

2025 PENNSYLVANIA BOATING INCIDENT ANALYSIS

By Ryan C. Walt – Boating Accident Review Officer

The total number of reported recreational boating incidents in Pennsylvania in 2025 decreased by 22 from 2024. Boaters and Waterways Conservation Officers reported 37 recreational boating incidents of all types, 37% less than 2024. The number of vessels involved in reported accidents totaled 44, a decrease of 32 from 2024. Incident reports indicated 22 injuries requiring medical treatment, which was sixteen less than in 2024. Property damage to vessels totaled \$54,320 which was \$142,080 less than the amount reported in the previous year. One vessel incident comprised \$7,000 or 13% of that total. Federal and state law requires that incidents involving death, disappearance, injuries requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, and/or property damage exceeding \$2,000 be reported to the state. Incidents with lesser property damage and/or minor injuries are not required to be reported.

Of the 37 reported accidents in 2025, the most common types of incidents were collisions with vessels and capsizing. The types of reported accidents were as follows:

Type	Quantity	Type	Quantity
Capsizing	13	Struck by prop	1
Skier mishap	7	Person ejected from vessel	1
Collision with vessel	5	Person leaves vessel	1
Fire/explosion	3	Fall in boat	1
Falls overboard	2	Swamping	1
Struck submerged/fixed object	1	Grounding	1
TOTAL 37			

In 2025, 9 recreational boating incidents resulted in 10 fatalities. This is the same as the previous year and is slightly above the 10-year average of 9.9 victims. Factoring in the 2025 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 10.5 victims. Two of the 10 victims in 2025 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death.

The attached "Recap of 2025 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities" is a summary of all fatal recreational boating incidents in the Commonwealth that year. The recap's last page details statistical information about 2025'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.

**PENNSYLVANIA’S RECREATIONAL BOATING FATALITIES
2025 RECAP**

These brief recaps are intended to provide awareness of fatal recreational boating incidents. Details are subject to change pending a full investigation. Annual incident analyses and updated fatality recaps may be found on the Commission’s website at: <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/fishandboat/about-us/agency-overview/reports-strategic-plans.html#sortCriteria=%40copapwpyear%20descending>

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|----|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | 1 Fatality
01/28/2025 | Allegheny River
2:24 P.M. | Warren County
Tuesday |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|

A 20-year-old male is deceased after his 10-foot kayak capsized in icy cold water. The victim attempted to cross the Allegheny River to look at an unidentified object when he capsized. Two individuals witnessed the victim go under the water and not resurface. The victim was using a shovel as a paddle and was not wearing a lifejacket nor was there one onboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden cold-water immersion may have been a factor.

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|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. | 1 Fatality
06/01/2025 | Schuylkill River
8:56 P.M. | Montgomery County
Sunday |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|

A 26-year-old male is deceased after his 12-foot open motorboat capsized. The river stage was high and the current was fast after recent rainfall. The boat was drifting down the river when victim attempted to start the engine, in the process of restarting the engine the boat capsized and became lodged against a construction flume pipe in connection with a construction site at a bridge. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket but there were lifejackets onboard. The operator did have formal boating safety education.

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|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3. | 1 Fatality
06/07/2025 | Loyalsock Creek
11:17 A.M. | Lycoming County
Saturday |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|

A 26-year-old male is deceased after his 8-foot kayak capsized in a strainer. Recent high-water events had caused debris to compile and cause obstructions to paddlecraft. The victim was paddling with another kayak when both kayaks engaged tree debris across the creek. In an attempt to free the other kayak, the victims kayak capsized. The victim was later recovered after a search. The victim was not wearing a lifejacket and there was no lifejacket onboard. The operator did not have formal boating safety education.

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|----|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 4. | 1 Fatality
06/11/2025 | Lake Wilhelm
2:40 P.M. | Mercer County
Wednesday |
|----|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|

An 81-year-old male is deceased after he fell overboard while docking his 19-foot pontoon boat. The victim was the only individual on the boat and no one witnessed the incident. He was not wearing a lifejacket but lifejackets were onboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education.

5. 1 Fatality
06/13/2025

Youghiogheny River
5:45 P.M.

Fayette County
Friday

A 43-year-old male is deceased after his 9-foot kayak capsized in Ohiopyle State Park. The river stage and current was above normal due to recent rainfall. The victim and his friends were kayaking Class III rapids on the lower Youghiogheny River when he got stuck in a hydraulic. The victim was wearing a lifejacket. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education but was an experienced paddler.

6. 2 Fatality
07/02/2025

Lake Erie
3:57 P.M.

Erie County
Wednesday

Two 49-year-old males are deceased after leaving their vessel. The 24-foot cabin motorboat was broken down and drifting in the water awaiting for the towboat to arrive. While waiting, victim 1 jumped overboard and became distressed, victim 2 emptied his pockets and jumped in to assist, both subsequently drowned. The victims were not wearing lifejackets but they did have them onboard. The victims did not have any formal boating safety education.

7. 1 Fatality
07/03/2025

Lake Wallenpaupack
12:30 P.M.

Pike County
Thursday

A 42-year-old female is deceased after she fell off a tube being pulled by a rented 22-foot pontoon boat. The boat was making a turn and hit a wake causing the tube to flip. The victim was observed facedown in the water and was unresponsive when retrieved back to the boat and declared deceased on scene. The operator did not possess a boating safety education certificate. The victim was wearing a lifejacket. Alcohol and drugs may have been a factor.

8. 1 Fatality
07/18/2025

Lake Erie
5:35 P.M.

Erie County
Friday

A 17-year-old female is deceased after the 10-foot kayak she was on capsized in Lake Erie. Two individuals took a kayak not belonging to either of the individuals, and without the permission of the owner of the kayak. They proceeded to hand paddle the one-person kayak into Lake Erie. The kayak capsized and each victim was separated from the kayak. One victim was picked up by a personal watercraft that responded to cries of help from the beach. The 17-year-old victim disappeared. Her body was recovered two days later. The operator did not have any formal boating safety education. Neither the victim or operator were wearing lifejackets and there were none onboard. Alcohol and drugs may have been a factors.

9. 1 Fatality
09/17/2025

Acme Dam
1:02 P.M.

Westmoreland County
Wednesday

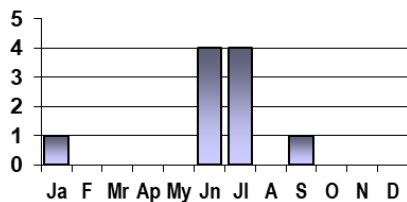
A 67-year-old male is deceased after his 12-foot kayak capsized while drifting on Acme Dam. The victim capsized without making a sound and the kayak was later observed floating unmanned. The

victim was not wearing a lifejacket however there was one onboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Alcohol and drugs may have been a factor.

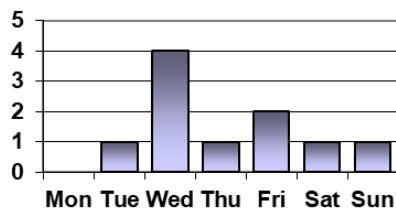
TOTALS FOR 2025: There were 37 recreational boating incidents reported, 22 of which involved injuries requiring medical treatment, and 9 accidents that resulted in 10 fatalities.

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

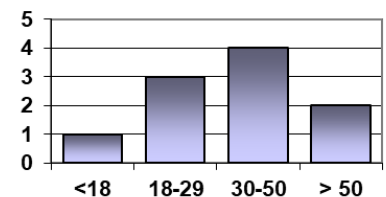
FATALITIES by MONTH



FATALITIES by DAY



FATALITIES by AGE



COLD WEATHER DATA

The first chart below shows the number of incidents and percentage of incidents resulting in fatalities from 2002 to 2011. The percentage of incidents 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, kayak or paddleboard to wear a life jacket from November 1st to April 30th of each year. The second chart below shows incident statistics from 2012 to present, to show the impact of the regulation change.

