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

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<th>PWC Fatalities</th>
<th>PWC Injuries</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.
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*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: 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 (rental): 147 (13%)
- PWC (private): 157 (14%)
- Private vessels: 782 (68%)

*1,150 vessels involved in accidents

Accidents 2016-2020

- 2020: 227
- 2019: 186
- 2018: 120
- 2017: 151
- 2016: 158

Top Ten Counties

- Miami-Dade: 41
- Pinellas: 24
- Monroe: 21
- Palm Beach: 14
- Okaloosa: 12
- Lee: 10
- Manatee: 10
- Collier: 9
- Hillsborough: 9
- Bay: 6

*Top ten counties listed only if they have at least 5 accidents.
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

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

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

*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)

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

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.

PWC Ownership

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

**Operator Education**

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

*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

**Operator Age**

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

**Operator Experience (Hours)**

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

**Operators by Age Without Boater Education**

- **2020**
  - 0-16: 11
  - 17-21: 27
  - 22-35: 52
  - 36-50: 47
  - 51+: 21
- **2019**
  - 0-16: 7
  - 17-21: 27
  - 22-35: 50
  - 36-50: 32
  - 51+: 25
- **2018**
  - 0-16: 4
  - 17-21: 10
  - 22-35: 44
  - 36-50: 35
  - 51+: 18
- **2017**
  - 0-16: 1
  - 17-21: 8
  - 22-35: 49
  - 36-50: 37
  - 51+: 22
- **2016**
  - 0-16: 3
  - 17-21: 20
  - 22-35: 46
  - 36-50: 38
  - 51+: 23
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

- PWC fatalities: 15 / 19%
- Other vessel fatalities: 64 / 81%

*79 Fatalities

FATALITIES 2016-2020

- 2020: 15
- 2019: 6
- 2018: 7
- 2017: 11
- 2016: 11

INVESTIGATING AGENCY

- FWC: 205 / 90%
- Sheriff's Office: 14 / 6%
- Police Department: 7 / 3%
- Self investigated: 1 / 1%

*227 PWC accidents

ACCIDENTS BY MONTH

- Jan: 6
- Feb: 8
- Mar: 22
- Apr: 6
- May: 30
- Jun: 36
- Jul: 31
- Aug: 33
- Sep: 21
- Oct: 13
- Nov: 10
- Dec: 11

*227 PWC accidents