2020 Boating Accident Statistical Report
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Law Enforcement
www.MyFWC.com
2020 Boating Officer of the Year

Officer Miguel Despian attended Florida International University to study Criminal Justice and in 2014 was hired by FWC. He spent his first two years in Naples and in 2016 transferred back home to Miami Dade county. Alongside educating the public, he enjoys patrolling the waterways and creating a positive impact in any situation. Each year he is asked by the principal at Doral Academy Elementary School to come back and give a presentation for Career Day. Throughout the presentation, Miguel interacts with around 130 kids. This year, he had the opportunity to bring two baby alligators, a six-month-old black timber wolf, and an all-terrain vehicle that is used in everyday patrol.

Miguel is also a primary field training officer (FTO). As one of the senior FTO’s, he takes this responsibility very seriously and it shows through the officers that he trains once they are on their own. He has also completed the training and holds the certifications for alcohol/drug impairment enforcement and Speed Measurement. He volunteers for every boating under the influence (BUI)/boating detail and will assist in any way possible. He has assisted in training other law enforcement departments such as: Miami-Dade P.D., U.S. Coast Guard Miami and Miami Beach P.D., on BUI, fisheries and boating laws.

Officer Despian has been at the forefront of the growing problem of illegal personal watercraft (PWC) liverys within Miami Dade County. He has been able to identify major PWC rental companies in the area that are a part of the temporary certificate program and those that are not, tracking down owners, employees of PWC companies and rental locations. He has been involved in numerous livery violation details and assisted in a multi-agency detail that used undercover officers from other agencies to perform buy/bust operations. The operation identified numerous companies not complying with regulations and individuals operating illegal liverys with their personal PWCs. He has created several other details focusing on BUI, boating safety and manatee zone enforcement and has encouraged the participation of federal and local law enforcement partners. He truly demonstrates a passion for boating safety enforcement, and it shows with his consistent and varied patrol efforts.

Officer Despian has embraced FWC’s mission statement and its core missions. He is one of the most well-rounded officers in South Region Bravo and is not afraid to step out of his comfort zone to gain experience and better himself. He is a hard-working officer with excellent morals and ethics and is a leader amongst his peers. His outstanding work performance and positive attitude have really made him a leader in the region. Other officers in the region look forward to working with and learning from him.

2020 Boating Educator of the Year

Theodore (Ted) Dawson became a boater while living in Chicago, he started his membership with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in 1967. Ted decided to move to Florida to enjoy year-round boating and in 2011 became the lead instructor of the Cape Coral Power and Sail Squadron.

Ted’s experience with the USCG and USCG Auxiliary has given him a unique insight into the mindset and habits of the typical recreational boater, allowing him to take a slightly different approach to the material in America’s Boating Course. Ted’s approach to teaching is to get away from trying to race through a bunch of slides, reading bullet points and teaching to the test. Instead, he takes a storytelling approach. Ted, like many of the top educators across the country, believes that students identify with stories and allows them to imagine how they would react in the situation. In addition to his personal stories, he talks about current news of local boating accidents that might help to bring the impact of the topic being discussed closer to home. These news reports and others Ted has collected over the years are now posted on the walls of the classroom so the students can read them before class or during breaks. He also has posted highlights from the annual state and national accident reports. He includes local statistics too. Images from the State of Florida’s Boating Accident Report going back to 2007 have been incorporated into a “welcome” presentation that plays on screen as students show up for the first class and get registered. The graphic with the actual location of each boating accident in Lee County gets a lot of interest from the students as they can see a consistent pattern of where accidents tend to occur each year. Ted doesn’t teach the class in a single 8 hours. His approach is to teach America’s Boating Course over a three-week period, in 5, two-hour sessions. This gives the students time to read the material, digest the evening’s lesson and seek clarification on items they don’t understand.

But that is not all, Ted opens the classroom an hour before class starts and invites the students to come early with their questions. During that time, he shares with them videos and presentations that support the points of each previous session. This gives each student 15 hours of exposure to the material, making it more likely they will remember what they learned.

Since Ted began teaching America’s Boating Course, he has graduated over 2,400 students. He teaches the class 9 times per year, each class averaging 30 students.
INTRODUCTION

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), powered by science-based leadership, is committed to creating a sustainable and healthy future for Florida's fish, wildlife, water and habitat resources. The FWC serves Floridians and visitors alike in a variety of ways, most of which revolve around our mission of managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people. The Division of Law Enforcement (DLE) is perhaps the most visible tool within the FWC’s “tool belt” used to meet its goal of providing healthy resources for safe, satisfied customers.

THE DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Roles and Mission
The FWC is the only state agency in Florida tasked with the management of the state’s fish and wildlife resources. As a primary responsibility, the FWC’s Division of Law Enforcement focuses on enforcing regulations aimed at protecting and sustaining these resources both for their long-term well-being and the benefit of Florida’s residents and visitors, all the while blending in its unique and specialized public safety role. The Division’s mission is clear... “Protecting Florida’s natural resources and people through proactive and responsive law enforcement services.”

Responsibilities

The FWC Division of Law Enforcement provides protection to those who enjoy Florida’s natural resources, while also enforcing resource protection and boating safety laws. Officers patrol rural, wilderness, inshore and offshore areas, and where other law enforcement agencies do not routinely patrol. FWC officers have the authority to enforce all the laws of the state and are cross-deputized to enforce federal fisheries and wildlife laws.

While carrying out their broad responsibilities, FWC officers seek every opportunity to educate and introduce Floridians and visitors to the wonders of Florida’s fish, wildlife, and natural resources, as well as safe boat operation and safety equipment requirements.

The Division also provides general law enforcement services as part of Florida’s statewide emergency response network. Because of their unique jurisdiction and specialized training and equipment, FWC is also charged with protecting the state’s waterways and critical infrastructure during times of heightened security threat levels. As seasoned first responders, FWC officers are trained to move fast and efficiently.

Moving forward into the future, FWC will continue to pursue and apply advances in technology to improve response to both conservation and general law enforcement incidents. When duty calls, FWC will always be among the first to respond, providing aid as needed. Until then, FWC will continue to lead the way in natural resource protection, proactive boating safety law enforcement and education.

Uniquely prepared

On the water, in the woods and in the air, FWC law enforcement officers are uniquely situated and equipped to identify and respond to illegal activity and promote public safety, particularly in the maritime and wilderness areas.
**Intervention equals prevention on the water**
FWC officers help to ensure Floridians and visitors are safe when they are on the water. The FWC accomplishes this through proactive law enforcement by initiating boating safety, fisheries, and hunting inspections and identifying and minimizing potential navigation or environmental hazards in the waterways.

FWC’s Boating and Waterways Section supports officers by coordinating statewide boating safety efforts. Some examples of support include education campaigns, ensuring waterway markers are accurate and maintained, permitting and marking speed-regulated areas, coordinating initiatives aimed at removing derelict vessels and improving public boating access.

With close to a million registered vessels, Florida leads the nation in that category. As a negative consequence of high vessel numbers and our mild climate, Florida also leads the nation in the number of boating fatalities annually. The vast size of our inland, coastal and offshore patrol areas combined with a significant population of avid and diverse boaters, presents a unique and daunting challenge for FWC and our local and federal maritime enforcement partners.

**Boating education is critical**
The 2020 Boating Accidents Statistical Report indicates there were 837 reportable boating accidents and 79 boating related fatalities in the calendar year. This total includes five missing persons who at the end of 2020 have not been located or accounted for and their circumstances suggest that death or serious injury has occurred. Many of the deaths were due to victims falling overboard and drowning. A large number of the deaths could have been prevented if the victims had worn life jackets. FWC continues efforts to reduce the number of boating-related fatalities through education about the importance of wearing life jackets while boating.

Florida’s current boating safety education law only applies to boaters born on or after January 1, 1988 operating a motorized vessel of 10 horsepower or greater. The face-to-face contacts by FWC officers and our partner agencies are a critical part of our outreach efforts and education to the boating public. These statistics show us that the boat operator most likely to be involved in a boating accident is a middle-age or older male who has boating experience yet has never learned the most important safety considerations by having taken a boating safety course. When officers observe boating violations or perform resource enforcement activities, they conduct boating safety inspections aimed at both identifying and preventing violations or accidents. FWC officers make boating safer and ultimately save lives.

**Safe boating is a choice**
Florida is a leader in promoting boating accident prevention. The FWC, in association with the National Safe Boating Council, Bombardier Recreational Products Inc., West Marine, and the USCG has launched a statewide boating safety campaign as part of a national initiative. The “Wear It Florida” campaign encourages boaters to wear life jackets anytime they are on the water and educates boaters about the ease and convenience of inflatable life jackets. The campaign is designed to reach the public through a variety of methods including media events, exhibits, personal contacts, social media, radio and televised public service announcements.
ABOUT THIS REPORT

The 2020 Boating Accident Statistical Report is compiled by the Boating and Waterways Section of the FWC’s Division of Law Enforcement. Most of the data contained in this report is gathered from boating accident investigative reports submitted by FWC officers and our marine law enforcement partners.

At the end of each calendar year, boating accident data is compiled and assembled into Florida’s annual report. The FWC’s Boating and Waterways Section analyzes this information and uses it to formulate proactive plans aimed at reducing the number of boating accidents and their related injuries, fatalities and property damage. This information is also reported to the USCG’s Boating Safety Division in Washington, D.C., to be included in the national database consisting of data from all U.S. states and territories.

The statistics reflect data from “reportable boating accidents” that occurred in Florida. Boating accidents must meet at least one of the five criteria below to be classified as reportable:

- A person dies.
- A person disappears under circumstances that indicate possible death or injury.
- A person receives an injury requiring medical treatment beyond immediate first aid.
- There is at least $2,000 aggregate property damage to the vessel(s) or other property.
- There is a total loss of a vessel.

The number of vessels registered in Florida increased slightly in 2020. With 985,005 registered vessels, Florida leads the nation in registered vessels. Additionally, it is estimated that up to one million non-registered vessels actively use Florida’s waters, and this segment of the boating population appears to still be growing. Our waterways show the strains of congestion as each year brings more residents and visitors together to utilize our abundant water resources and enjoy Florida’s boating lifestyle.
2020 SUMMARY

BOATING ACCIDENT REVIEW
• Florida leads the nation with a total number of 985,005 registered vessels in 2020.
• There were 836 reportable boating accidents in 2020.

REPORTABLE BOATING ACCIDENT
• Collision with vessel was the leading type of accident with a total of 224 (27%).
• Towed watersport activities were involved in 23 accidents, resulting in 9 fatalities and 37 injuries.
• Paddle/Human powered craft (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, paddleboards) were involved in 14 accidents resulting in 14 fatalities and 1 injured. (11 kayaks, 1 canoe, 3 rowboats)
• May was the month with the highest number of accidents (120).
• Monroe County reported the highest number of accidents and injuries (99 total accidents with nine fatalities and 52 injuries).

REPORTABLE BOATING FATALITIES
• 77 fatal accidents resulting in 79 fatalities.
• 46% of the fatal accidents resulted from falls overboard (36 accidents). Boaters falling overboard remains the leading type of boating fatality.
• The leading cause of death in fatal boating accidents was drowning with 42 fatalities (53%).
• March was the deadliest month in 2020 with 10 fatalities.
• Alcohol or drug-use is reported to have played a role in 23% boating fatalities.
• 76% (60) of the victims of fatal boating accidents were males.
• 60% (55) of the 91 operators involved in fatal accidents were age 36 or older.
• 75% (68) of all vessels involved in fatal accidents in 2020 were 21 feet in length or less.

REPORTABLE BOATING INJURIES
• There were 375 accidents that resulted in 534 injured persons. The rate of injury was 54 injuries per 100,000 registered vessels.

REPORTABLE PERSONAL WATERCRAFT ACCIDENTS
• Personal watercraft (PWC) accounted for 15% of all registered vessels in Florida.
• PWC were involved in 27% (227) of reportable boating accidents.
• Rented PWC represented 48% (147) of PWC involved in accidents.
• 44% (101) of PWC accidents involved a collision with another vessel.
• 38% of PWC accidents occurred in Miami-Dade (41), Pinellas (24) and Monroe (21) counties.
• 15 fatalities resulted from the 227 PWC accidents.
• 183 people were injured in PWC accidents.

BOATING EDUCATION STATISTICS
• FWC issued 74,376 Boating Safety Education ID Cards in 2020.
• 70% of the cards were issued to persons born on or after January 1, 1988.
• Of the 74,376 cards issued, 53,786 were to males, 20,590 were to females. An additional 3,254 cards were printed for lost, damaged and information changes.
• 69% of the operators involved in fatal accidents had no formal boater education.

Boating accident statistics for 2020 were compiled on March 1, 2021. Reports received after that date were not included in the following data. In 2020, there were five missing persons reported. There has not been any updated information as to their status as of the date of this report compilation. The five missing persons have been included in the fatality data.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Boating Accident Review

Number of Accidents - 2019 Top Ten States................................. 1
Number of Recreational Registered Vessels, Top Ten States........... 1
Florida Reportable Accidents (2016-2020)................................. 2
Total Florida Registered Vessels (2016-2020).............................. 2

II. 2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

2020 Vessel Registration and Accident Statistics by County.......... 3-4
Top Ten Counties....................................................................... 5
Investigating Agency.................................................................. 5
Accidents by Month.................................................................. 5
Time of Day............................................................................... 6
Accident Site Location................................................................. 6
Restricted Area Accidents.......................................................... 6
Primary Type of Accident.......................................................... 7
Secondary Type of Accident........................................................ 7
Operation at Time of Accident.................................................... 8
Activity at Time of Accident....................................................... 8
Vessel Type, Length & Propulsion................................................. 9
Vessel Fuel & Hull Type............................................................... 10
Vessel & Property Damage Figures (2016-2020).......................... 10
Vessel Ownership...................................................................... 10
Primary Cause Assessed by Reviewing Authority...................... 11
Boat Operator Age, Experience and Gender.............................. 11
Operator/Occupant Swimming Ability and PFD Use................... 12
Operator Education................................................................... 12
Operator by Age with No Boater Education (2016-2020)........... 12
PFD Wear by Age................................................................. 13
Victim Statistics........................................................................ 13
State Waters vs. Offshore Waters Accidents............................ 13
Victim Statistics (Ejected)............................................................ 13
I. 2020 Boating Fatalities

Top Ten States 2019 .......................................................... 15
Florida Total Fatalities Recorded (2016-2020). ......................... 15
Investigating Agency .......................................................... 15
Accidents by Month ............................................................ 16
Time of Day .......................................................................... 16
Accident Types ................................................................. 16
Operation at Time of Accident .............................................. 17
Accident Site Location ........................................................ 17
Restricted Area Fatal Accidents .............................................. 17
Vessel Ownership ............................................................... 18
Vessel Fuel & Hull Type ...................................................... 18
Vessel Propulsion, Length & Type ........................................ 18
Primary Cause of Death ...................................................... 19
Operator Gender ............................................................... 19
Operator Age and Experience .............................................. 19
Operator Education .......................................................... 20
Operators by Age without Formal Boater Education .................. 20
Victim Statistics (Ejected, Wearing PFD, Swimming Ability) ........ 20
Victim Residency ............................................................. 21
Victim Gender and Age ..................................................... 21
Alcohol/Drug Related Accidents and Victims ......................... 21
Primary Cause Assessed by Reviewing Authority .................... 22
State Waters vs. Offshore Waters ........................................ 22

IV. 2020 Boating Injuries

Total Injuries Recorded (2016-2020) .................................... 23
Types of Injury .................................................................... 23
Victim Statistics (Injured, Swimming Ability and PFD Use) ....... 24
Victim Statistics (Ejected, Alcohol/Drug USE and AGE) ............ 25
Injury Action ....................................................................... 25

V. 2020 Personal Watercraft (PWC) Accidents

PWC Registration and Accidents by County ......................... 27-28
Total PWC Registration ...................................................... 29
PWC Ownership by Registration ........................................ 29
Comparison of PWC to Vessels Involved in Accidents .............. 29
PWC Accidents (2016-2020) ................................................ 25
Top Ten Counties .................................................................. 29
Accident Site Location ....................................................... 30
V. 2020 Personal Watercraft (PWC) Accidents (Continued)

- Restricted Area Accidents
- Operation at Time of Accident
- Primary Type of Accident
- Primary Cause Assessed by Reviewing Authority
- PWC Ownership
- Operator Education
- Operators by Age without Boater Education (2016-2020)
- Operator Age and Experience
- Primary Injury Types
- Injuries (2016-2020)
- Comparisons of PWC Injuries
- Comparisons of PWC Fatalities
- Fatalities (2016-2020)
- Investigating Agency
- Accidents by Month

VI. 2020 Boating Education Statistics

- Top Ten Counties Boating Safety Education Cards Issued
- Card Distribution by Age and Gender
- Operators Involved in Accidents Education/Age
- Operators Involved in Fatal Accidents Education/Age

VII. 2020 Boating Violation Summary

- Uniform Boating Citation Summary

VIII. 2020 Top Ten Counties Review

- Top Ten Counties Map
- Monroe County
- Miami-Dade County
- Palm Beach County
- Pinellas County
- Lee County
- Okaloosa County
- Bay County
- Collier County
- Manatee County
- Sarasota County
IX. Trend Analyses

- Reportable Accidents 2011-2020. ................................................................. 61
- Recreational Vessel Registration 2011-2020 ........................................... 61
- Fatalities 2011-2020. .............................................................................. 62
- Injuries 2011-2020. ................................................................................ 62
- Boating Safety Education ID Cards Issued 2011-2020 ......................... 63
- Fatalities by Quarter 2011-2020 .............................................................. 63
- Fatalities: Quarters 1 and 2 ................................................................... 64
- Fatalities: Quarters 3 and 4 ................................................................... 65
- Vessel Types 2016-2020 ........................................................................ 66
- Operator by Age 2011-2020 ................................................................. 67
- PWC Accidents, Fatalities, and Injured 2011-2020 .......................... 68

X. Glossary

Definitions for Boating Accident Report forms ......................... 69-74
Boating Accident Review photo detail

Photos: (Courtesy of FWC)

Top photo: Four friends were fishing from a 24-foot motorboat off Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge. While the vessel was drifting, a wave impacted the left side causing the boat to capsize. One of the occupants became trapped in the cabin area and was able to stay in a pocket of air while one of the other occupants swam under to rescue him. A passing fishing vessel came to their location and assisted them. No one was injured in the incident. The capsized boat drifted onto the beach due to its close proximity and wave action.

Bottom photo: A 29-foot motorboat was travelling South through Jewfish Creek in Monroe County. The operator swerved to avoid a head-on collision with another boat, resulting in his vessel crashing into the mangroves along the shoreline. Fortunately no one was injured in the crash.
2020 Boating Accident Review

Number of Accidents - Top Ten States 2019
(RECREATIONAL)

- Florida: 679
- California: 324
- Texas: 184
- New York: 165
- Missouri: 145
- South Carolina: 141
- Maryland: 130
- North Carolina: 128
- Michigan: 128
- Ohio: 128

*Based on $2,000 damage threshold
Source: U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Division, 2020 data not available at time of publishing

Registered Vessels - Top Ten States 2019
(RECREATIONAL)

- Florida: 935,742
- Maryland: 567,443
- South Carolina: 563,820
- Texas: 440,381
- New York: 361,970
- Georgia: 331,481
- Michigan: 248,307
- North Carolina: 247,393
- California: 246,361
- Georgia: 246,361

*Totals represent number of recreationally registered vessels in 2019
Source: U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Division
2020 Boating Accident Review

2016 - 2020 Florida Reportable Accidents

*Totals represent all currently registered vessels for that year
Source: Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV)
Reportable Boating Accidents photo detail

Cover Photo: (Courtesy of FWC)

The 13-foot motorboat was traveling at planing speed on the west side of the intracoastal waterway. The operator turned away from the helm and was not paying attention to where his vessel was heading. His boat struck the channel marker on the right corner of the bow. The operator was ejected and made contact with the marker, resulting in broken ribs and multiple bruises and minor cuts and abrasions.
# 2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

## 2020 Vessel Registration and Accidents by County

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<th>County</th>
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<th>Total Vessels</th>
<th>Reportable Accidents</th>
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*Accident Rate = # of Registered Vessels / Top ten counties for incidents in bold print. Fields that equaled zero intentionally left blank.
## 2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

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<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Recreational Vessels</th>
<th>Total Vessels</th>
<th>Reportable Accidents</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
<th>Injuries</th>
<th>Property Damage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Accident Rate*</th>
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*Accident Rate = # of Registered Vessels / # of Incidents

Those counties in bold print represent the top ten counties for incidents.

Department of Highways Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) numbers represent registrations issued at main office instead of at the county level.

Fields that equaled zero intentionally left blank.
**2020 Reportable Boating Accidents**

**Top Ten Counties**

- Monroe: 99
- Miami-Dade: 95
- Palm Beach: 56
- Pinellas: 56
- Lee: 48
- Okaloosa: 31
- Bay: 29
- Collier: 29
- Manatee: 22
- Sarasota: 22

**Investigating Agency**

- FWC: 773, 90%
- Police: 20, 3%
- Sheriff: 40, 5%
- Self-Report: 3, Less than 1%

**Accidents by Month**

- Jan: 45
- Feb: 37
- Mar: 47
- Apr: 78
- May: 120
- Jun: 105
- Jul: 102
- Aug: 85
- Sep: 70
- Oct: 54
- Nov: 49
- Dec: 44
2020 REPORTABLE BOATING ACCIDENTS

TIME OF DAY

ACCIDENT SITE LOCATION

RESTRICTED AREA ACCIDENTS

*836 total accidents

"Other" may include areas where the regulation or local ordinance was not specified.
2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

Primary Type of Accident

- Collision with vessel: 224
- Collision with fixed object: 163
- Flooding/swamping: 72
- Falls overboard: 66
- Grounding: 50
- Capsizing: 42
- Other: 41
- Fire/explosion (fuel): 26
- Struck by skeg/prop: 25
- Fall on PWC: 25
- Fall in boat: 19
- Collision with floating object/person: 16
- Struck underwater object: 15
- Fire/explosion (non-fuel): 15
- Skier mishap/fall: 14
- Vessel wake damage: 10
- Sinking: 6
- Struck by boat (person): 3
- Starting engine: 2
- Skier hit object: 2

*836 accidents involving 1,150 vessels
(Based on first harmful event as determined by the state reviewing authority)

Secondary Type of Accident

- Falls overboard: 132
- Struck by boat/person: 62
- Capsizing: 54
- Fall in boat: 49
- Collision with fixed object: 37
- Flooding/swamping: 27
- Other: 26
- Sinking: 24
- Grounding: 21
- Struck by skeg/prop: 20
- Collision with vessel: 18
- Fall on PWC: 12
- Collision with floating object/person: 3
- Fire/explosion (non-fuel): 2
- Fire/explosion (fuel): 2
- Skier mishap/fall: 1
- Struck underwater object: 1

*345 of the 836 accidents did not have a secondary type of accident...
2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

Operation at Time of Accident

- Cruising: 591
- Docked (moored): 105
- Changing direction: 94
- Drifting: 70
- Changing speed: 65
- At anchor: 58
- Docking/undocking: 52
- Other: 47
- Wake/surf jumping: 15
- No information: 12
- Towing a boat: 9
- Rowing/paddling: 9
- Launching/loading: 8
- Being towed: 8
- Sailing: 7

Activity at Time of Accident

- Recreational cruising: 762
- No information: 105
- Other: 99
- Fishing (recreational): 93
- Commercial purpose: 46
- Boat pulling a tube: 13
- Swimming/snorkling: 12
- Making repairs: 5
- Starting engine: 5
- Fueling: 3
- Skiing (skurfing, etc.): 2
- Scuba diving: 2
- Tournament fishing: 1
- Racing (sanctioned): 1
- Hunting: 1

*1,150 vessels
2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

Vessel Count in Reportable Accidents

*836 total accidents involving 1,150 vessels

*77 fatal accidents involving 91 vessels

*227 personal watercraft accidents involving 304 PWC

Vessel Type, Length & Propulsion

*836 accidents involving 1,150 vessels
2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

Vessel Fuel & Hull Type

- Electric: 1
- Other: 29
- Diesel: 148
- Gas: 972
- Rigid hull inflatable: 4
- Wood: 7
- Steel: 13
- Other/no info: 33
- Aluminum: 106
- Fiberglass: 987

*850 accidents involving 1,150 vessels

Vessel & Property Damage Figures
(IN MILLIONS)

- 2016: 10
- 2017: 8.5
- 2018: 8
- 2019: 16.1
- 2020: 13.3

Vessel Ownership

- Owner household: 845 / 74%
- Borrowed (not in household): 94 / 8%
- Rented: 211 / 18%

Boating Accident Statistical Report

10
2020 Reportable Boating Accidents

Primary Cause Assessed by Reviewing Authority

- No proper look-out/inattention: 77
- Operator inexperience: 75
- Other: 65
- Machinery failure: 53
- Weather: 46
- Excessive speed: 48
- Careless/reckless: 33
- Hazardous water: 31
- Alcohol/Drug use: 23
- Congested waters: 22
- Skier/occupant behavior: 18
- Sharp turn: 17
- Equipment failure: 16
- Violation of nav rule: 12
- Off throttle steering-jet: 12
- Hull failure: 8
- Standing/sitting on gunwale, bow or transom: 8
- Ignition of fuel vapor: 8
- Vision obstructed: 6
- Overloading: 5
- Failure to vent fumes: 5
- Lack of proper lights: 3
- Dam or lock: 1
- Improper loading: 1
- Improper anchoring: 1

Operator Age

- No Info: 29 / 3%
- Less than 17: 27 / 3%
- 17 - 21: 97 / 9%
- 22 - 35: 275 / 27%
- 36 - 50: 272 / 26%
- 51+: 332 / 32%

Operator Experience (Hours)

- No info: 100 / 9%
- Less than 10 Hours: 162 / 16%
- 10 - 100 Hours: 535 / 52%
- 100+ Hours: 235 / 23%

Operator Gender

- No info: 29 / 3%
- Male: 883 / 85%
- Female: 120 / 12%

*836 accidents involving 1,032 operators
Vessels may have been docked, anchored, or involved in a hit and run accident which would result in no operator information
Also, some information may not be provided by operators
**2020 REPORTABLE BOATING ACCIDENTS**

### Operator/Occupant Swimming Ability

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<th>Could swim</th>
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<td>8 / 0%</td>
<td>853 / 36%</td>
<td>1,544 / 64%</td>
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*2,405 total occupants and operators*

### Boat Operator Education

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<td>451 / 44%</td>
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### Operator/Occupant PFD Use

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<th>Not wearing PFD</th>
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<td>No info</td>
<td>162 / 7%</td>
<td>1,566 / 65%</td>
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### Operator by Age With No Boater Education

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<td>51+</td>
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<td>199</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>203</td>
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<td>178</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>159</td>
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<td>10</td>
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*1,032 operators; 29 were unknown due to hit and run accidents*
2020 REPORTABLE BOATING ACCIDENTS

PFD WEAR BY AGE
Other Vessels vs PWC

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*686 of 2,405 operators/occupants were wearing a PFD at time of the accident. Seven persons did not provide an age. Other vessel types versus PWC due to law requiring PFD wear for PWC.

STATE WATERS VS. OFFSHORE WATERS (ACCIDENTS)

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Offshore</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>State waters</td>
<td>811</td>
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*Offshore is defined as the edge of the Gulfstream or three miles from shore, whichever is greater, in the Atlantic and more than nine miles out in the Gulf of Mexico.

VICTIM STATISTICS

Fatal
79 / 3%

Injured
534 / 22%

Uninjured
1,820 / 75%

*2,433 persons involved in vessel accidents
2,414 operators/occupants and 19 swimmers.

VICTIM STATISTICS (EJECTED)

Ejected
226 / 9%

Not ejected
2,188 / 91%

*2,414 total operators and occupants
Boating Fatalities
The 19-foot motorboat was launched on Lake Harney in Seminole County. While the vessel was operating out on the water, it made a course change, and collided with a tree at the shoreline. The 20-year-old operator was fatally injured during the collision receiving blunt force trauma to his body. Investigators could not determine a cause for the sudden change in direction.
2020 Boating Fatalities

2019 Fatalities - Top Ten States

Florida Total Fatalities Recorded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registered vessels</th>
<th>Fatality rate</th>
<th>Number of fatalities</th>
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<tr>
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<td>985,005</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>961,266</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>931,450</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>67</td>
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</table>

*Fatality Rate – Number of fatalities per 100,000 registered vessels

Investigating Agency

Sheriff’s Office
6 / 8%

FWC
71 / 92%

*77 fatal accidents
**2020 Boating Fatalities**

**Accidents By Month**

- Jan: 7
- Feb: 10
- Mar: 6
- Apr: 8
- May: 9
- Jun: 6
- Jul: 6
- Aug: 6
- Sep: 2
- Oct: 2
- Nov: 5
- Dec: 4

**Time of Day**

- 0:00-1:59 am: 6
- 2:00-3:59 am: 1
- 4:00-5:59 am: 1
- 6:00-7:59 am: 4
- 8:00-9:59 am: 6
- 10:00-11:59 am: 9
- 12:00-1:59 pm: 10
- 2:00-3:59 pm: 10
- 4:00-5:59 pm: 11
- 6:00-7:59 pm: 9
- 8:00-9:59 pm: 7
- 10:00-11:59 pm: 3

**Accident Types**

- Struck by boat (person): 1
- Flooding (swamping): 1
- Collision with floating object/person: 1
- Fire/explosion (fuel): 2
- Fall on PWC: 2
- Skier mishap/fall: 4
- Struck by skeg/prop: 4
- Collision with vessel: 7
- Capsizing: 8
- Collision with fixed object: 15
- Other: 15
- Falls overboard: 17

*77 fatal accidents involving 79 fatalities (Based on first harmful event)*

Fatality data includes four missing persons where their disappearance is associated with a boating accident.
2020 Boating Fatalities

Operation at Time of Accident

- Cruising: 46
- Rowing/paddling: 11
- Drifting: 12
- Other: 7
- Changing direction: 5
- At anchor: 3
- Wake/surf jumping: 3
- Sailing: 3
- Changing speed: 1

*91 vessels involved in 77 fatal accidents with 79 victims

Accident Site Location

- Lake/pond: 21
- Bay/sound: 20
- Ocean/gulf: 12
- River/creek: 10
- Canal/cut: 8
- Port/harbor: 3
- Marsh/swamp: 2
- Other: 1

Restricted Area Accidents

- Other: 15
- Manatee slow speed: 3
- Slow speed: 3
- Idle speed: 2
- MPH limit: 2

*25 of 77 fatal accidents occurred in restricted areas. “Other” may include areas where the regulation or local ordinance was not specified.
2020 Boating Fatalities

Vessel Ownership

- Owned: 59 / 65%
- Rented: 14 / 15%
- Borrowed (not in household): 18 / 20%

Vessel Fuel & Hull Type

- Gasoline: 67
- None: 18
- Diesel: 6
- Fiberglass: 64
- Aluminum: 14
- Other: 10
- Steel: 2
- Rubber/vinyl: 1

Vessel Propulsion, Length & Type

- Propeller: 51
- Water jet: 19
- Manual: 14
- Sail: 5
- Air thrust: 1
- Other (paddlewheel): 1
- < 12 Feet: 31
- 12 - 16 Feet: 16
- 17 - 21 Feet: 21
- 22 - 26 Feet: 10
- 27 - 40 Feet: 8
- 41-65 Feet: 3
- 66+ Feet: 1
- Unknown: 1

- Open motorboat: 42
- Personal watercraft: 18
- Canoe/Kayak: 11
- Cabin motorboat: 6
- Sail boat: 5
- Pontoon boat: 5
- Rowboat (jon): 3
- Other: 1

*77 total fatal accidents involving 91 vessels
2020 Boating Fatalities

Primary Cause of Death

- Hypothermia: 1 / 1%
- Trauma: 31 / 39%
- Drowning: 37 / 47%
- Other: 10 / 13%

*79 fatalities, “Other” category includes 5 missing where cause of death is unknown

Operator Gender

- Male: 84 / 92%
- Female: 7 / 8%

*91 operators

Operator Age (in years)

- Unknown: 1 / 1%
- Less than 17: 5 / 6%
- 17 - 21: 8 / 9%
- 22 - 35: 22 / 24%
- 36 - 50: 23 / 25%
- 51 + years: 32 / 35%

Operator Experience (in hours)

- Unknown: 14 / 14.5%
- Under 10: 12 / 13%
- 10 - 100: 14 / 16%
- Over 100: 51 / 64.5%
2020 BOATING FATALITIES

On September 13, 2020, at approximately 9:45 pm, a 21-foot open motorboat was traveling north bound in the ICW near Haulover Sand Bar. The 29-year-old operator stated that he swerved to avoid an oncoming personal watercraft, this change in course resulted in his vessel impacting a channel marker. The impact resulted in one person being ejected and the four other occupants falling inside the vessel. One of the occupants received serious head trauma from falling inside the vessel, she later succumbed to her injuries. Three other occupants were also injured in the incident.

OPERATOR EDUCATION

No boater education 63 / 69%
Boater education 28 / 31%

OPERATORS BY AGE WITHOUT FORMAL BOATER EDUCATION

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<th>Age Range</th>
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<td>36-50</td>
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<tr>
<td>51+</td>
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</table>

*63 operators did not have any formal boater education

VICTIM STATISTICS

(EJECTED)

Ejected 34 / 43%
Not ejected 45 / 57%

VICTIM STATISTICS

(WEARING PFD)

Wearing PFD 21 / 27%
Not wearing PFD 58 / 73%

VICTIM STATISTICS

(SWIMMING ABILITY)

Cannot swim 24 / 30%
Can swim 55 / 70%

*77 fatal accidents involving 79 victims
2020 Boating Fatalities

Victim Residency

Florida resident 58 / 73%
Non resident 21 / 27%

Victim Gender

Male 60 / 76%
Female 19 / 24%

Victim Age

6-16 6 / 7%
17-21 6 / 8%
22-35 15 / 19%
36-50 25 / 32%
51+ 27 / 34%

Alcohol/Drug Related Accidents

Alcohol/drug use 18 / 23%
Other causes 59 / 77%

Alcohol/Drug Related Victims

Alcohol/drug use 12 / 15%
Other causes 67 / 85%

*77 accidents involving 79 fatalities
(Alcohol/drug related refers to any accidents in which alcohol or drug use may have been a contributing factor, whether legally impaired
2020 Boating Fatalities

Primary Cause of Accident by Reviewing Authority

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>No proper look-out/inattention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol use</td>
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<td>Skier or occupant behavior</td>
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<td>Careless/reckless</td>
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<td>Operator inexperience</td>
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<td>Weather</td>
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<td>Excessive speed</td>
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<td>Sharp turn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overloading</td>
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<td>Off throttle steering-jet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hull failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Machinery failure</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*77 fatal accidents

State Waters vs. Offshore Waters

*Offshore defined as the edge of the Gulf Stream or three miles from shore, whichever is greater, in the Atlantic and more than nine miles out in the Gulf
Boating Injuries photo detail

Photos: (Courtesy of FWC)

V-1 was anchored approximately nine miles E of the inlet at Montgomery Reef. V-2 was traveling at planning speed and collided with V-1. Operator of V2 said that he was putting the coordinates in his G.P.S to go to the south side of Montgomery Reef. When he looked up, he saw that he was heading toward a vessel that was in his direct path of travel. He made a sharp left turn crashing into the starboard side of V-1. He said that a young kid that was on V-1 either jumped or was ejected into the water but was able to swim back to the boat. Operator said that after he crashed into V-1, he went back to check on the other people. He exchanged information and headed back home because of the damage to his vessel.
## 2020 Boating Injuries

### Total Injuries Recorded 2016-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Injuries</th>
<th>Total Injuries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>54</td>
<td>985,005</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>950,740</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>944,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>931,450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Injury Rate – Number of injuries per 100,000 recreational registered vessels

### Types of Injury

- Hypothermia: 1
- Dislocation: 1
- Shock: 1
- Amputation: 2
- Spinal injury: 8
- Neck injury: 8
- Teeth and jaw: 11
- Sprain/strain: 20
- Burns: 20
- Internal injuries: 23
- Not specified: 26
- Back injury: 29
- Head injury: 61
- Contusion(s): 83
- Broken bone(s): 90
- Lacerations: 150

*375 accidents involving 534 injuries
2020 Boating Injuries

**Victim Statistics (Injured)**

- Operators: 216 / 40%
- Swimmers: 13 / 2%
- Towed skiers: 19 / 4%
- Occupants: 286 / 54%

*375 accidents involving 534 injured
Towed skier includes all towed watersport participants (skiing, tubing, wake surfing, etc)*

On October 26th, a 20-year-old operator and a 30-year-old occupant, were on a rented personal watercraft (PWC) in the area known as Beer Can Island. The operator changed course and was heading toward the shore at a high rate of speed. As he neared the shoreline the operator to turn away from the rocks, turning the handlebars and letting off the throttle. The PWC did not turn due to the off-throttle status resulting in the PWC grounding on the rocks. The two were ejected onto the rocks, the occupant ended up slightly underneath the PWC, the operator landed a few feet away. Both were transported to the hospital and treated for minor cuts and abrasions.

**Victim Statistics (Swimming Ability)**

- Could swim: 376 / 70%
- Could not swim: 158 / 30%

**Victim Statistics (PFD Use)**

- Wearing PFD: 217 / 41%
- Not wearing PFD: 317 / 59%
2020 Boating Injuries

Victim Statistics (Ejected)
- Ejected: 226
- Not Ejected: 308

Victim Statistics (Alcohol/Drug Use)
- Alcohol/Drug: 34 / 6%
- None: 500 / 94%
- Unknown: <6

Victim Statistics (Age)
- 17 - 21: 72
- 22 - 35: 172
- 36 - 50: 121
- 51+: 108
- <6: 8

Injury Action
- Impact with boat: 193
- Impact with fixed object: 118
- Other: 86
- Struck by boat: 51
- Struck by skeg/prop: 51
- Impact with water: 31
- Impact with floating object/person: 4
Personal Watercraft Accidents
On October 19th, a 30-year-old operator and his 8-year-old daughter were riding on a borrowed personal watercraft (PWC) in Snake Creek Canal. The operator stated that the wake of another PWC caused him to lose control of his PWC while crossing under a water supply pipeline. His PWC impacted one of the concrete support pilings, ejected him and his daughter. A Good Samaritan observed them in the water and assisted. The incident resulted in both the operator and occupant receiving a fractured leg.
## 2020 PERSONAL WATERCRAFT ACCIDENTS

### 2020 PERSONAL WATERCRAFT REGISTRATION AND ACCIDENTS BY COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Pleasure</th>
<th>Rental</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>PWC Accidents</th>
<th>PWC Fatalities</th>
<th>PWC Injuries</th>
<th>Property Damage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Accident Rate*</th>
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*Accident Rate = \# of Registered Vessels / \# of Accidents

Top ten counties for PWC accidents in bold print. Fields that equaled zero intentionally left blank.
# 2020 PERSONAL WATERCRAFT ACCIDENTS

## 2020 PERSONAL WATERCRAFT REGISTRATION AND ACCIDENTS BY COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Pleasure</th>
<th>Rental</th>
<th>Total*</th>
<th>PWC Accidents</th>
<th>PWC Fatalities</th>
<th>PWC Injuries</th>
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<td>659</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong>*</td>
<td>147,647</td>
<td>3,838</td>
<td>151,694</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>$741,337</td>
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</table>

*Total registered PWC includes 209 government registered that are not represented in the pleasure or rental numbers.
Department of Highways Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) numbers represent registrations issued at main office instead of at the county level.
**2020 Personal Watercraft Accidents**

**Total Registered PWC**

- **PWC (private)**
  - 151,694 (15%)
- **Other vessels**
  - 833,311 (85%)

**PWC Ownership by Registration**

- **PWC (rental)**
  - 3,838 (3%)
- **PWC (private)**
  - 147,856 (97%)

**Comparison of PWC to Vessels Involved in Accidents**

- **PWC (private)**
  - 157 / 14%
- **PWC (rental)**
  - 147 / 13%
- **Private vessels**
  - 782 / 68%
- **Rented vessels**
  - 64 / 5%

*1,150 vessels involved in accidents

**Accidents 2016-2020**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Accidents</th>
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<td>2019</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>158</td>
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**Top Ten Counties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Accidents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami-Dade</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinellas</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okaloosa</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manatee</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**2020 Personal Watercraft Accidents**

### Accident Site Location

- **Bay/sound**: 78
- **Ocean/gulf**: 43
- **River/creek**: 33
- **Canal/cut**: 27
- **Lake/pond**: 22
- **Inlet/pass**: 20
- **Port/harbor**: 3
- **Other**: 1

### Restricted Area Accidents

- **Other**: 23
- **MPH limit**: 17
- **Slow speed**: 13
- **Idle speed**: 7
- **Manatee slow speed**: 4

*64 PWC accidents occurred within a restricted area. "Other" may include areas where the regulation or local ordinance was not specified.

### Operation at Time of Accident

- **Cruising**: 191
- **Changing direction**: 43
- **Changing speed**: 26
- **Wake/surf jumping**: 12
- **Drifting**: 12
- **Other**: 10
- **Docking/undocking**: 2
- **Being towed**: 2
- **At anchor (beached)**: 2
- **Towing a boat**: 2
- **Launching/loading**: 2

*304 PWC involved in 227 accidents*
2020 Personal Watercraft Accidents

Primary Type of Accident

- Collision with vessel: 101
- Collision with fixed object: 46
- Fall on PWC: 25
- Falls overboard: 20
- Capsizing: 7
- Grounding: 7
- Other: 5
- Collision with floating object/person: 4
- Fire/explosion (fuel): 3
- Struck underwater object: 2
- Flooding (swamping): 2
- Skier mishap/fall: 2
- Struck by boat (person): 1
- Skier hit object: 1
- Sinking: 1

*227 PWC accidents (Based on first harmful event as determined by the state reviewing authority)

On October 13th, at approximately 3:45 pm in Marathon a single PWC accident occurred. The 30-year-old male operator was traveling at a high rate of speed when he hit a boat wake and the PWC ramped off the wake. Upon landing, he hit his head on the handlebars, causing injuries to his head and neck before falling overboard. He was retrieved from the water unresponsive. CPR was performed, and he was transported to the hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

Primary Cause Assessed by Reviewing Authority

- No proper look-out/inattention: 71
- Operator inexperience: 38
- Careless/reckless operation: 29
- Excessive speed: 21
- Off throttle steering-jet: 16
- Other: 12
- Sharp turn: 10
- Violation of nav rule: 8
- Alcohol use: 5
- Congested water: 4
- Hazardous water: 3
- Weather: 3
- Skier or occupant behavior: 2
- Ignition of fuel vapor: 2
- Vision obstructed: 1
- Machinery failure: 1
- Overloading: 1

PWC Ownership

- PWC (owner household): 108 / 36%
- PWC (borrowed): 50 / 16%
- PWC (rented): 146 / 48%
**2020 PERSONAL WATERCRAFT ACCIDENTS**

**OPERATOR EDUCATION**

- **Boater education** 133 / 44%
- **No boater education** 157 / 53%
- **Unknown** 9 / 3%

**OPERATORS BY AGE**

**WITHOUT BOATER EDUCATION**

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>17-21</th>
<th>22-35</th>
<th>36-50</th>
<th>51+</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OPERATOR AGE**

- **Unknown** 9 / 3%
- **Less than 17** 23 / 8%
- **17-21** 72 / 24%
- **22-35** 104 / 35%
- **36-50** 64 / 21%
- **51+** 27 / 9%

**OPERATOR EXPERIENCE (HOURS)**

- **Unknown** 25 / 8%
- **<10** 128 / 43%
- **10-100** 91 / 31%
- **100+** 55 / 18%

---

*227 PWC accidents involving 304 PWC and 299 operators
Operator information for 9 PWC are unknown due to hit and run accidents and 5 PWC with no operators at time of accident
2020 Personal Watercraft Accidents

Primary Injury Types

- Broken bones: 53
- Lacerations: 34
- Contusions: 31
- Head injury: 19
- Internal injury: 13
- Back injury: 11
- Sprain/strain: 8
- Spinal injury: 5
- No info: 4
- Teeth and jaw: 2
- Neck injury: 1
- Dislocation: 1
- Burns: 1

*227 accidents involving 183 injured persons

Injuries 2016-2020

- 2020: 183
- 2019: 169
- 2018: 87
- 2017: 141
- 2016: 132

Comparisons of PWC Injuries

- PWC injuries: 183 / 34%
- Other vessel injuries: 351 / 66%

*534 injuries
2020 Personal Watercraft Accidents

Comparisons of PWC Fatalities

![Pie chart showing PWC fatalities (15/19%) and other vessel fatalities (64/81%).]

Fatalities 2016-2020

![Bar chart showing fatalities from 2016 to 2020.]

Investigating Agency

![Pie chart showing FWC (205/90%), Sheriff’s Office (14/6%), and Police Department (7/3%).]

Accidents by Month

![Bar chart showing accidents by month from January to December.]

*79 Fatalities

*227 PWC accidents
Boating Education

Statistics

Get Your Permanent Florida Boating Safety Education Identification Card Today!

Become a better boater • Rent boats and PWC without taking the Temporary Certificate test

Courses are available online, in our How to Boat Smart course book, and in classrooms. Visit http://MyFWC.com/Boating/Safety-Education/Courses for available courses!

Good for life! Free replacement if lost, stolen or damaged!

Printed on durable, wallet-sized cards.
Boating Education Statistics photo detail

Cover Photos: (Courtesy of FWC)
2020 Boating Education Statistics

Top Ten Counties Boating Safety Education Identification (I.D.) Cards Issued

- Miami-Dade: 6,476
- Palm Beach: 3,947
- Broward: 3,942
- Hillsborough: 3,882
- Pinellas: 2,959
- Orange: 2,793
- Lee: 2,385
- Brevard: 2,084
- Duval: 2,056
- Okaloosa: 1,795

*74,376 cards issued in calendar year 2020 (does not include temporary certificates)
11,497 cards were issued to out-of-state residents

Boating Safety Education
I.D. Card Distribution by Age

- 0-16: 12,599
- 17-21: 14,523
- 22-35: 26,932
- 36-50: 9,415
- 51 and up: 10,907

*74,376 new cards issued. An additional 3,254 cards issued as reprints for lost, damaged and change of information

Boating Safety Education
I.D. Card Distribution by Gender

- Male: 53,786 / 72%
- Female: 20,590 / 28%
2020 Boating Education Statistics

Operators Involved in Accidents-Education/Age

*1,032 operators, 29 were unknown due to hit and run accidents or information was not entered

Operators Involved in Fatal Accidents-Education/Age

*91 operators
Violation Summary photo detail

Cover Photos: (Courtesy of FWC)

Top photo: FWC Officers with a subject in custody for boating violations

Bottom photo: Alcoholic beverages found on a vessel during a boating accident investigation
## 2020 Boating Violation Summary

### 2020 Uniform Boating Citation Summary

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<td>Mooring to or damaging markers or buoys</td>
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<td>Rental without proper safety equipment</td>
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<td>Rental without boater education</td>
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<td>Operation of unregistered/unnumbered vessels</td>
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<td>Application, certificate, number or decal violation</td>
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<td>Special manufacturer and dealer numbers</td>
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<td><strong>Safety Equipment and Regulations</strong></td>
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<td>Equipment and lighting requirements</td>
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<td>14,036</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL VIOLATIONS RECORDED</strong></td>
<td>16,880</td>
<td>20,846</td>
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A thorough review of the annual boating accident statistics has revealed that 58% of the reportable boating accidents during the 2020 calendar year occurred in 10 Florida counties.

The information on the following pages represents a breakdown of the accident data from each of these top 10 counties. The graphs show the type of vessels involved, the length, the primary cause of each accident and the primary type of accident for each county. There is also a map of each county with points designating the accident locations.

The information found in this section will provide a basis for future boating safety awareness efforts implemented by the FWC Division of Law Enforcement, Boating and Waterways Section.
Florida Top 10 Counties of Boating Accidents during 2020

Legend
- Red circle: Fatal Accident (40)
- Blue circle: Accident with Injury (202)
- Green circle: Accident without Injury (245)

Map document created by FWC LE GIS
Known Locations of Accidents in Monroe County during 2020

**Legend**
- **Fatal Accident (9)**
- **Accident with Injury (41)**
- **Accident without Injury (49)**

[Map diagram showing locations of accidents]
1. Monroe County

**Type of Vessel**
- Houseboat: 1
- Pontoon boat: 1
- Other: 2
- Canoe/kayak: 2
- Sail (aux power): 11
- Cabin motorboat: 19
- Personal watercraft: 31
- Open motorboat: 64

**Vessel Length (in feet)**
- Unknown: 2
- 66+: 4
- 41 - 65: 11
- 27 - 40: 24
- 22 - 26: 23
- 17 - 21: 23
- 12 - 16: 10
- Less than 12: 34

**Primary Cause of Accident**

**Primary Type of Accident**

---

Boating Accident Statistical Report
Known Locations of Accidents in Miami-Dade County during 2020

Legend
- Fatal Accident (5)
- Accident with Injury (46)
- Accident without Injury (44)

Map document created by FWC DLE GIS
2. MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

**TYPE OF VESSEL**

- Airboat: 1
- Mini jet-boat: 2
- Pontoon boat: 3
- Sail (aux power): 5
- Open motorboat: 35
- Personal watercraft: 47
- Cabin motorboat: 57

**VESSEL LENGTH (IN FEET)**

- Unknown: 2
- 66+: 7
- 41 - 65: 31
- 27 - 40: 32
- 22 - 26: 16
- 17 - 21: 12
- 12 - 16: 4
- Less than 12: 46

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF ACCIDENT**

**PRIMARY TYPE OF ACCIDENT**
Known Locations of Accidents in Palm Beach County during 2020

**Legend**
- Fatal Accident (6)
- Accident with Injury (10)
- Accident without Injury (40)

Map document created by FWC DLE GIS
3. Palm Beach County

Type of Vessel

- Other: 1
- Houseboat: 1
- Sail (aux power): 1
- Pontoon boat: 1
- Canoe/kayak: 1
- Airboat: 1
- Cabin motorboat: 18
- Personal watercraft: 21
- Open motorboat: 40

Vessel Length (in feet)

- Unknown: 2
- 66+: 6
- 41 - 65: 10
- 27 - 40: 15
- 22 - 26: 15
- 17 - 21: 10
- 12 - 16: 9
- Less than 12: 18

Primary Cause of Accident

- No responsible vessel: 6
- Other: 5
- Carelessness: 5
- Machinery failure: 4
- Weather: 3
- Congested water: 2
- Operator inexperience: 2
- Violation of navigation rule: 2
- Hazardous water: 2
- Excessive speed: 2
- Alcoholic use: 2
- Off throttle steering/float: 2
- Equipment failure: 1
- Collision with vessel: 1
- Collision with fixed object: 1
- Falls overboard: 1

Primary Type of Accident

- Other: 4
- Struck by vessel: 3
- Collisions (sideswipe): 3
- Flooding (sideswipe): 3
- Struck underwater object: 2
- Grounding: 2
- Fire/explosion (fuel): 1
- Vessel wake damage: 1
- Other: 1
Boating Accident Statistical Report

Known Locations of Accidents in Pinellas County during 2020

**Legend**
- **Fatal Accident (4)**
- **Accident with Injury (24)**
- **Accident without Injury (28)**

Map document created by FWC DLE GIS
4. PINELLAS COUNTY

**Type of Vessel**

- Mini jet-boat: 1
- Canoe/kayak: 1
- Pontoon boat: 3
- Sail (aux power): 4
- Cabin motorboat: 12
- Open motorboat: 21
- Personal watercraft: 35

**Vessel Length (in feet)**

- 41 - 65: 5
- 27 - 40: 12
- 22 - 26: 11
- 17 - 21: 10
- 12 - 16: 2
- Less than 12: 37

**Primary Cause of Accident**

- Collision with vessel: 19
- Other: 6
- Operating失误: 4
- Speed: 4
- Skier or occupant: 3
- Equipment failure: 3
- Sharp turn: 3
- Off course: 2
- Stalling: 2
- Immersion: 2
- Collisions with hot water: 1
- Collisions with cold water: 1

**Primary Type of Accident**

- Collision with fixed object: 9
- Falling overboard: 5
- Flooding (swamping): 5
- Skier mishap: 4
- Grounding: 3
- Stuck in shallow water: 3
- Fire/Explosion: 2
- Capsize: 2
- Fall from PWC: 1
Known Locations of Accidents in Lee County during 2020

Legend

- Fatal Accident (3)
- Accident with Injury (22)
- Accident without Injury (23)
5. Lee County

**Type of Vessel**

- Other: 1
- Sail (aux power): 1
- Pontoon boat: 5
- Cabin motorboat: 10
- Personal watercraft: 13
- Open motorboat: 33

**Vessel Length (in feet)**

- Unknown: 1
- 66+: 1
- 41 - 65: 4
- 27 - 40: 11
- 22 - 26: 17
- 17 - 21: 14
- 12 - 16: 3
- Less than 12: 12

**Primary Cause of Accident**

- Other: 15
- Excessive speed: 6
- Violation of navigation rules: 4
- Equipment failure: 1
- Dam or lock: 1
- Weather: 1
- Alcohol/illegal drug: 1
- Other: 1

**Primary Type of Accident**

- Collision with fixed object: 12
- Collision with floating object: 9
- Struck by vessel: 5
- Grounding: 3
- Other: 3
- Capsizing (vessel): 2
- Sinking (vessel): 2
- Falling overboard: 2
- Vessel water damage: 2
- Falling (vessel): 1
- Injury to boat personnel: 1
- Injury to vessel: 1
- Vessel lost: 1
- Other: 1
Known Locations of Accidents in Okaloosa County during 2020

Legend
- Fatal Accident (2)
- Accident with Injury (16)
- Accident without Injury (13)
6. OKALOOSA COUNTY

**Type of Vessel**

- Mini jet-boat: 1
- Cabin motorboat: 6
- Pontoon boat: 12
- Open motorboat: 16
- Personal watercraft: 17

**Vessel Length (in feet)**

- 41 - 65: 1
- 27 - 40: 6
- 22 - 26: 20
- 17 - 21: 6
- 12 - 16: 2
- Less than 12: 17

**Primary Cause of Accident**

- No proper lookout/attention: 19
- Operator inexperience: 6
- Excessive speed: 4
- Carelessness, recklessness: 4
- Vibration, interference, bow or stern trim: 3
- Slip or loss of control behavior: 3
- Machinery failure: 3
- Hazards of water: 2
- Over-loaded vessel: 2
- Alcohol use: 1

**Primary Type of Accident**

- Collision with vessel: 13
- Falls overboard: 4
- Fall on PWC: 2
- Struck by vessel/person: 2
- Flooding (swamping): 2
- Vessel walk damage: 2
- Collision with fixed object: 2
- Capsizing: 1
Known Locations of Accidents in Bay County during 2020

**Legend**
- Fatal Accident (4)
- Accident with Injury (11)
- Accident without Injury (14)

Map document created by FWC DLE GIS

52
7. BAY COUNTY

**Type of Vessel**

- Sail (aux power): 1
- Pontoon boat: 4
- Cabin motorboat: 4
- Personal watercraft: 8
- Open motorboat: 19

**Vessel Length (in feet)**

- 41 - 65: 2
- 27 - 40: 5
- 22 - 26: 12
- 17 - 21: 9
- 12 - 16: 2
- Less than 12: 6

**Primary Cause of Accident**

- No proper look-out/attention: 7
- Carelessness: 5
- Weather: 4
- Other vessel behavior: 2
- Machinery failure: 2
- Compelled water: 2
- Excessive speed: 2
- Operator inexperience: 1
- Off intended steering pt: 1

**Primary Type of Accident**

- Collision with vessel: 4
- Struck by algae/marine: 3
- Falling overboard: 2
- Falls on PWC: 2
- Grounding: 2
- Other: 2
- Fall in boat: 1
- Capsizing: 1
- Struck underwater object: 1
- Vessel wake damage: 1
Known Locations of Accidents in Collier County during 2020

**Legend**
- Fatal Accident (3)
- Accident with Injury (12)
- Accident without Injury (14)
8. Collier County

**Type of Vessel**

- **Sail (only):** 1
- **Cabin motorboat:** 1
- **Canoe/kayak:** 1
- **Pontoon boat:** 2
- **Sail (aux power):** 3
- **Personal watercraft:** 12
- **Open motorboat:** 19

**Vessel Length (in feet)**

- **41 - 65:** 1
- **27 - 40:** 5
- **22 - 26:** 9
- **17 - 21:** 9
- **12 - 16:** 4
- **Less than 12:** 11

**Primary Cause of Accident**

- **No proper look-out/communication:** 8
- **Weather:** 5
- **Excessive speed:** 4
- **Equipment failure:** 3
- **Alcohol or drugs:** 2
- **Sharp turn:** 1
- **Machinery failure:** 1
- **Hazardous water:** 1
- **Conflicted water:** 1
- **Other:** 1

**Primary Type of Accident**

- **Collision with vessel:** 6
- **Front overboard:** 5
- **Capsize:** 4
- **Grounding:** 4
- **Struck by vessel (sunk):** 3
- **Fall on PWC:** 3
- **Struck underwater object:** 1
- **Other:** 1
Known Locations of Accidents in Manatee County during 2020

Legend

- Red Circle: Fatal Accident (2)
- Blue Circle: Accident with Injury (12)
- Green Circle: Accident without Injury (8)

Map document created by FWC DLE GIS 56
9. MANATEE COUNTY

**Type of Vessel**

- Airboat: 1
- Pontoon boat: 1
- Other: 2
- Personal watercraft: 6
- Cabin motorboat: 8
- Open motorboat: 9

**Vessel Length (in Feet)**

- Unknown: 1
- 66+: 1
- 41 - 65: 3
- 27 - 40: 8
- 22 - 26: 3
- 17 - 21: 5
- 12 - 16: 6
- Less than 12: 9

**Primary Cause of Accident**

- Navigational error: 5
- Off course, steering failure: 3
- Weather: 3
- Carelessness/Inattention: 3
- Sharp turn: 2
- Excessive speed: 1
- Congested water: 1
- Failure to yield right of way: 1
- Other: 1

**Primary Type of Accident**

- Collision with fixed object: 6
- Collision with vessel: 5
- Fall in boat: 2
- Capsize: 2
- Grounding: 2
- Struck by falling object: 2
- Falls overboard: 1
- Premise (fuel): 1
Known Locations of Accidents in Sarasota County during 2020

**Legend**

- **Fatal Accident (2)**
- **Accident with Injury (8)**
- **Accident without Injury (12)**

Map document created by FWC DLE GIS 58
10. Sarasota County

**Type of Vessel**

- Pontoon boat: 1
- Sail (aux power): 4
- Personal Watercraft: 6
- Cabin motorboat: 7
- Open motorboat: 14

**Vessel Length (in feet)**

- 66+: 1
- 41 - 65: 5
- 27 - 40: 4
- 22 - 26: 5
- 17 - 21: 7
- 12 - 16: 1
- Less than 12: 9

**Primary Cause of Accident**

- Other: 1
- Motor failure: 2
- Engine failure: 2
- Weather: 1
- Collision with fixed object: 1
- Sinking: 1

**Primary Type of Accident**

- Collision with vessel: 7
- Flooding (overboarding): 5
- Struck by vessel: 3
- Overturned: 2
- Struck by object: 2
- Sinking: 1
- Grounding: 1

---

Boating Accident Statistical Report
Trend Analysis photo detail

Photos: (Courtesy of FWC)

Photos of boating accidents involving vessels grounding on shore or rocks
2020 Trend Analysis

Reportable Accidents 2011-2020

*Average number of accidents per year: 722

Vessel Registration 2011-2020

Recreational vessels Commercial/other vessels
2020 Trend Analysis

Fatalities 2011-2020

*Average number of fatalities per year: 65

Injuries 2011-2020

*Average number of injuries per year: 417
2020 Trend Analysis

Boating Safety Education I.D. Cards Issued
2011-2020

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<td>2011</td>
<td>27,062</td>
<td>29,308</td>
<td>36,251</td>
<td>38,179</td>
<td>45,360</td>
<td>47,307</td>
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<td>48,771</td>
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Fatalities by Quarter 2011-2020

- Q1= JAN-MAR
- Q2= APR-JUN
- Q3= JUL-SEP
- Q4= OCT-DEC
**2020 Trend Analysis**

**Quarter 1 Fatalities**

![Bar chart showing quarter 1 fatalities from 2011 to 2020]

*Q1 = JAN – MAR  Average number of fatalities in first quarter: 13

**Quarter 2 Fatalities**

![Bar chart showing quarter 2 fatalities from 2011 to 2020]

*Q2 = APR – JUN  Average number of fatalities in second quarter: 18
2020 Trend Analysis

Quarter 3 Fatalities

*Q3 = JUL – SEP  Average number of fatalities in third quarter: 19

Quarter 4 Fatalities

*Q4 = OCT – DEC  Average number of fatalities in fourth quarter: 15
2020 Trend Analysis

Vessel Types 2016 - 2020
2020 Trend Analysis

Operator by Age 2011-2020
2020 Trend Analysis

PWC Accidents, Fatalities, Injured
2011-2020

Accidents
Fatalities
Injured
Glossary
Glossary photo detail

Photos: (Courtesy of FWC)

Top Picture: At the Mosquito Bank sandbar in Key Largo, this vessel was loaded with heavy stereo/sound equipment and large ice chests at the stern. The boarding ladder is also located on the right-side stern. As occupants began to climb aboard the boat, water began to enter over the transom. The bilge pumps came on but were not able to keep up with the amount of water that was coming in. The vessel became swamped and later capsized as the occupants got off.

Bottom Picture: At the Gandy Boat Ramp on April 5th this vessel was being launched. The owner stated that he had turned on the blower motor prior to starting but the amount of time given before starting is unknown. When the operator attempted to start the engine, fuel was ignited, and a fire quickly engulfed the vessel. The owner and occupants were able to get off the vessel before being injured. The flames burned the lines keeping the boat at the dock allowing it to drift a short distance away before ultimately sinking.
Definitions for Boating Accident Report Forms

**ALCOHOL/DRUG RELATED** – Refers to any accidents in which alcohol/drug use may have been a contributing factor, whether legally impaired or not.

**AT ANCHOR** – Held in place in the water by an anchor, includes “moored” to a buoy or anchored vessel and “dragging anchor.”

**BOATING ACCIDENT** – A collision, accident, or casualty involving a vessel, in or upon, or entering into or exiting from the water, includes capsizing, collision with another vessel or object, sinking, personal injury, death or disappearance of any person from onboard under circumstances which indicate the possibility of death or injury or property damage to any vessel or dock.

**CABIN MOTORBOAT** – Motorboats with a cabin which can be completely closed by means of doors or hatches. Large motorboats with cabins, even though referred to as yachts, are considered to be cabin motorboats.

**CAPSIZING** – Overturning of a vessel.

**CARELESS OPERATION** – Operation of a vessel in a manner that is not reasonable and prudent, having no regard for other waterborne traffic, posted speed and wake restrictions, and all other attendant circumstances so as not to endanger the life, limb, or property of any person.

**COLLISION WITH ANOTHER VESSEL** – Any striking together of two or more vessels, regardless of operation at time of the accident, is a collision. (Also includes colliding with the tow of another vessel, regardless of the nature of the tow, e.g., surfboard, ski ropes, skier, tow line, etc.)

**COLLISION WITH FIXED OBJECT** – The striking of any fixed object above or below the surface of the water.

**COLLISION WITH A FLOATING OBJECT** – Collision with any waterborne object (except another vessel), above or below the surface, that is free to move with the tide, current or wind.

**CRUISING** – Proceeding normally, unrestricted, with an absence of drastic rudder or engine changes.

**DOCUMENTED VESSEL** – A vessel of five or more net tons, owned by a citizen of the United States, for which a certificate of documentation is issued by the United States Coast Guard, pursuant to 46 C.F.R. part 67. Documented vessels are not required to display an assigned registration number.

**DRIFTING** – Underway, but not proceeding over the bottom with use of engines, oars or sails, being carried along only by the tide, current or wind.

**FALLS OVERBOARD** – A person who unintentionally exits the vessel.

**FAULT OF OPERATOR** – Speeding, overloading, improper loading, not properly seating occupants of boat, no proper look-out, carelessness, failure to heed weather warnings, operating recklessly in a congested area, not observing the rules of the road, unsafe fueling practices, lack of experience, ignorance of aids to navigation, lack of caution in an unfamiliar area of operation, improper installation or maintenance of hull, machinery or equipment, poor judgment, recklessness, overpowering the boat, panic, proceeding in an unseaworthy craft, operating a motorboat near persons in the water, starting the engine with clutch engaged or throttle advanced or irresponsible boat handling (such as quick, sharp turns).
FIBERGLASS (PLASTIC) HULL - Hulls of fiber-reinforced plastic. The laminate consists of two basic components: the reinforcing material (glass filaments) and the plastic or resin in which it is embedded.

FIRE/EXPLOSION (FUEL) - Accidental combustion of vessel fuel or liquids (including their vapors).

FIRE/EXPLOSION (OTHER) - Accidental burning or explosion of any material onboard, except, vessel fuels or their vapors.

FLORIDA INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY - The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from the Georgia state line north of Fernandina to Miami, the Port of Canaveral lock and canal to the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway; the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, Miami to Key West; the Okeechobee Waterway, Stuart to Fort Myers; the St. Johns River, Jacksonville to Sanford; the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Anclote to Fort Myers; the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Carrabelle to Tampa Bay; Carrabelle to Anclote open bay section (using Gulf of Mexico); the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Carrabelle to the Alabama state line west of Pensacola; and the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint rivers in Florida.

FLOODING - Filling with water, regardless of method of ingress, but retaining sufficient buoyancy to remain on the surface.

FUELING - Any stage of the fueling operation, primarily concerned with introduction of explosive or combustible vapors or liquids onboard.

GROUNDING - Running aground of a vessel, striking or pounding on rocks, reefs or shoals, "stranding."

IMPROPER LOADING - Loading, including weight shifting of the vessel, causing instability, limited maneuverability or dangerously reduced freeboard.

INBOARD/OUTBOARD - Also referred to as inboard/outdrive. Regarded as inboard because the power unit is located inside the boat and has a stern-mounted propulsion unit.

INFLATABLE LIFE JACKET - A sleeveless jacket or vest with inflatable chambers designed to keep a person afloat in the water. May also be manufactured to resemble a belt or fanny pack when not inflated.

LIFE JACKET - A sleeveless jacket or vest that is filled with buoyant material designed to keep a person afloat in the water.

MANEUVERING - Changing of course, speed or similar boat handling action during which a high degree of alertness is required, or the boat is imperiled because of the operation, such as docking.

MOTORBOAT - Any vessel which is propelled or powered by machinery and which is used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water and any vessel equipped with propulsion machinery and not more than sixty-five feet in length.

NON-RESIDENT - A citizen of the United States who has not established residence in this state and has not continuously resided in this state for one year and in one county for the six months immediately preceding the initiation of a vessel titling or registration action.

NO PROPER LOOK-OUT - No proper watch, the failure of the operator to perceive danger because no one was serving as look-out or the person so serving failed in that regard.

NUMBERED VESSEL - An undocumented vessel numbered by a state with a numbering system approved by the United States Coast Guard under Chapter 123, Title 46, U.S.C.

OPEN MOTORBOAT - Craft of open construction specifically built for operating with a motor, including boats canopied or fitted with temporary partial shelters.

OPERATE - To be in charge of or in command of or in actual physical control of a vessel upon the waters of this state, or to exercise control over or to have responsibility for a vessel’s navigation or safety while the vessel is underway upon the waters of this state, or to control or steer a vessel being towed by another vessel upon the waters of this state.

OWNER - A person, other than a lien holder, having the property or title to a vessel. The term includes a person entitled to the use or possession of a vessel subject to an interest in another person, reserved or created by agreement and securing payment of performance of an obligation, but the term excludes a lessee under a lease not intended as security.

OUTBOARD - An engine not permanently affixed to the structure of the craft, regardless of the method or location used to mount the engine: e.g., motor wells, kicker pits, motor pockets, etc.

OVERLOADING - Excessive loading of the vessel causing instability, limited maneuverability, dangerously reduced freeboard, etc.

PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICE (PFD) - A life jacket or similar buoyancy aid. See also LIFE JACKET.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT - A vessel less than 16 feet in length which uses an inboard motor powering a water jet pump as its primary source of motive power and which is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing or kneeling on the vessel, rather than in the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.

RECKLESS OPERATION - A person is guilty of reckless operation of a vessel who operates any vessel, or manipulates any water skis, aquaplane or similar device, in willful or wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property at a speed or in a manner as to endanger, or likely to endanger, life or limb, damage the property of or injure any person.

REGISTRATION - A state operating license on a vessel which is issued with an identifying number, an annual certificate of registration and a decal designating the year for which a registration fee was paid.

REPORTABLE BOATING ACCIDENT - An accident that results in personal injury requiring medical treatment beyond immediate first aid, death, disappearance of any person from onboard under circumstances which indicate the possibility of death or injury or damage to any vessel or other property in an apparent aggregate amount of at least $2,000 or total loss of a vessel.
**RESIDENT** · A citizen of the United States who has established residency in this state and has continuously resided in this state for one year and in one county for the six months immediately preceding the initiation of a vessel titling or registration action.

**RULES OF THE ROAD** · The Inland and International Navigation Rules for the prevention of collision at sea.

**SAILBOAT OR AUXILIARY SAILBOAT** · Any vessel whose sole source of propulsion is the natural element (i.e., wind), or a craft intended to be propelled primarily by sail, regardless of size or type.

**SINKING** · Losing enough buoyancy to settle below the surface of the water.

**SPEEDING** · Operating at a speed, possibly below the posted speed limit, above that which a reasonable and prudent person would operate under the circumstances.

**STEEL HULL** · Hulls of sheet steel or steel alloy, not those of steel ribs and wood, canvas or plastic hull coverings.

**STRUCK BY BOAT OR PROPELLER** · Striking of a victim who is outside of the boat, but not necessarily a swimmer.

**SWAMPING** · Filling with water, particularly over the side, but retaining sufficient buoyancy to remain on the surface.

**TOWED WATER SPORT MISHAP** – A water sport accident associated with vessel passenger(s) or person(s) being towed or surfing the wake created by a vessel. Includes, but is not limited to, water skiing, wakeboarding, tubing, parasailing, etc.

**TOWING** · Engaged in towing any vessel, fishing gear or object other than a person.

**VESSEL** · Is synonymous with boat as referenced in S.1 (b), Article VII of the State Constitution, and includes every description of watercraft, barge and airboat, other than a seaplane on the water, used or capable of being used as means of transportation on water.

**WOOD HULL** · Hulls of plywood, molded plywood, wood planking or any other wood fiber in its natural consistency, including those of wooden construction that have been "sheathed" with fiberglass or sheet metal.
Boating Accident Statistical Report

**IMPORTANT**
boating safety messages to remember

**Always know what’s going on around your boat.**
Most boating accidents involve collisions.
Staying alert is critical!

![Scan constantly](image)

**Develop a “Life Jacket Habit.”**
Most people who die in boating accidents drown. Try out an inflatable life jacket and, most of all, wear it!

![Life Jacket Habit](image)

**Alcohol use is a leading cause of boating deaths.**
Alcohol and boating really don’t mix, so save it for later. When you drink, you don’t think!

*From your friends at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*
FWC reminds you not to spoil your boating fun. 
Slow down and look around.