



Recap of 2011 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities

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Twenty-two recreational boating accidents resulted in an equal number of fatalities. This is 15 more fatalities than the number reported in 2010 and the second highest since 1992. In addition, it is above the last 10-year average of 12 victims. Factoring in the 2011 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 12.8 victims. Only three of the 22 victims were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. In 16 of the

accidents, there were wearable life jackets onboard the boat, but the victims did not wear them.

The recap below is a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in the 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

**Allegheny River, Venango County, 4/17/11,
3:40 p.m., Sunday**

A 56-year-old male lost his life when his 17-foot kayak capsized. The Rockland Volunteer Fire Department rescue boat retrieved the victim who was wearing a Type III life jacket and was found face down in the water. Emergency Medical Services transported the victim to UPMC Northwest where he was pronounced dead. It is not known if the victim could swim, but the victim was an experienced boater. The victim had no formal instruction in boating safety. The water temperature was 49 degrees, so sudden immersion into cold water was a major factor.

2. 1 Fatality

**Fishing Creek, Columbia County, 5/7/11,
6:10 p.m., Saturday**

A 37-year-old male lost his life when his 9½-foot kayak capsized while attempting to paddle over a low-head dam. The victim, who was wearing a life jacket and could swim, was thrown from the kayak when his bow hit the boil and was forced under. Several unsuccessful attempts to rescue him were made. He was ejected from the boil and recovered by a member of his party. Emergency personnel administered CPR and transported the victim to Bloomsburg Hospital where he was pronounced dead. The water temperature was 55 degrees, so sudden immersion into cold water was a factor. The operator was wearing a Type III life jacket and was an experienced boater but had no formal instruction in boating safety.

3. 1 Fatality

**Kahle Lake, Venango County, 5/8/11,
time unknown, Sunday**

A 59-year-old man lost his life when he capsized or fell overboard from his 10-foot open motorboat. The water temperature was 55 degrees, so hypothermia or sudden immersion into cold water may have been factors. It is not known if the victim could swim. The victim was an experienced boater but did not have any formal instruction in boating safety. The victim was not wearing a life jacket.

4. 1 Fatality

**Mahoning Creek, Armstrong County, 5/21/11,
5:45 p.m., Saturday**

A 61-year-old man lost his life when his overloaded 14-foot canoe capsized. All three paddlers were ejected. Two passengers, only one of whom was wearing a life jacket, made it to shore. The victim could not swim and was not wearing his life jacket. The victim's body was recovered the following morning. The victim had no formal boating safety education but was an experienced boater. The water temperature was 56 degrees, so hypothermia or sudden immersion into cold water may have been factors.

5. 1 Fatality

**Youghiogheny River, Fayette County, 5/21/11,
3:20 p.m., Saturday**

A 31-year-old man lost his life when his 12-foot kayak capsized. The victim was with a friend when the friend capsized and swam to shore. The victim remained in his boat and attempted to retrieve his friend's kayak downstream and disappeared from view. The victim's empty kayak was observed traveling over the South Connellsville Dam. Neither paddler was wearing a life jacket. The kayaks were designed for flat-water, not whitewater, and neither had spray skirts. The victim had no whitewater paddling experience and no formal boating safety education. It is not known if the victim could swim. Water levels were three times the normal level. The air temperature was in the low 80s, and the water temperature was in the low 50s. Hypothermia or sudden immersion into cold water may have been factors.

6. 1 Fatality

**Lehigh River, Lehigh County, 5/25/11,
7:30 p.m., Wednesday**

A 53-year-old woman lost her life when she launched a 13-foot canoe to rescue two dogs. One hour later, the empty canoe was discovered approximately ½ mile downstream from where she launched. Her body was recovered at Kimmet's Lock the following weekend. The victim was not wearing

a life jacket. The water temperature was in the low 60s, so hypothermia or sudden immersion into cold water may have been factors. The victim had a health condition that may have contributed to her drowning. It is unknown if the victim could swim. The victim had some boating experience but no formal boating safety education.

7. 1 Fatality

Delaware River, Pike County, 5/28/11, 2:30 p.m., Saturday

A 71-year-old man lost his life when he fell overboard from a 12-foot inflatable raft. The victim was with three other passengers when they encountered a set of rapids in the area of Butler's Riff. According to the passengers, the victim went under and never resurfaced. The victim and passengers were not wearing life jackets. The victim was an experienced boater but had no formal boating safety education. Sudden immersion into cold water may have been a factor. Alcohol use may have been a factor. The victim's body was recovered two days later.

8. 1 Fatality

Lake Erie, Erie County, 5/30/11, 6:25 p.m., Monday

A 25-year-old woman lost her life when the 32-foot cabin motorboat she was onboard caught fire and exploded. The boat's operator was having trouble starting the engine after refueling the boat's fuel tanks. When the engine turned over, it ignited the fuel causing an explosion. Five others were injured in the accident. The victim and four others were not wearing life jackets. Only one passenger was wearing a life jacket and escaped with minor injuries. The operator of the boat was not an experienced boater and had no formal boating safety education.

9. 1 Fatality

Foster Joseph Sayers Dam, Centre County, 6/3/11, 5:00 p.m., Friday

A 70-year-old man lost his life when he fell overboard while trying to launch an 18-foot pontoon boat. The victim was on the dock and released the dock lines. As he attempted to board the boat, a wind gust caught the boat and pushed it away from the dock. The victim held on to the railing, was pulled off the dock and fell into the water. The victim was not wearing a life jacket. The operator threw a Type IV throwable life jacket to the victim, but the victim did not reach for the device and went face down in the water. The operator jumped into the water to assist but was unable to keep the victim from sinking. The victim's body was recovered approximately 20 minutes after the incident. Lifesaving efforts were unsuccessful, and the victim was pronounced dead at the hospital. The operator of the boat was an experienced boater but had no formal boating safety education. It is not known if the victim was able to swim. The victim's health and physical condition may have been factors.

10. 1 Fatality

Canoe Creek Lake, Blair County, 6/14/11, 7:38 a.m., Tuesday

A 71-year-old man lost his life when he apparently fell overboard from his 11-foot open motorboat. He was found approximately 100 yards from the boat with one arm in a Type III life jacket. It's likely that the victim was not wearing the life jacket

when the accident occurred. It is unknown if the victim could swim. The victim's health and physical condition may have been factors. The victim was an experienced boater, but it's unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

11. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Dauphin County, 6/15/11, 4:12 p.m., Wednesday

A 41-year-old man lost his life when his 9½-foot kayak went over the Dock Street Dam. The victim was an inexperienced paddler. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, although one was found in the boil of the dam along with an inflatable air bladder. The victim had not taken a formal boating safety education course. The victim could swim. The victim's body was recovered the same day.

12. 1 Fatality

Youghiogheny River Lake, Somerset County, 7/2/11, 2:15 p.m., Saturday

A 50-year-old man lost his life when the 34-foot catamaran he was operating capsized. The speedboat was travelling at a high rate of speed when the operator lost control. All four persons onboard were ejected. Other boaters rescued the passengers. The victim had been boating for 15 years, so he was an experienced boater but had no formal boating safety education. There were life jackets onboard, but the victim and passengers were not wearing them. The victim could swim. Alcohol may have been a factor. Divers recovered the victim's body four days later.

13. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Bradford County, 7/9/11, 12:30 p.m., Saturday

A 47-year-old man lost his life when his 12-foot open motorboat went through a sweeper (overhanging tree branch). The victim and a passenger drifted into strong current, and they got swept off their boat by an overhanging tree along the shoreline of an island. The victim and passenger both clung to a tree branch. The passenger was unable to hold onto the tree any longer. He broke free from the tree and was washed into shallow water on the opposite shoreline downstream. The victim, who remained trapped, continued to struggle and call for help. The victim went under the water. His body and boat were found trapped under the surface by a strainer. There were two life jackets on board, but they were not worn. The victim was an average swimmer and an experienced boater. He had no formal boating safety education.

14. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Lancaster County, 7/18/11, time unknown, Monday

A 61-year-old man lost his life while boating on his 16-foot open motorboat. The victim's body was found in shallow water with the boat nearby. The victim was wearing a life jacket. The victim drowned, but health or heat related issues could have contributed to the fatality. It is unknown if the victim could swim. The victim was an experienced boater but did not have any formal boating safety education.

15. 1 Fatality

Lake Erie, Erie County, 7/27/11, 6:15 p.m., Wednesday

A 27-year-old man lost his life when he drowned while swimming from a 27-foot sailboat. The victim became distressed. A passenger onboard the sailboat threw a Type III life jacket to the victim who was unable to recover it. The passenger entered the water to assist the distressed victim but was unable to recover him. Emergency personnel were able to recover the body using side scan sonar approximately six hours later. All required safety equipment was onboard the boat at the time of the incident. The victim was not wearing a life jacket. The victim's swimming skills are unknown. The operator of the boat was an experienced boater and had taken a formal boating safety course.

16. 1 Fatality

Mauch Chunk Lake, Carbon County, 7/30/11, 1:10 p.m., Saturday

An 88-year-old angler was fishing from his 9-foot open motorboat when it capsized. Waterways Conservation Officers arrived at the location of the capsized boat and found the angler unconscious. Officers retrieved the angler from the water and performed CPR. The victim was transported by patrol boat to Emergency Medical Services staff and airlifted to the hospital where he was pronounced dead. The boat was equipped with life jackets; however, the victim was not wearing one. The victim's health and physical condition may have been factors. It is unknown if the victim could swim. The victim was an experienced boater but did not have any formal boating safety education.

17. 1 Fatality

Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County, 7/31/11, 7:30 a.m., Sunday

A 54-year-old angler and a passenger were fishing from his 19-foot open motorboat when he fell overboard. The victim did not surface, and repeated attempts by the passenger and nearby boaters did not produce the victim. A dive unit recovered the victim's body three hours later. The boat was equipped with life jackets; however, no one onboard was wearing one. The victim's health and physical condition may have been a factor. It is unknown if the victim could swim. The boat operator was an experienced boater, but it is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

18. 1 Fatality

Lehigh River, Lehigh County, 8/7/11, 4:30 p.m., Sunday

A 34-year-old male drowned when his kayak capsized. His fellow kayakers saw he was in distress and reached him and brought him to shore. An ambulance transported him to a local hospital where he died one hour later. The cause of death was drowning and toxicology reports are pending. The investigation is ongoing.

19. 1 Fatality

Delaware River, Philadelphia County, 8/13/11, 10:15 p.m., Saturday

A 46-year-old male lost his life after entering the water from an 18-foot open motorboat to swim. The victim and four others had been at anchor on the river while listening to a concert. They

later were underway when three of the passengers entered the water to swim. One of the subjects noticed the victim struggling and observed him going under the water. The victim's body was recovered six days later, and an autopsy ruled his death a drowning. The boat was equipped with life jackets; however, no one onboard was wearing one. It is unknown if the victim could swim. The boat operator was an experienced boater and had taken a formal boating safety education course. Drug and alcohol use may have been a factor.

20. 1 Fatality

Hemlock Lake, Indiana County, 8/27/11, 4:05 p.m., Saturday

A 63-year-old male lost his life when he fell from a 12-foot open motorboat. The victim and his son were fishing and shifted their weight to the same side of the boat. This caused the boat to capsize, ejecting both passengers. The son was able to swim to shore. The father held on to a seat from the boat, but the seat was not designed to be a flotation aid. The boat, equipped with an electric motor that was still in gear, returned upright and continued down the lake. The body of the victim was recovered the next morning. All required safety equipment was onboard the boat at the time of the incident; however, the victim was not wearing a life jacket. The victim's swimming skills are unknown. The victim was an experienced boater, but the victim had no formal boating safety education. The victim's health and physical condition may have been factors.

21. 1 Fatality

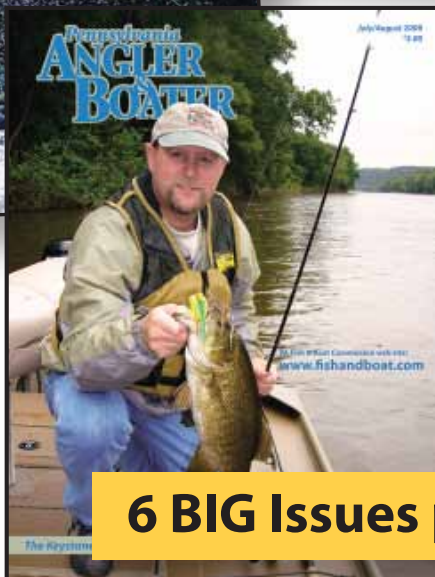
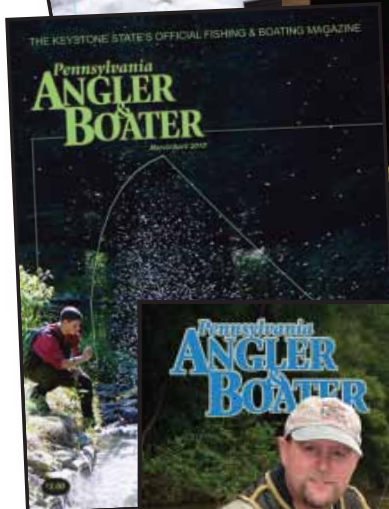
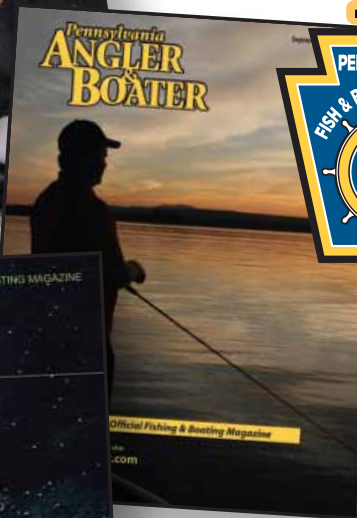
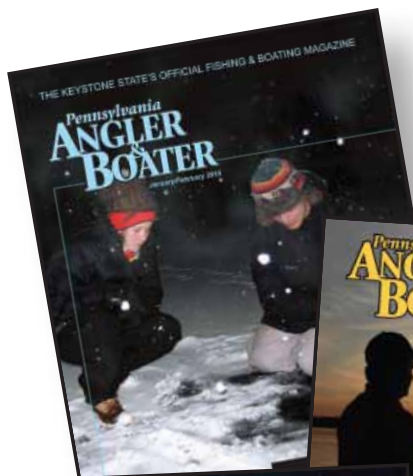
Pinchot Lake, York County, 8/27/11, 9:00 a.m., Saturday

A 61-year-old male lost his life when his 26-foot rowing scull capsized. The victim yelled for help and was unable to free himself from the scull. The victim was underwater for approximately five minutes before other boaters were able to pull him into a fishing boat and take him to shore. The victim suffered a massive heart attack. He was admitted to the hospital and in critical condition for three days before being removed from life support and pronounced dead. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and there were no life jackets onboard. It is unknown if the victim could swim. The victim was an experienced boater, but it is unknown if he had any formal boating safety education.

22. 1 Fatality

Lake Marburg, York County, 9/2/11, 6:30 p.m., Friday

A 64-year-old male lost his life when he fell overboard from his 22-foot pontoon boat. Officers responded to a report of an intoxicated boat operator on the lake. They found the boat in a boat slip with the motor still running and the navigation lights on. The victim was face down in the water. He was not wearing a life jacket, but there were life jackets onboard. The victim's swimming skills are unknown. The victim was an experienced boater, but the victim had no formal boating safety education. Alcohol use was a factor, and the victim's health and physical condition may have been factors. □



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