

2022-2023 Recreational Boating Accident Statistics



**California State Parks
Division of Boating
and Waterways**





Our Mission

The California State Parks and Recreation's Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) brings together a body of knowledge as the state's expert in recreational boating-related matters, including public access, safety and education, marine law enforcement, and consumer and environmental protection.

The Division of Boating and Waterways

For decades, California's reputation as a boater's paradise has lured millions of visitors to California State Parks and thousands of miles of waterways and coastline. For over 60 years, DBW has improved and safeguarded the boating experience for all users – from Mission Bay in San Diego to the crystal clear water of Lake Tahoe and along every lake, river and stream in between.

DBW is responsible for planning, developing, and improving facilities on state-owned and state-managed properties, including those on State Parks and State Water Project properties. The division also provides funding to local agencies so that they can renew deteriorated facilities or develop new public access opportunities; furthers environmentally sound boating practices through its clean and green programs; and conducts research on climate change and wave prediction as they relate to navigation and coastal protection.

Purpose for Collecting Recreational Boating Accidents

To improve safety on California waterways, DBW collects and analyzes recreational boating accident reports to inform safety programs implemented by the division, law enforcement agencies and educational boating institutions. Information contained in the reports is confidential and may not be used in prosecuting any violations which may have occurred, nor in civil litigation of any kind. DBW is responsible for submitting all recreational boating accidents to the U.S. Coast Guard that meet the requirements of Title 33 CFR Part 173.1



Accident Reporting as Required by State Law

A recreational boat owner/operator must report their boat accident to DBW if the accident results in death, disappearance or injury to a person requiring medical attention beyond first aid, damage to a vessel or other property exceeding \$500, or complete loss of a vessel, regardless of value. Boat accidents must be reported within the following specific time periods:

Within 48 hours of an accident that involves:

- Death occurring within 24 hours of the accident
- Disappearance of a person
- Injury beyond first aid

Within 10 days of an accident that involves:

- A person who dies more than 24 hours after an accident occurs
- Property damage exceeding \$500, or there is a complete loss of a vessel

Reportable Boating Accidents

A vessel is considered to be involved in a “boating accident” whenever a death, missing person, personal injury, property damage, or total vessel loss results from the vessel’s operation, construction, seaworthiness, equipment, or machinery.

The following are examples of accident types included in this report:

- Grounding, capsizing, sinking, or flooding/swamping.
- Falls in overboard a vessel.
- Persons ejected from a vessel.
- Fire or explosions that occur while underway and while anchored, moored or docked if the fire resulted from the vessel or vessel equipment.
- Water-skiing or mishap involving a towable device.
- Collision with another vessel or object.
- Striking a submerged object.
- A person struck by a vessel, propeller, propulsion unit, or steering machinery.
- Carbon monoxide exposure.
- Electrocuting due to stray current related to a vessel.
- Casualties while swimming from a vessel that is not anchored, moored or docked.
- Casualties where natural causes served as a contributing factor in the death of an individual but the determined cause of death was drowning.
- Casualties from natural phenomena such as interaction with marine life and interaction with nature.
- Casualties where a person falls off an anchored vessel.
- Casualties that result when a person departs an anchored, disabled vessel to make repairs, such as unfouling an anchor or cleaning out the intake of a jet-propelled vessel.



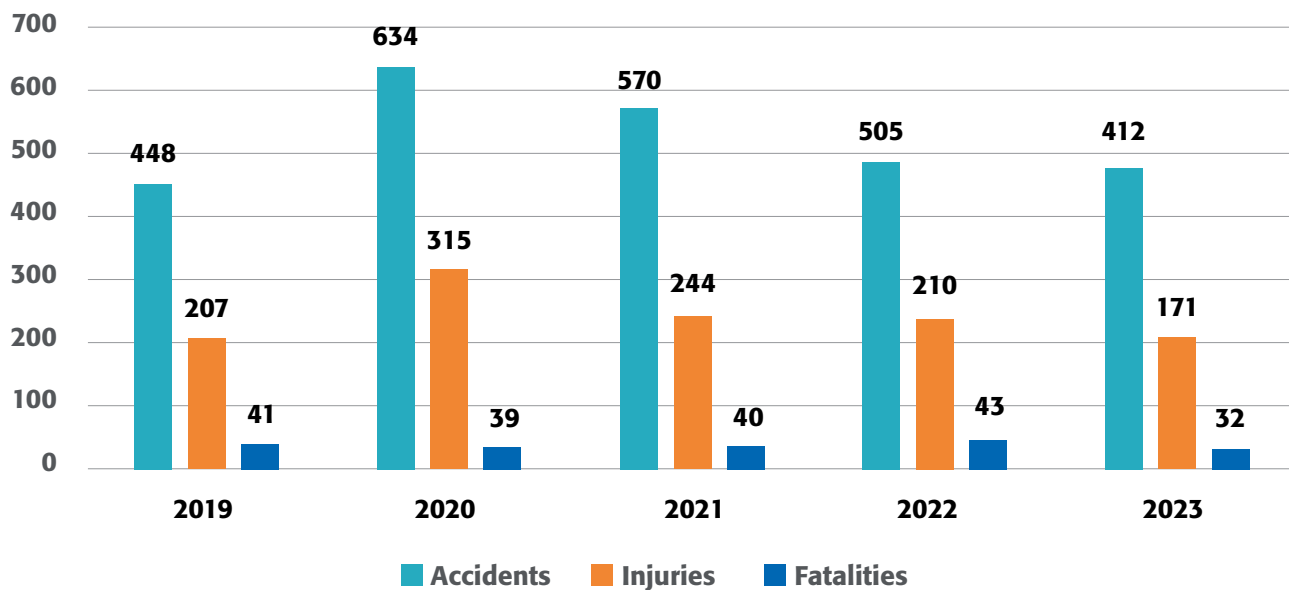


Non-Reportable Boating Accidents

Not every occurrence involving a vessel is considered within the scope of the program. The following occurrences are examples of accidents that are considered non-reportable:

- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of self-inflicted wounds, alcohol poisoning, gunshot wounds, or the ingestion of drugs, controlled substances or poison.
- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of assault by another person or persons while aboard a vessel.
- A person dies or is injured from natural causes while aboard a vessel where the vessel did not contribute to the casualty.
- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of jumping, diving, or swimming for pleasure from an anchored, moored, or docked vessel.
- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of swimming to retrieve an object or a vessel that is adrift from its mooring or dock, having departed from a place of inherent safety, such as the shore or pier.
- Property damage occurs or a person dies, is injured, or is missing while preparing a vessel for launching or retrieving and the vessel is not on the water and capable/ready for its intended use.
- Property damage occurs if a person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of a fire on shore or a pier that spreads to a vessel or vessels.
- Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel or a person dies, is injured, or is missing from such a vessel as a result of storms, or unusual tidal or sea conditions; or when a vessel gets underway in those conditions in an attempt to rescue a person or vessel.
- Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel due to lack of maintenance on the vessel or the structure to which it was moored.

Accidents, Injuries, and Fatalities 2019-2023



Accidents by Location 2022 and 2023

Waterbody Type	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities
	2022	2022	2022	2023	2023	2023
Colorado River	33	14	8	17	18	1
Delta	42	15	4	51	21	2
Northern Coast	27	13	4	12	3	5
Northern Lake	121	64	10	115	51	10
Northern River	21	12	3	18	6	4
San Francisco Bay Area	13	3	4	7	4	1
Southern Coast	201	57	4	160	51	5
Southern Lake	45	30	6	28	15	2
Southern River	2	2	0	4	2	2

Accidents by County 2023

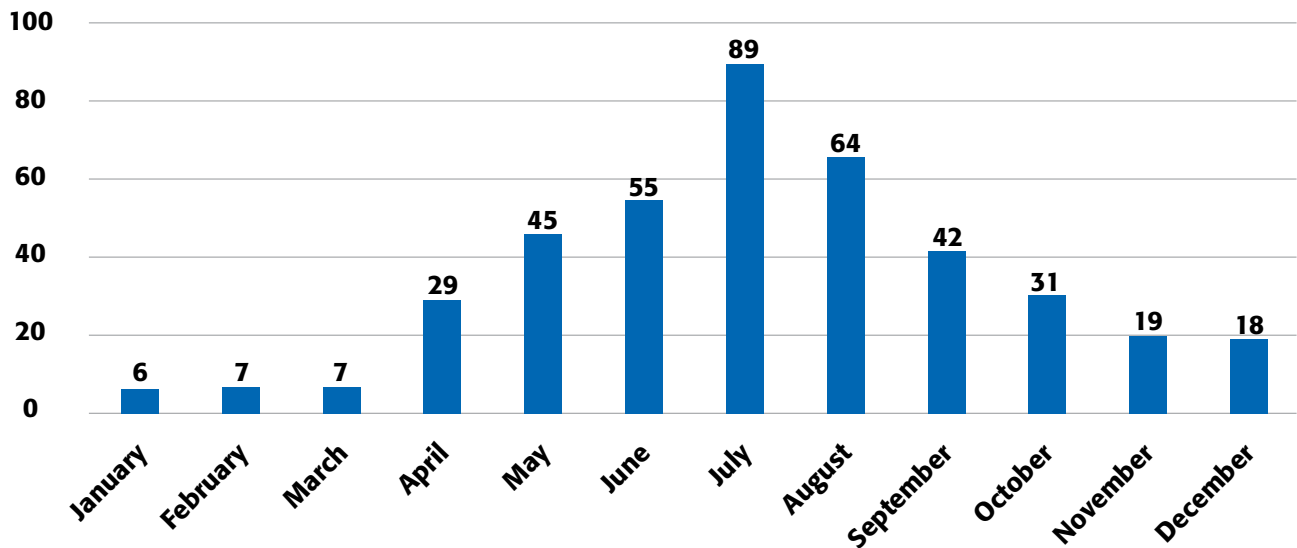
County	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Property Damage
Alameda	2	0	2	\$-
Amador	1	1	0	\$1,500.00
Butte	6	1	0	\$37,100.00
Calaveras	12	5	1	\$69,250.00
Colusa	1	0	0	\$2,000.00
Contra Costa	27	11	2	\$273,000.00
El Dorado	10	8	1	\$59,500.00
Fresno	21	7	1	\$58,500.00
Humboldt	1	0	1	\$-
Kern	2	5	0	\$24,000.00
Lake	9	2	1	\$68,398.00
Los Angeles	51	22	2	\$858,700.00
Madera	5	3	0	\$8,000.00
Marin	4	2	0	\$37,000.00
Mariposa	2	0	0	\$27,500.00
Mendocino	3	0	4	\$60,000.00
Merced	4	1	0	\$4,250.00
Napa	10	6	0	\$47,600.00
Nevada	5	1	1	\$53,000.00
Orange	56	7	0	\$1,251,601.00
Placer	12	5	1	\$139,600.00
Plumas	3	1	0	\$13,500.00
Riverside	9	3	3	\$36,500.00
Sacramento	11	2	1	\$417,600.00
San Bernardino	16	19	1	\$74,200.00

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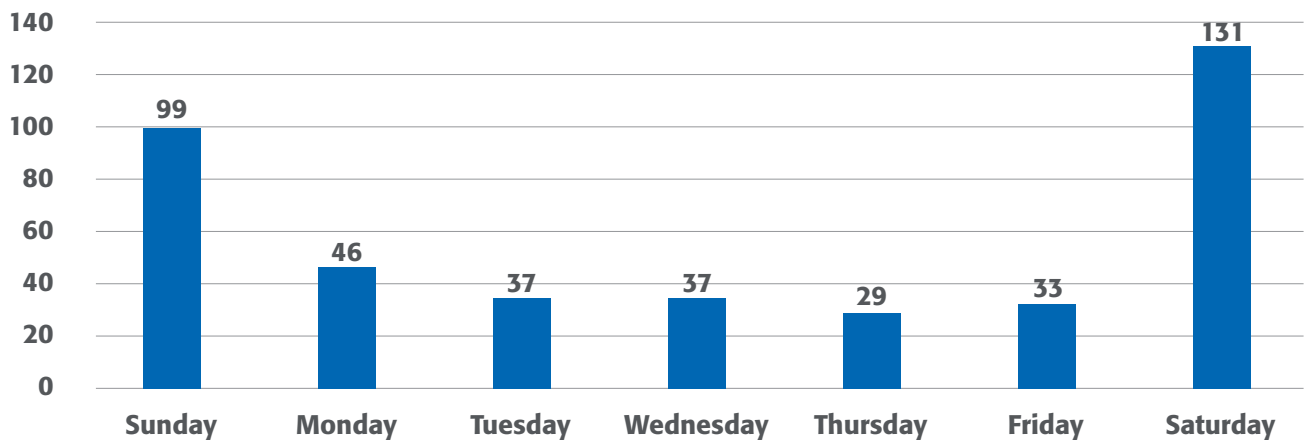
Accidents by County 2023, continued

County	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Property Damage
San Bernardino County	3	2	0	\$2,700.00
San Diego	39	24	1	\$180,642.00
San Francisco	4	2	0	\$218,100.00
San Joaquin	19	6	0	\$197,140.00
San Luis Obispo	2	0	1	\$10,000.00
San Mateo	1	1	0	\$120,000.00
Santa Barbara	12	0	1	\$132,300.00
Santa Cruz	1	0	0	\$500.00
Shasta	13	5	1	\$57,000.00
Siskiyou	1	1	0	\$-
Solano	5	4	0	\$112,095.00
Sonoma	4	1	0	\$11,000.00
Stanislaus	5	2	1	\$24,200.00
Trinity	3	6	1	\$2,800.00
Tulare	1	1	0	\$-
Tuolumne	7	4	2	\$34,497.00
Ventura	5	0	0	\$39,500.00
Visalia	1	0	1	\$-
Yolo	3	0	1	\$5,500.00

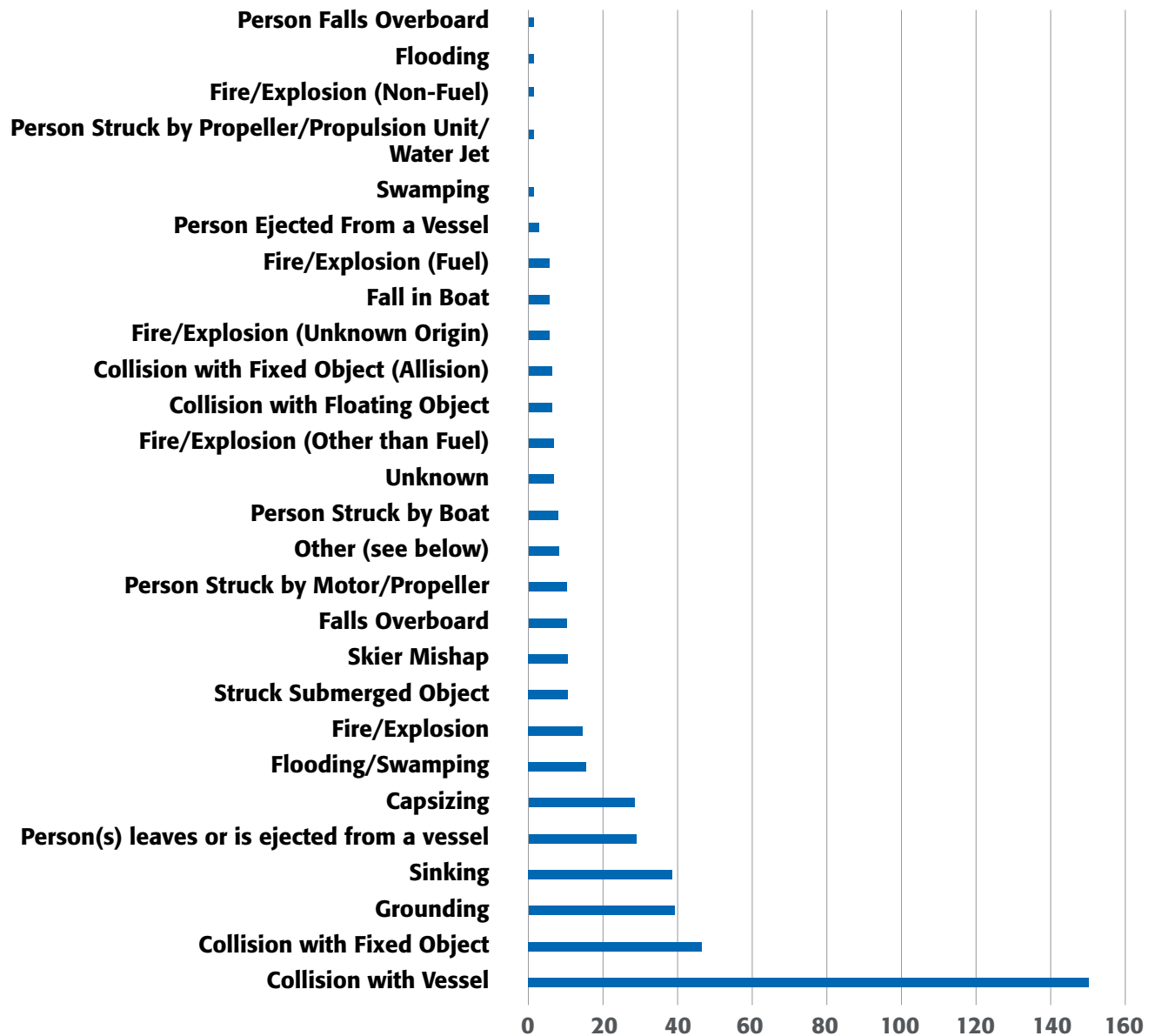
Accidents by Month 2023



Accidents by Day of the Week 2023



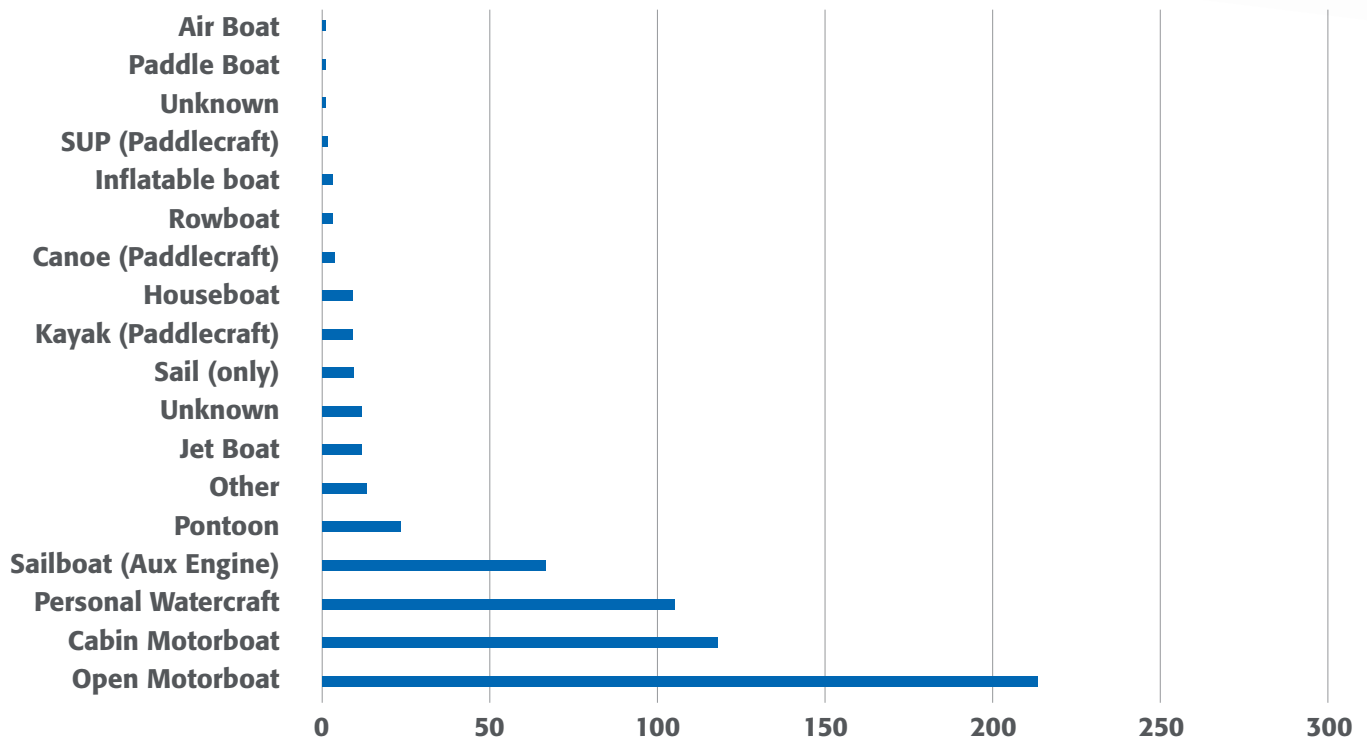
Type of Accident 2023



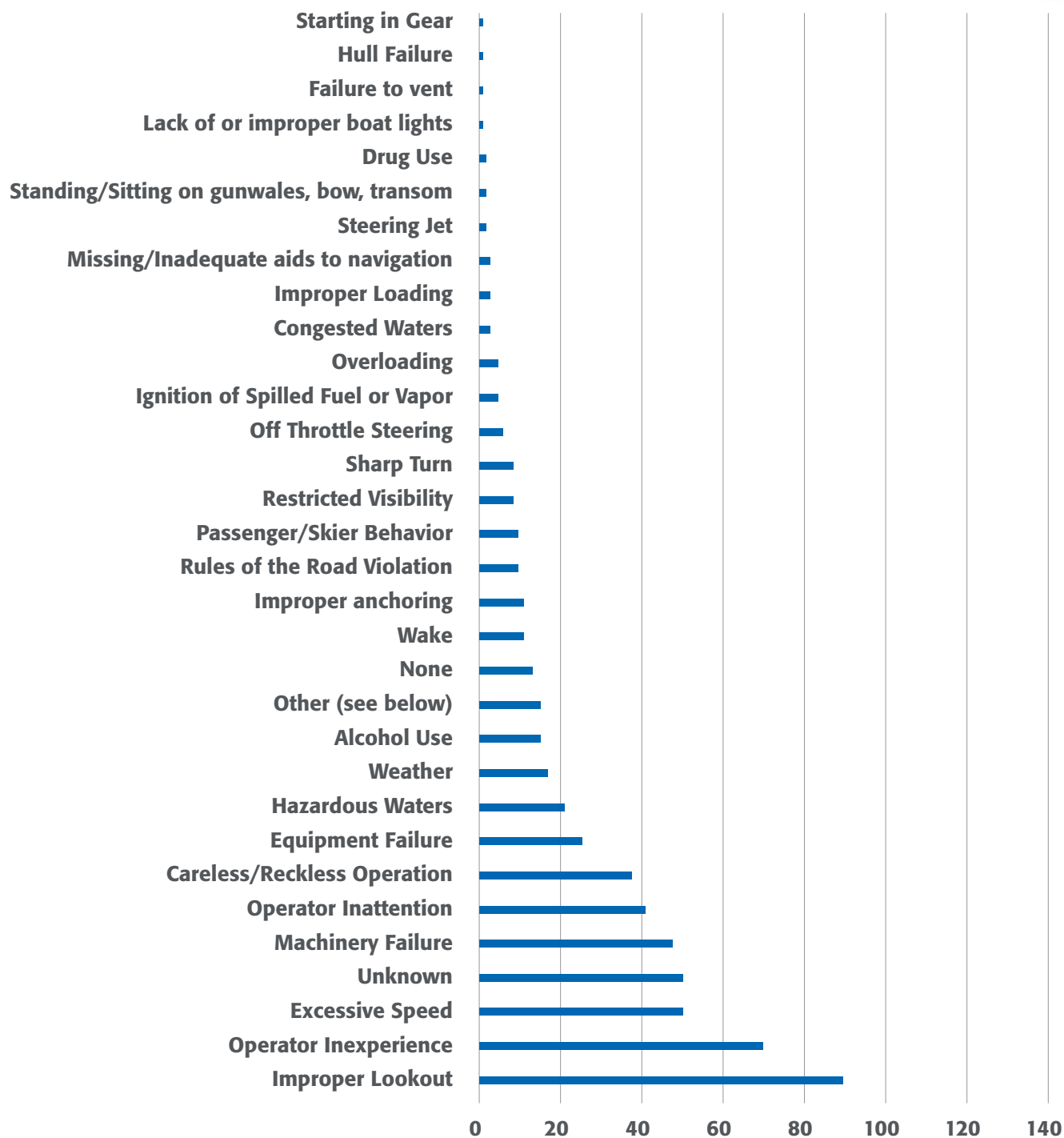
Type of Accident by Vessel Type 2023

	All Vessels	Open Motorboat	Cabin Motorboat	Personal Watercraft	All Sail Boats	Houseboat/Pontoon
Capsizing	28	13	3	2	3	0
Collision with Fixed Object	46	20	11	5	5	2
Collision with Fixed Object (Allision)	6	2	5	0	0	0
Collision with Floating Object	6	3	1	2	0	0
Collision with Vessel	148	59	49	43	37	10
Fall in Boat	5	3	0	0	1	1
Falls Overboard	12	3	0	4	1	0
Fire/Explosion	16	8	8	0	0	1
Fire/Explosion (Fuel)	4	3	0	0	0	0
Fire/Explosion (Non-Fuel)	1	0	1	0	0	0
Fire/Explosion (Other than Fuel)	7	2	3	0	1	1
Fire/Explosion (Unknown Origin)	5	1	2	1	0	1
Flooding	1	1	0	0	0	0
Flooding/Swamping	17	13	2	1	1	0
Grounding	38	13	5	5	8	2
Other (see below)	10	4	0	3	2	1
Person Ejected from a Vessel	2	0	0	2	0	0
Person Falls Overboard	1	0	0	0	1	0
Person Struck by Boat	9	3	0	6	0	1
Person Struck by Motor/Propeller	12	5	2	0	0	4
Person Struck by Propeller/Propulsion Unit/Water Jet	1	1	0	0	0	0
Person(s) leaves or is ejected from a vessel	28	7	1	15	0	3
Sinking	36	18	11	1	1	1
Skier Mishap	13	9	1	0	0	2
Struck Submerged Object	13	9	0	0	1	2
Swamping	1	1	0	0	0	0
Unknown	7	0	0	1	2	0
Total Accidents Count	412	175	97	77	57	28

Vessels Involved in all Accidents by Type 2023



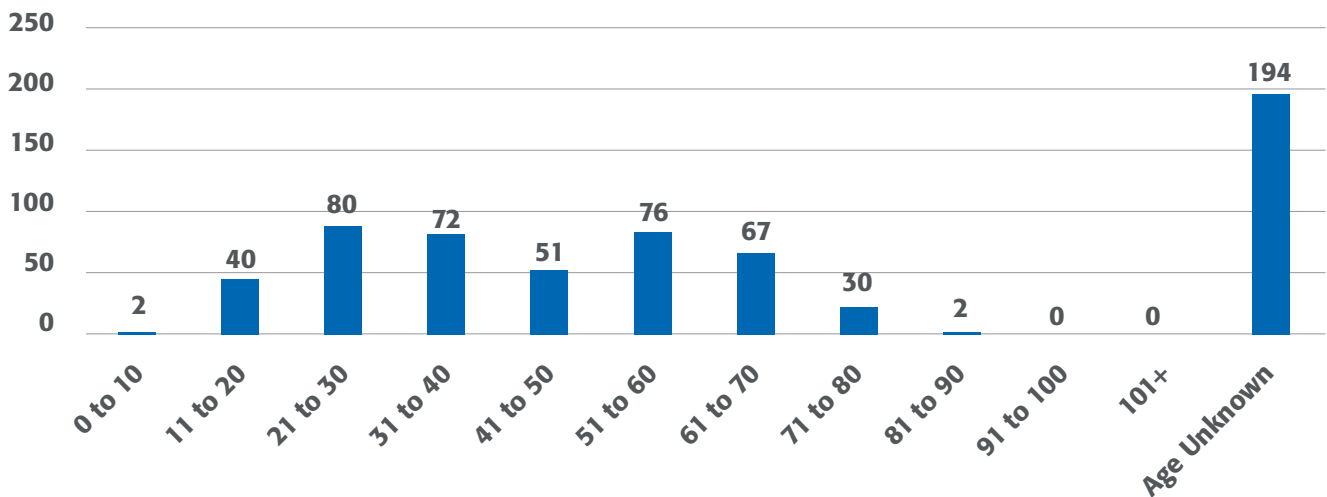
Cause of Accident 2023



Ownership Status of Vessels Involved in Accidents 2022/2023

Operated By	All vessels		Open Motorboats		Personal Watercraft	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
No Operator	163	146	35	40	1	3
Operated by Owner	256	235	112	103	17	17
Operated by Renter	108	82	27	29	43	28
Total Vessels	718	614	235	211	129	108

Operators Involved in all Accidents by Age 2023



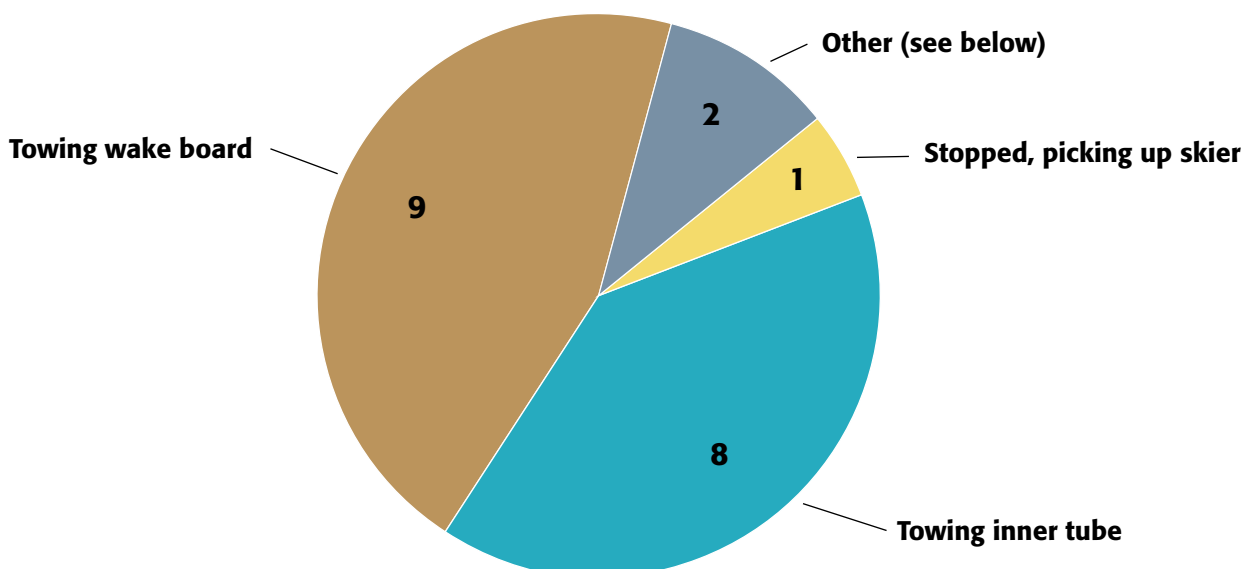
Operator Education Involved in Accidents 2023

Operator Education	Number of Operators
State Course	31
U.S. Power Squadron	2
USCG Auxiliary	6
USCG Captains License	12
Other	28
Informal	104
None	132
Unknown	153
No Operator	146

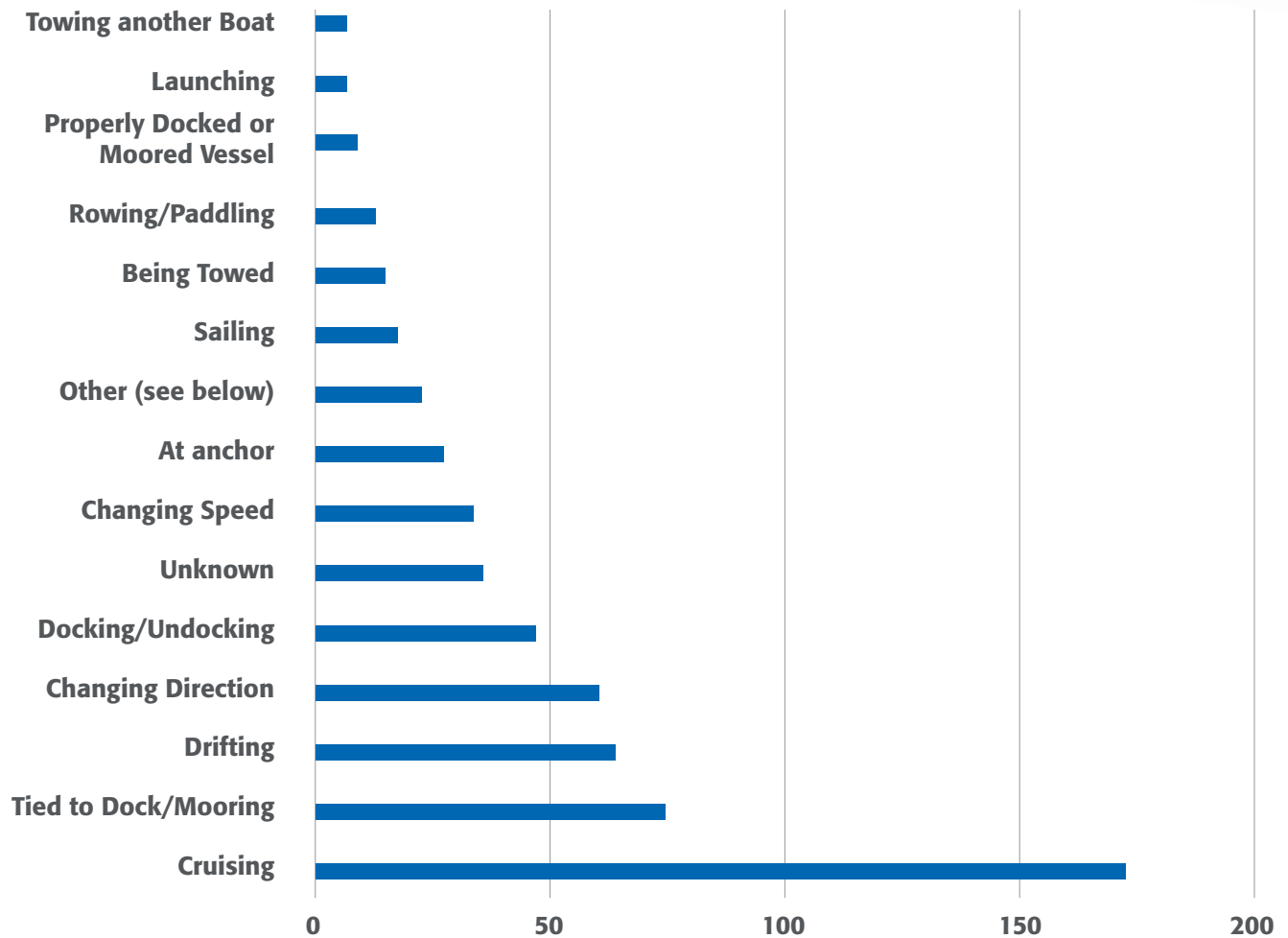
Gender of Operators Involved in Accidents 2023

Gender	Number Of Operators
Female	49
Gender Unknown	30
Male	389
No Operator	146

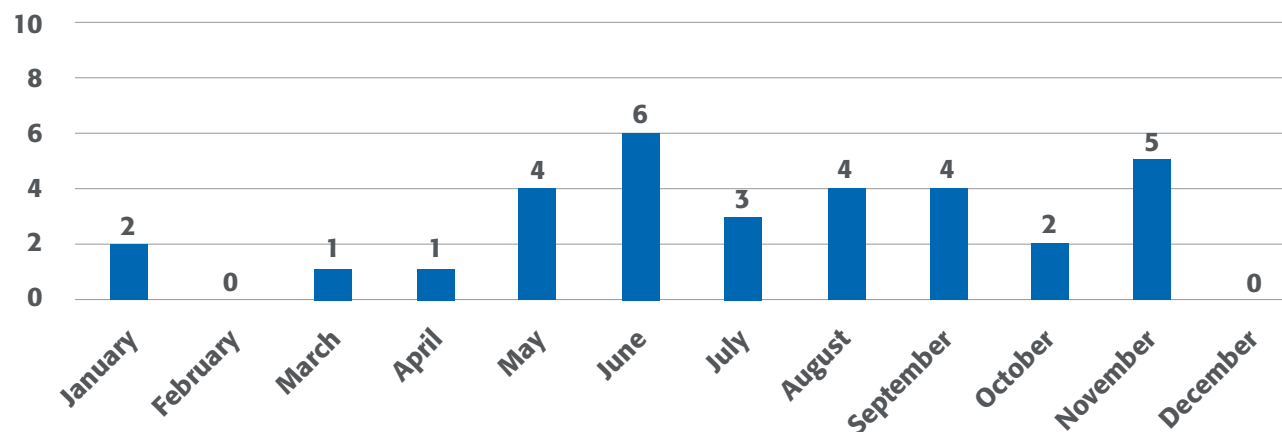
Accidents Involving Towing Sports 2023



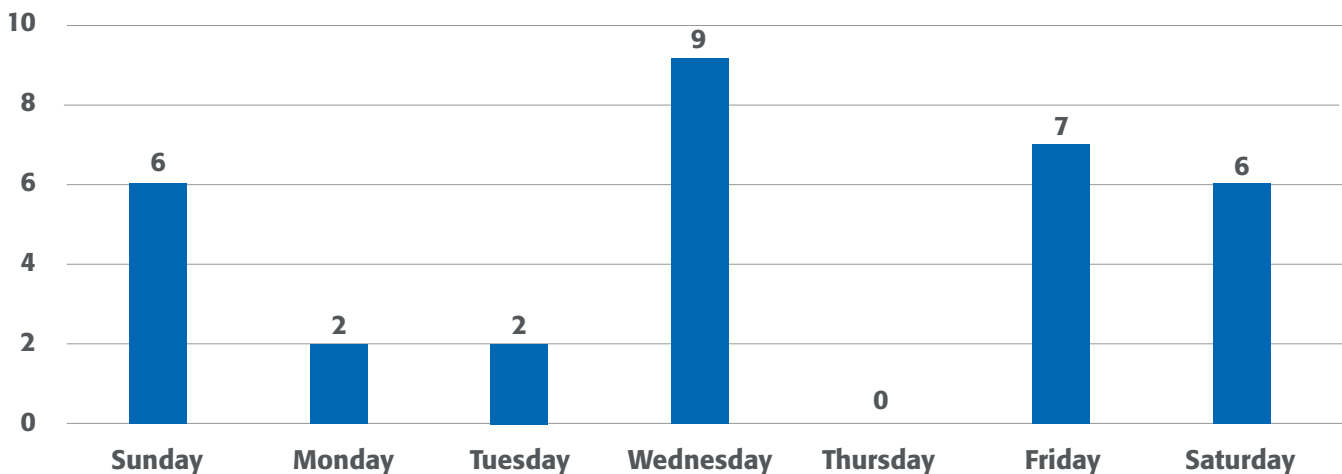
Operation at Time of Accident 2023



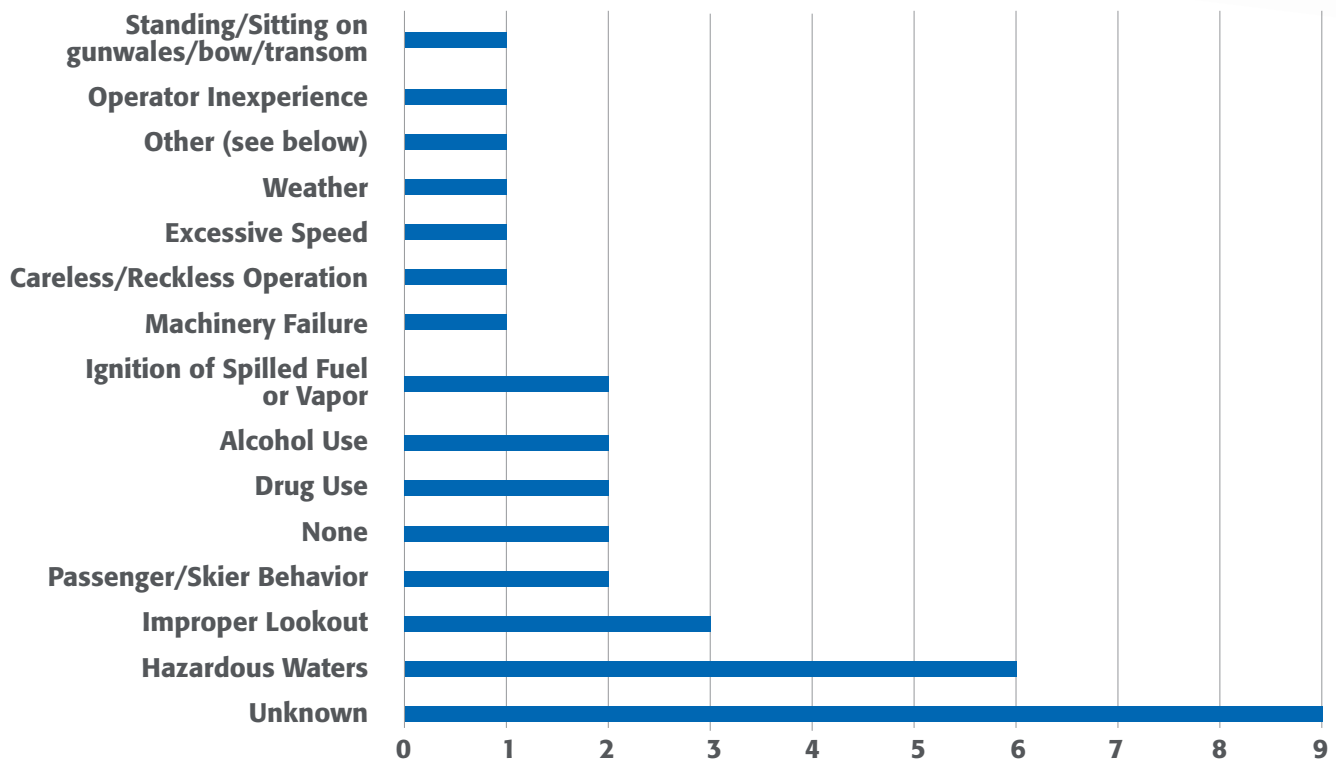
Fatalities by Month 2023



Fatalities by Day of Week 2023



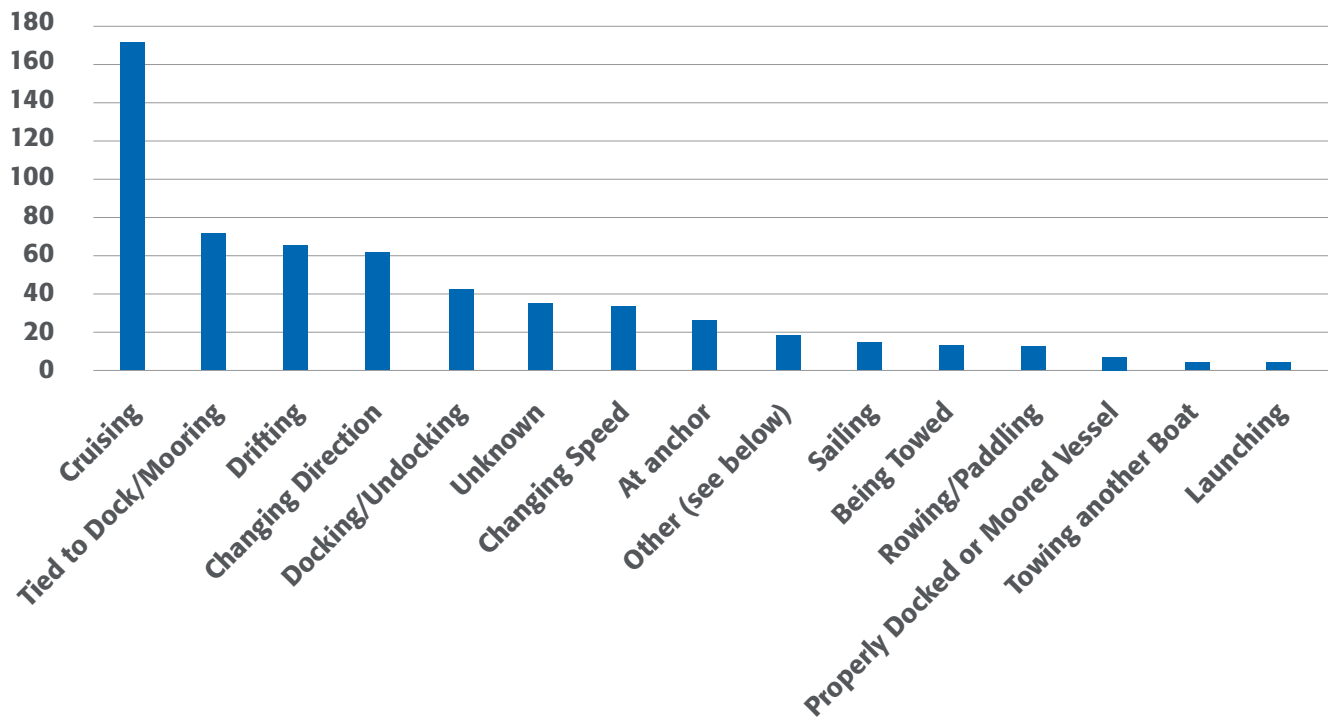
Fatalities by Cause of Accident 2023



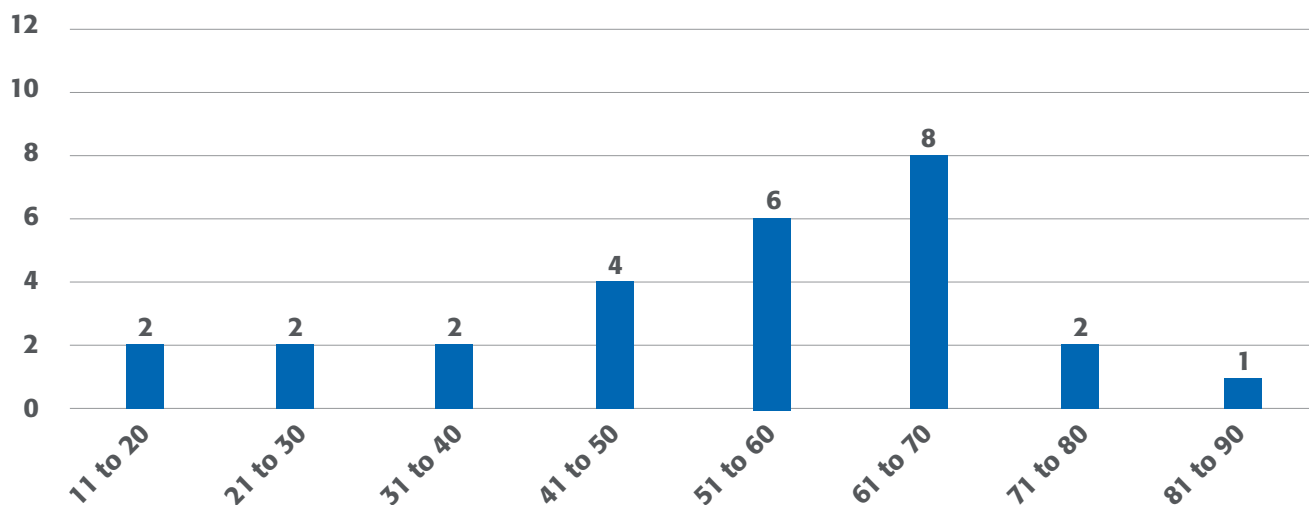
Vessels Involved in Fatal Accidents 2023

Boat Type	Total Vessels
Air Boat	1
Cabin Motorboat	1
Canoe (Paddlecraft)	3
Houseboat	1
Inflatable boat	1
Kayak (Paddlecraft)	5
Open Motorboat	12
Paddle Boat	1
Personal Watercraft	3
Pontoon	1
Sailboat (Aux Engine)	1
SUP (Paddlecraft)	1

Operation at Time of Fatal Accident 2023



Operator Involved in Fatal Accident by Age 2023



Gender of Operators Involved in Fatal Accident 2023

Gender	Number of Operators
Female	2
Gender Unknown	1
Male	24
No Operator	2

Operator Education Involved in Fatal Accident 2023

Operator Education	Total Operators
Informal	2
No Operator	2
None	7
Other	2
Unknown	16



Life Jacket Use by Cause of Death 2022

Cause of Death	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2022	2022	2022	2022
Carbon Monoxide	0	0	0	0
Drowning	5	15	6	26
Heart Attack	0	1	0	1
Hypothermia	0	0	0	0
Other	3	0	0	3
Trauma	7	2	1	10
Unknown	0	1	2	3
Total Fatalities	15	19	9	43

Life Jacket Use by Cause of Death 2023

Cause of Death	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2023	2023	2023	2023
Carbon Monoxide	0	0	0	0
Drowning	6	9	2	17
Heart Attack	0	0	0	0
Hypothermia	0	0	0	0
Other	0	3	0	3
Trauma	1	2	1	4
Unknown	0	8	0	8
Total Fatalities	7	22	3	32

Life Jacket Use by Victim Type of Vessel 2022

Type Of Vessel	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2022	2022	2022	2022
Cabin Motorboat	0	0	1	1
Canoe/Inflatable/Kayak/Raft/Row/SUP	2	4	1	7
Houseboat	0	0	0	0
Jet Boat	0	1	0	1
Kite Board	1	1	0	2
Open Motorboat/Pontoon	1	10	4	15
Other	0	0	0	0
Other Person	0	0	1	1
Paddle Boat	0	0	0	0
Personal Watercraft	11	3	0	14
Sailboats/Sailboards	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	2	2
Total Fatalities	15	19	9	43

Life Jacket Use by Victim Type of Vessel 2023

Type Of Vessel	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2023	2023	2023	2023
Air Boat	0	0	1	1
Cabin Motorboat	0	2	0	2
Canoe/Inflatable/Kayak/Raft/Row/SUP	3	7	0	10
Houseboat	0	1	0	1
Jet Boat	0	0	0	0
Open Motorboat/Pontoon	3	11	1	15
Other	0	0	0	0
Paddle Boat	1	0	0	1
Personal Watercraft	0	0	1	1
Sailboats/Sailboards	0	1	0	1
Unknown	0	0	0	0
Total Fatalities	7	22	3	32

Life Jacket Use by Victim Activity 2022

Victim Activity	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2022	2022	2022	2022
Diving/Swimming	0	1	2	3
Fishing	1	2	1	4
General Recreation	10	12	2	24
Other	0	1	0	1
Paddle Sports	0	1	0	1
Sailing	1	0	0	1
Skiing/Tubing	0	1	0	1
Unknown	2	1	4	7
Whitewater Sports	1	0	0	1
Total Fatalities	15	19	9	43

Life Jacket Use by Victim Activity 2023

Victim Activity	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2023	2023	2023	2023
Diving/Swimming	0	7	0	7
Fishing	1	5	1	7
General Recreation	2	7	1	10
Other	0	1	0	1
Paddle Sports	1	1	0	2
Skiing/Tubing	0	1	0	1
Unknown	1	0	0	1
Whitewater Sports	2	0	1	3
Total Fatalities	7	22	3	32

2022-2023

Recreational Boating Accident Statistics

Safe recreational boating is essential for ensuring a fun and enjoyable experience on the water. By following proper safety measures—such as wearing life jackets, maintaining a lookout, obeying navigation rules, and avoiding alcohol while operating a vessel—you can protect yourself, your passengers, and others on the water. Preparedness, responsibility, and awareness are key to preventing accidents and ensuring that every boating trip ends as safely as it begins. Safe boating is smart boating!

-Deputy Director, Ramona Fernandez



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