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# Water Sports Foundation Media Fact Sheet: Boating Safety

***Information curated from multiple boating safety stakeholders using***

***most recently published 2019 U.S. Coast Guard Data***

* **11,878, 542 registered recreational vessels in the United States**
* **In 2019, the U.S. Coast Guard reported:**
* 4,168 accidents that involved 613 deaths.
* 2,559 injuries.
* $55 million dollars of damage to property from recreational boating accidents.
* **Drowning**
* Where cause of death was known, 86% of drowning victims in recreational boating accidents were not wearing a life jacket.
* *Drowning is the reported cause of death in 79% of all boating fatalities*
* 8 out of every 10 boaters who drowned were using vessels less than 21 feet in length.
* Nine out of 10 drownings occur on inland waters within a few hundred feet from shore, and half of recreational boating fatalities happen on calm water.
* **Boating Safety Instruction**
* Where instruction was known, 70% of deaths occurred on boats where the operator did not receive boating safety instruction.
* Where instruction was known, only 20% of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received nationally-approved boating safety instruction.
* **Boating Accidents**

**The top five primary contributing factors in accidents include:**

* Operator Inattention
* Improper Lookout
* Operator Inexperience
* Excessive Speed
* Alcohol
* **NOTE:** *There were 171 accidents in which at least one person was struck by a propeller. Collectively, these accidents resulted in 35 deaths and 155 injuries.*
* **NOTE:** *Where data was known, the most common vessel types involved in reported accidents were open motorboats (45%), personal watercraft (19%), and cabin motorboats (16%).*
* **Top 10 states for boating accidents:**

1. Florida (679 accidents; 55 deaths)
2. California (324 accidents; 37 deaths)
3. Texas (184 accidents; 38 deaths)
4. New York (165 accidents; 17 deaths)
5. Missouri (145 accidents; 18 deaths)
6. South Carolina (141 accidents; 15 deaths)
7. Maryland (130 accidents; 12 deaths)
8. Michigan (128 accidents; 21 deaths)
9. North Carolina (128 accidents; 15 deaths)
10. Ohio (128 accidents; 12 deaths)

* **Boating Fatalities**
* **Fatality rate:** 5.2 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels, a 1.9% decrease from recorded 2018 fatality rate of 5.3 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels.
* *Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in boating fatalities; where the primary cause was known, alcohol was listed as the leading factor in 23% of deaths*
* Alcohol was the primary contributing factor in 113 U.S. boating fatalities in 2019.
* Alcohol was the primary contributing factor in more than 18 percent of U.S. boating deaths in 2019 from all causes, including those attributed to equipment failure and weather.
* The Coast Guard estimates a boat operator with a blood alcohol concentration above .10 percent is more than 10 times as likely to die in a boating accident than a sober operator
* **Top states by recreational boating deaths include**:

1. Florida (62 deaths; 421 injuries)
2. Texas (43 deaths; 122 injuries)
3. California (39 deaths; 199 injuries)
4. Alabama (28 deaths; 58 injuries)
5. Washington (27 deaths; 55 injuries)
6. Georgia (23 deaths; 57 injuries)
7. Michigan (22 deaths; 74 injuries)
8. Louisiana (20 deaths; 96 injuries)
9. Virginia (20 deaths; 33 injuries)
10. Illinois (18 deaths; 41 injuries)

#### **ADDITIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT**

The communications team at the Water Sports Foundation has designed the **National Boating Safety Media Center** to provide relevant and accurate content, imagery, experts and resources to assist journalists in story development. If further assistance is needed, please feel free to **Contact Us** for additional support. <https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/about/contact-us/>