Boating Fatalities
Boating Fatalities photo detail

Photos: (Courtesy of FWC)

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 - 55
Texas - 38
California - 37
Washington - 26
Alabama - 25
Georgia - 22
Michigan - 21
Missouri - 18
Louisiana - 18
Virginia - 18

*2020 statistics for top 10 states were not available at time of printing
Source: U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Division (recreational fatalities)

Florida Total Fatalities Recorded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registered vessels</th>
<th>Fatality rate</th>
<th>Number of fatalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>985,005</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>961,266</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>950,740</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>944,162</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>931,450</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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

Time of Day

Accident Types

*77 fatal accidents involving 79 fatalities
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

- Drowning: 37 / 47%
- Trauma: 31 / 39%
- Hypothermia: 1 / 1%
- 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)

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

*79 fatalities, “Other” category includes 5 missing where cause of death is unknown
2020 Boating Fatalities

On September 13, 2020, at approximately 9:45pm, 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

Operators by Age Without Formal Boater Education

Victim Statistics (Ejected)

Victim Statistics (Wearing PFD)

Victim Statistics (Swimming Ability)

*77 fatal accidents involving 79 victims
2020 Boating Fatalities

Victim Residency

- Florida resident: 58 / 73%
- Nonresident: 21 / 27%

Victim Gender

- Male: 60 / 76%
- Female: 19 / 24%

Victim Age

- 6-16: 6 / 7%
- 17-21: 17 / 21%
- 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

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2020 Boating Fatalities

Primary Cause of Accident by Reviewing Authority

- Other
- No proper look-out/inattention
- Alcohol use
- Skier or occupant behavior
- Careless/reckless
- Operator inexperience
- Weather
- Excessive speed
- Sharp turn
- Overloading
- Off throttle steering-jet
- Hull failure
- Machinery failure

*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