 1 Fatality

**Ohio River, Allegheny County, 5/20/12,
3:20 p.m., Sunday**

A 24-year-old female lost her life when the personal watercraft she was a passenger on traveled too close to a dam. Both the operator and the passenger were caught in the boil below the dam for an unknown period of time. Another boater pulled them from the water, and they were treated by Emergency Medical Services personnel prior to being transported to the hospital. The victim was pronounced dead at the hospital and the operator received minor injuries. Both were wearing life jackets prior to the accident. The watercraft has not been recovered. The operator was an experienced boater and had taken formal instruction in boating safety.

5. 1 Fatality

**Lehigh River, Carbon County, 7/21/12,
3:30 p.m., Saturday**

A 50-year-old female lost her life when she fell overboard from a commercial inflatable raft when it struck a rock. Upon impact, the victim and one of four other passengers onboard the raft were thrown into the water. Two passengers attempted to reach the victim with a paddle but were unsuccessful. The victim was then observed floating face down in the water. When the victim was retrieved from the water, she was unresponsive and not breathing. The victim was transported to a local hospital then life flighted to a medical center where she was admitted to the intensive care unit. The victim was pronounced dead the following day. The coroner's report ruled the death a drowning. Witnesses report the victim was wearing a life jacket at the time of the incident but was not wearing a helmet. The victim was a non-swimmer, had no prior experience whitewater rafting and had not taken a formal boating safety course.

6. 1 Fatality

**Allegheny River, Allegheny County, 7/25/12,
9:00 p.m., Wednesday**

A 31-year-old male lost his life when he fell overboard from a 20-foot pontoon boat. The victim was outside of the passenger carrying area while the boat was underway and fell over the bow of the boat. The operator entered the water and tried to save the victim but was unsuccessful at putting a life jacket on the victim or holding onto the victim. The victim disappeared under the water. The body of the victim was recovered the following day. The operator was under the influence of alcohol and was arrested for Boating Under the Influence. Alcohol use was a factor. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, but there were wearable life jackets on board the vessel. The boat operator was an experienced boater but had no formal instruction in boating safety.

7. 2 Fatalities

**Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County, 7/29/12,
1:10 p.m., Sunday**

Two males, ages 57 and 71, lost their lives when they left their 17-foot open motorboat (drifting) and entered the water. The younger victim was recovered immediately following the incident and was pronounced dead at the scene. The elder victim was recovered 9 ½ hours later. Neither victim was wearing a life jacket at the time of the incident; however, there were life jackets onboard. The boat operator was a very experienced boater but had no formal instruction in boating safety. Pre-existing health issues may have been a factor.

8. 1 Fatality

**Lake Arthur, Butler County, 8/12/12,
12:30 a.m., Sunday**

A 42-year-old male lost his life when he presumably jumped or fell overboard from a 25-foot pontoon boat that was underway. The boat's operator noticed that one passenger was missing as he returned to the dock after several hours of being underway. The body of the victim was recovered the evening of the following day. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, but there were wearable life jackets on board the vessel. The boat operator was a very experienced boater but had no formal instruction in boating safety. Alcohol use may have been a factor.

9. 2 Fatalities

**Allegheny Reservoir, McKean County, 11/11/12,
12:28 p.m., Sunday**

A 57-year-old male and 62-year-old female lost their lives when the 16-foot canoe in which they were paddling capsized. The victims were fishing on an unusually warm day in November. The victims were not wearing life jackets at the time of the incident; however, life jackets were onboard. Sudden immersion into cold water (cold water shock) was a factor.

The female victim was recovered within hours of the incident. The male victim was recovered days later. The boat operator was an experienced motorboat operator but had little experience paddling canoes and had no formal instruction in boating safety. ☐



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