



Recap of 2016 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities

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In 2016, nine recreational boating accidents resulted in 11 fatalities. This is an increase of 7 fatalities from 2015 and below the last 10-year average of 11.8 victims. Factoring in the 2016 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 11.9 victims. Only three of the 11 victims in 2016 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Seven of the 11 victims (64 percent) were not wearing a life jacket but did have them onboard the boat.

The "Recap of 2016 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities" is a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in the Commonwealth that year. This recap is intended to provide information to illustrate the importance of safe boating practices and to help improve boating safety in Pennsylvania.

1. 1 Fatality

Aughwick Creek, Huntingdon County

2/22/16, unknown, Monday

An unpowered jonboat used to access property on the Aughwick Creek was found with the deceased owner on board approximately 1 mile below the property. The victim was found in the stern of the boat with his legs hanging over the side in the water. There was no safety equipment on board. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and it is unknown if the victim had any prior formal boating safety education. Hypothermia and alcohol may have been factors.

2. 1 Fatality

Little Indian Springs Lake, Pike County

7/1/16, 3:00 p.m., Friday

The victim capsized a kayak approximately 30 feet from shore. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and could not swim. It is unknown if the victim had taken any formal boating safety education. According to witnesses, the victim went under the water and never came back up. Local rescue dive teams recovered the victim's body later that evening.

3. 1 Fatality

Westcolang Lake, Pike County

7/23/16, 7:55 p.m., Saturday

The operator of a recreational motorboat stopped the boat and entered the water to go swimming. Upon entering the water, the victim began to have difficulties and yelled for help. An individual onboard attempted to maneuver the boat closer to the victim but was having difficulty due to the wind and wave action. The individual then lost sight of the victim. The victim was recovered by rescue divers later that evening and was pronounced deceased. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and it is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education. Alcohol may have been a factor.

4. 3 Fatalities

Allegheny River, Clarion County

8/20/16, 1:30 a.m., Saturday

A motorboat accident took place on the Allegheny River in the Waterson area of Clarion County near the Armstrong County line. Four persons were onboard, three of which are now deceased. The lone survivor was flown to an area hospital for treatment. The vessel ran aground at an apparent high rate of speed, rolled over and was found upside down. The victims were not wearing life jackets, and it is unknown if they had any prior boating safety education. Alcohol and high rate of speed may have been factors.

5. 1 Fatality

West Branch Susquehanna River, Lycoming County

8/20/16, 9:10 a.m., Saturday

The operator of a cabin cruiser was cruising at approximately 30 mph when two passengers jumped from the boat into the water. The victim surfaced but was having noticeable difficulties. The other passenger attempted to assist, but the victim went under and failed to resurface. The victim's body was located later that day. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and had no prior formal boating safety education. Alcohol may have been a factor.

6. 1 Fatality

Chambers Lake, Chester County
9/15/16, 11:20 a.m., Thursday

The operator of a small motorboat fell overboard after his boat capsized at Chambers Lake. The accident was witnessed by several kayakers who raced to the scene to assist, but the victim never returned to the surface. Witnesses indicated that the operator went to the rear of his vessel and was seen adjusting his motor when the bow rose out of the water, capsizing the boat and throwing the victim overboard. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and it is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

7. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Northumberland County
10/13/16, 12:30 a.m., Thursday

The victim died when the vessel capsized below a low-head dam in Northumberland County. The victim was fishing with a friend below the PPL Dam near Hummels Wharf. As they were trolling near the dam, they lost power to the electric motor. Before they could correct the motor issue, they were pulled into the dam's boil, swamping and capsizing the boat. Both were wearing life jackets, but one of the victims could not escape the boil. The operator made it to shore and was treated at the local hospital. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

8. 1 Fatality

Allegheny River, Warren County
11/28/16, 11:15 p.m., Monday

A 52-year-old man lost his life after his boat capsized sometime during the evening. Indication is that the operator was attempting to put the vessel onto the trailer and was on the bow when the vessel capsized, throwing him into the water. The water that evening was choppy with winds about 12 to 16 mph. The water temperature was 49 degrees F. Sudden cold water immersion may have been a contributing factor. The victim was wearing a life jacket, but it is unknown if he had any formal boating safety education.

9. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Lancaster County
12/29/16, 6:00 p.m., Thursday

A 65-year-old male was reported missing and later found deceased wearing his life jacket. It is likely the victim launched his 12-foot kayak the day before onto the Conestoga River and paddled out into Susquehanna River where his kayak was found capsized. It is unknown where or when his kayak capsized, but the victim was wearing a life jacket. However, the victim was not dressed appropriately for the environmental conditions. The victim was an experienced paddler with formal boating safety education. Sudden cold water immersion and hypothermia were factors in this incident. ☐



When boating, remember to . . .

- Wear your life jacket. It floats, even if you don't. Make sure to have it buckled or zipped.
- Never operate your boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Look around. Avoid a collision by keeping a proper lookout.
- Watch your wake. It is the wave behind your boat and can cause damage.
- Stay away from man-made and natural hazards like dams and strainers (trees in the water).
- Never overload your boat. Keep your weight and gear centered.
- Stop that prop. Turn off your engine before picking up a skier or swimmer.
- Never anchor from the stern (back) of your boat—always at the bow (front).
- Stay with your boat on the upstream side if you capsize.
- Carry onboard a wearable life jacket for each person on a boat.
- Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Never take your boat over a low-head dam.

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