

BOATING FATALITIES IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

A Special Report from The Lifesaving Society

2002 Edition



All Victims Male

Fifty-three people became victims of water-related boating activity in Newfoundland and Labrador between 1996 and 2000. Power boating was involved in 34 deaths, small power boating was involved in 15 deaths, while canoes were involved in 4 deaths (see chart #1).

All 53 victims were male. Sixty-two percent (62%) were between the ages of 25-49. Of the 34 power boating fatalities, 12 were between the ages of 35-49, with eight in the age range of 25-34 as well as 50-64. There were 6 deaths in the age group of 35-49 for small powerboat users, while all 4 canoe fatalities were in the age group of 25-34. §

Lack of PFD Usage Still a Major Contributor

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the total water-related boating fatalities did not wear a PFD or lifejacket. However, 50 % of the time a PFD or lifejacket was present.

People need to realize that a lifejacket/PFD is like a seat belt in a car or a helmet on a motorcycle. It does save lives. §

Capsizing/Swamping Most Common Cause

Sixty-four percent (64%) of the water-related boating fatalities were the result of capsizing/swamping, with falling or being thrown overboard contributing to 17%.

Power boats over 5.5 meters (18 feet) involved 18 water-related boating fatalities, while power boats 5.5 meters and under claimed another 16 lives. Small power boats 5.5 meters and under claimed 15 lives. Boats 5.5 meters and under represented 58% of all boating fatalities. §

Most Boating Fatalities Occur During Day Light

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the total boating incidents occurred during daylight, 13% occurred in the dark with 18% occurring in twilight.

Twenty-three power boating fatalities happened during daylight, 5 occurred in the dark, with 3 occurring during twilight.

Twelve small power boating fatalities occurred during daylight with 1 occurring at twilight as well as in the dark.

Three canoeing incidents occurred during daylight with 1 occurring in the dark.

Forty-three percent (43%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred in cloudy/overcast weather, 34% occurred in clear weather, and 15% occurred while it was raining.

Fourteen power boating fatalities occurred in cloudy/overcast weather, 10 in clear weather, 6 while it was raining and 2 in foggy weather.

Seven small power boating incidents occurred in cloudy weather, 6 in clear weather, while 2 occurred while it was raining.

The canoeing incidents were equally divided between clear weather and cloudy /overcast weather each having 2 fatalities. §

Ocean Still the Deadliest

Seventy-four percent (74%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred on the ocean, 21% occurred on lakes/ponds, while 5% occurred on rivers/streams.

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Twenty-nine power boating incidents occurred on the ocean, with 5 more occurring on lakes/ponds. Ten small power boating incidents occurred on the ocean, the remaining 5 occurred on lakes/ponds. One canoeing incident occurred on lakes/ponds with the remaining 3 occurring on rivers/streams. §

Most Boating Fatalities Occur on the Weekend

By day of week, 42% of all water-related boating fatalities occurred during the weekday (Monday to Thursday). The remaining 58% occurred on the weekend (Friday to Sunday) (see chart #3).

Fifteen power boating incidents occurred during the weekday – Tuesday having 7. However, 19 occurred on the weekend- Saturday having 9.

Five small power boating fatalities occurred during the weekday – Tuesday having 4. The weekend saw 10 occur – Saturday having 5.

Canoeing incidents were equally split between the weekday and weekend, each having 2 fatalities occur. §

Afternoon Most Popular Time of Day

By time of day, 28% of the total water-related boating deaths occurred in the morning (5am-11:59). Thirty-four percent (34%) occurred during the afternoon (12:00-17:59), with 15% occurring during the rest of the day.

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Chart # 1

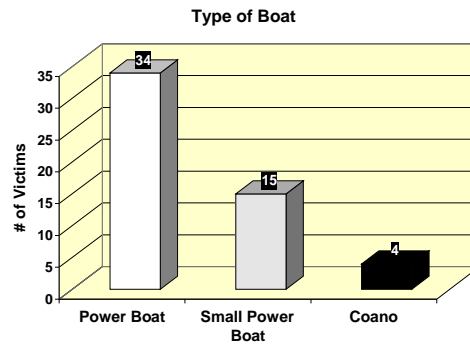


Chart # 2

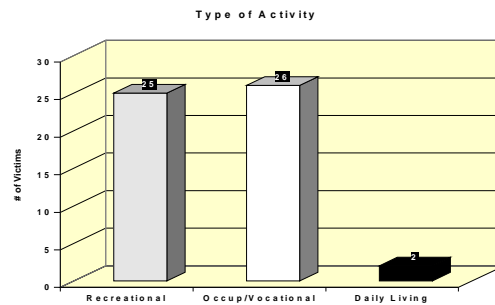
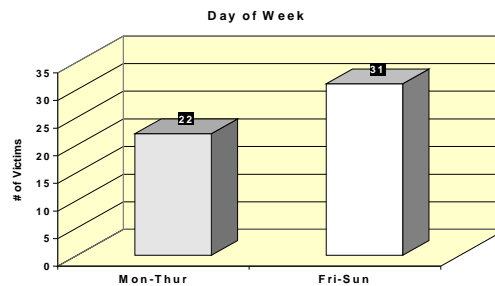


Chart # 3



Most Boating Fatalities Involved in Occupational/Vocational Activities

Forty-nine percent (49%) of the total water-related boating fatalities were involved in occupational/vocational activities (commercial fishing). Forty-seven percent (47%) were involved in recreational activities, with the remaining 4% involved in daily living activities at the time the incidents occurred (see chart #2).

Thirteen power boating victims were engaged in recreational activities, 20 were engaged in occupational/vocational activities, with 1 involved in daily living activities.

All 4 canoeing victims were involved in recreational activities. §

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Most power boating incidents occurred during the afternoon (10) followed by the morning (9). Seven small power boating incidents occurred in the afternoon, followed by 4 in the morning.

Most canoe incidents took place in the morning (2) with 1 occurring in the afternoon as well as the evening (18:00-21:59).§

More Common to be With Others

Almost 80% of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred while the victim were with others. However 20% were alone at the time of the incident.

Twenty-six power boating fatalities were with others at the time of the mishap, while 8 were alone. Twelve small power boating victims were with others, while 3 were alone.

All 4 canoeing victims were with others at the time of the incident. §

More Water-Related Boating Fatalities in Newfoundland than Labrador

Ninety-six percent (96%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred in Newfoundland. The remaining 4% took place in Labrador.

Power boating saw 33 victims in Newfoundland; Labrador saw 1. There were 15 small power boating fatalities in Newfoundland. There were none in Labrador. There were 3 canoeing deaths in Newfoundland and 1 in Labrador. §

April to June Most Popular Time of Year

By time of year, 40% of the water-related boating fatalities occurred between April and June. Thirty percent (30%) occurred between July and September as well as October through December.

Thirteen power boating incidents took place between April and June. Twelve more occurred between October and December, while 9 occurred between July and September. Seven small power boating incidents occurred between April and June.

Five took place between July and September, with 3 more occurring between October and December.

One canoeing incident happened during the months of April to June. July through September saw 2 occur and 1 occurred between October and December. §



Most Boating Fatalities Occur in Choppy/Small Wave Waters

Thirty percent (30%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred in choppy/small wave waters, 26% occurred in rough-white cap waters and 13% occurred in calm waters.

Eleven power boating incidents occurred in rough-white cap waters, 9 in choppy/small wave waters, while 5 occurred in calm waters.

Six small power boating incidents occurred in choppy/small wave waters, 2 in calm waters, with 1 occurring in rough-white cap waters.

Two canoeing incidents occurred in rough-white cap waters, with 1 occurring in choppy/small wave waters. §

Major Contributing Factors

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the total victims did have some swimming ability, 8% did not know how to swim. However, it was not known if the victim was able to swim in 55% of the cases.

Alcohol consumption was a contributing factor in 26% of all boating fatalities.

Seven victims of power boating incidents, 4 victims of small power boating incidents, and 3 victims of canoeing incidents did consume alcohol.

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Overall, drowning attributed to 96% of all boating incidents, with hypothermia/exposure to the cold attributing to 15%.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the total water-related boating incidents happened in very cold waters (under 10 °C), 26% happened in waters that were cold (10-20 °C).

Twenty-six power boating incidents occurred in very cold waters (under 10 °C) with 7 more occurring in cold waters (10-20 °C). The 4 canoeing incidents were equally divided between very cold waters (under 10 °C) and cold waters (10-20 °C).§

The Future

Much drowning prevention work remains to be done in Newfoundland and Labrador. Risk taking behaviour such as alcohol consumption, not wearing a lifejackets/PFDs and lack of boat operator training are factors contributing to the high death rate among adult men. Initiatives such as the new federal recreational boating safety regulations, which began to take effect in September 1999, and the LIFESAVING SOCIETY'S B.O.A.T.™ (Boat Operator Accredited Training) safety course will help reduce the drowning toll.

As well, the Society's Water Smart public education campaign educated Canadians about how to modify their high risk behaviour and assume greater responsibility for themselves and others when in, on, or near water.

The Society's lifesaving and lifeguarding training programs teach self-rescue and how to rescue others.§

Be A Water Smart™ Boater...

1) Know The Boating "Rules Of The Road"!

MORE DETAILS AVAILABLE FROM THE CANADIAN COAST GUARD (WWW.CCG-GCC.GC.CA), BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THE RULES CHANGE AS OF SEPTEMBER 1999:

- No child under 12 years of age may operate a powerboat with more than a 10 HP motor.
- Youth 12 to 15 years of age may only operate a boat with a motor over 40 HP if accompanied and directly supervised by someone 16 years or older.
- Minimum age for operating a personal watercraft

(PWC) is 16 years of age.

- Operators of powerboats must have proof of operator competency. As of September 1999, this applied to any person under 16 years. As of September 2002, it applies to any person operating a powerboat less than 4 metres, including PWC's. As of September 2009, it applies to all operators of all powerboats and PWC's.

2. Get Trained On Boating Safety!

- Youth and adults can take the LIFESAVING SOCIETY'S B.O.A.T.™ (Boat Operator Accredited Training) safety course at a local facility.

3) Know Before You Go!

- Avoid potential danger by taking a few minutes with a simple checklist ...What's the weather forecast? Any local hazards? Have your maps or charts? Have your PFD's? Have your first aid kit, tools and spare parts? Is all the safety equipment working? Have enough fuel? Have you let someone know where you are going and when to expect you back?

4) Always Wear A Lifejacket!

- Don't just have it in the boat, pick one and **wear** it ...only 28% of Newfoundland drowning victims were wearing a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) properly; 57% of victims in powerboats, canoes and rowboats were not wearing PFD's.

5) Wear the Right Gear!

- Your PFD of course, but also good sunglasses and appropriate clothing.
- Paddles, whistles and flares are the right gear too.

6) Boat Sober ...Don't Drink And Drive Your Boat!

- Alcohol intensifies the effect of fatigue, sun, wind and boat motion to adversely affect your balance, judgment and reaction time.

7) Drive Your Powerboat or PWC Responsibly!

- Look before you act, stay low, drive at moderate speeds, be aware of changing weather conditions, and drive with extreme caution and proper lights after dark.§

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