

BOAT

Pennsylvania



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80¢



The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine

WHO HAS BOATING ACCIDENTS?



Gene Spori
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Pennsylvania Fish Commission

Too often a weekend outing turns to tragedy because a well-meaning father or friend decides to take "all the kids" for a boat ride, or several fishing buddies go out in a small flat-bottomed boat. In a great number of boating accidents it is found that the very simplest safety precautions were ignored. Lack of PFDs and overloading frequently set the stage for boating fatalities.

Sadly, our larger group of boaters frequently overlooks the problem of boating safety. Boaters in this broad group are owners of small boats, often sportsmen.

This is not to say that most of these folks are not safe boaters, but the figures show that sportsmen in this group in Pennsylvania regularly head the list of boating fatalities. There are more of them on the waterways and they probably make more frequent trips afloat than others. Thus, on a per capita or per-hour-of-boating basis, they may not actually deserve the top spot on the fatality list. Still, this reasoning does not save lives and that is what is important.

Most boating accidents happen in what is generally regarded as nice weather. Many tragedies happen on clear, warm days with light or no wind. However, almost half of all accidents involving fatalities occur in water less than 60 degrees.

A great percentage of these fatal accidents involved individuals fishing or hunting from a john boat, canoe, or some other small craft.

Not surprising is that victims of this type of boating accident die not because of the impact of the collision or the burns of a fire or explosion, but because they drown. Putting it another way, more than 80 percent of all boating fatalities in Pennsylvania over the past five years occurred because the victims were in the water unprepared. This "sudden drowning syndrome," or disappearance under the surface of the water, results because one or more of the following is true:

- The victim was not wearing a personal flotation device.
- The victim misused alcohol.
- The victim was thrown into cold water (less than 70 degrees).

No boater wants to be involved in a boating accident or have anyone on his craft drown, but accidents do not just happen. We set up and participate in a chain of events that ends up in a boating fatality. However, these accidents can be eliminated by preparation and the reality of knowing it can indeed happen to each of us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gene Spori".

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The cover

This issue's front cover, photographed by staffer Russ Gettig, is a portrait of fall boaters interested in cruising and fishing the waters of Raystown Lake.

With sorrow we affectionately dedicate this issue to staff assistant Jayne Povleski, who passed away suddenly in August. Jayne's strengths—her family ties, friendships, and love of life—set an example for all who knew her, and she will be missed by all the Harrisburg headquarters staff and throughout the Commission. She was 28.

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Warm and Dry in the Cold and Wet

