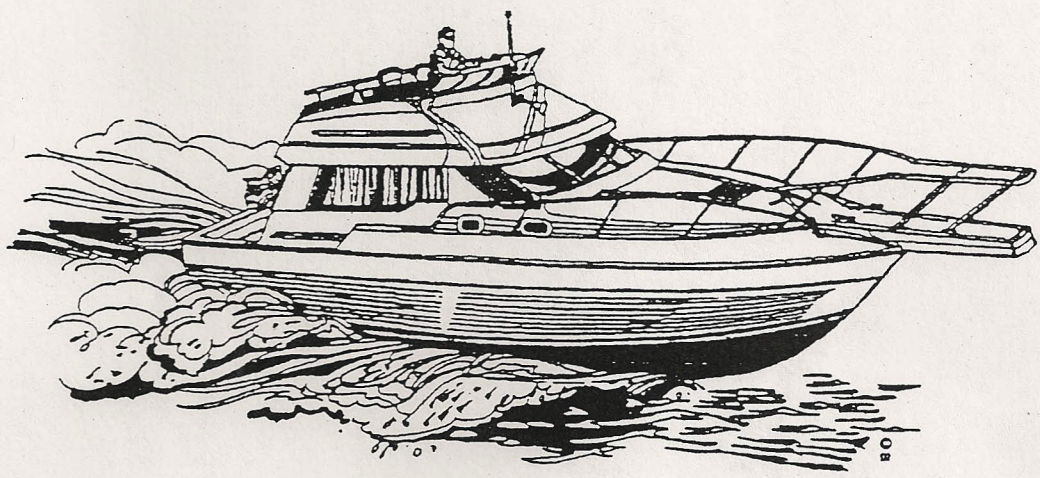
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

BOATING ACCIDENT REPORT

January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999



A STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF THE REPORTABLE BOATING ACCIDENTS IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1999.

Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

"BOAT SMART FROM THE START - WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET"
MAY 20-26, 2000 - NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK

This report contains statistical information for recreational boating accidents that occurred within the jurisdiction of Illinois, and were reported for the calendar year, 1999. State law requires that all boating accidents resulting in death, serious injury, or property damage in excess of $500, be reported to the Department of Natural Resources. All accidents resulting in death are investigated by either a Conservation Police Officer or a police officer from a local jurisdiction. Most of the accidents involving serious injury are also investigated. Some of the property damage only accidents are only documented by the report submitted by the operator, which at times brings the accuracy of the information into question. When submitting a report, operators are seldom willing to volunteer that the accident was the result of their own error or violation of the rules of operation. For this reason, Conservation Police try to investigate as many accidents as possible although some accidents are not brought to the attention of the department until the operator report is received. This report represents a compilation of the best available information.

The boating safety program in Illinois involves the combination of enforcement and safety education aimed at reducing the number of accidents, deaths, and injuries on the waters of this state. Safe boating practices are taught through a network of volunteer instructors statewide who provide free boating safety courses to the public. Media campaigns and news releases encourage boaters to take a DNR boating safety class or one offered by the US Coast Guard Auxiliary or US Power Squadrons. Conservation Police patrol the waters of the state, enforcing the laws relating to boat operation, emphasizing the detection of alcohol abuse. The US Coast Guard Auxiliary, through the efforts of dedicated volunteers, also patrols many bodies of water in Illinois providing courtesy inspections and safety assistance at special events and on busy weekends throughout the boating season. Several local police agencies also provide police patrol on the water in areas of concentrated boating use within their jurisdictions.

A review of the statistics for 1999 reveals that the same causes continue to play a prominent role in most fatal boat accidents. Of thirteen fatal accidents, eleven people were not wearing PFD's and would likely have survived if they had. Alcohol abuse was a contributing factor in eight of the thirteen fatalities. This reinforces the message that is stressed nationally year after year; designated drivers and wearing life jackets save lives.

And don't forget, May 20-26, 2000 is National Safe Boating Week. Boat smart from the start - wear your life jacket. Let's make 2000 the safest boating year yet.

Tom Wakolbinger, Chief
Illinois Conservation Police
Department of Natural Resources

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
BOATING ACCIDENT REPORT
1999

Total Accidents	-	159	**Fatalities**		
# of Injuries	-	75	# Died by Drowning	-	10
# of Fatalities	-	13	# Died from Trauma	-	3
			Total	-	13

ACCIDENT TIMES

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY DAY OF THE WEEK

Day Of Week	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Monday	8	11	3	0
Tuesday	6	9	2	0
Wednesday	7	10	5	0
Thursday	11	13	0	5
Friday	16	23	12	3
Saturday	54	83	22	3
Sunday	57	89	31	2
Total	159	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY MONTH OF THE YEAR

Month	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
January	0	0	0	0
February	1	1	1	0
March	1	1	4	0
April	5	5	2	2
May	15	24	8	1
June	28	44	10	2
July	56	78	30	5
August	28	46	7	1
September	21	34	11	1
October	3	4	2	0
November	1	1	0	1
December	0	0	0	0
Total	159	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY TIME OF DAY

Time	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Midnight - 6:00 a.m.	5	7	0	2
6:01 a.m. - 12:00 noon	15	24	2	1
12:01 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	99	148	52	2
6:01 p.m. - 11:59 p.m.	35	52	20	6
Unknown	5	7	1	2
Total	159	238	75	13

CONDITIONS AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY WATER CONDITIONS

Water	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Calm (Waves < 6")	90	139	42	9
Choppy (Waves 6"-2')	46	69	19	2
Rough (Waves 2'-6')	20	27	14	0
Very Rough (Waves > 6')	0	0	0	0
Unknown	3	3	0	2
Total	159	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Clear	138	211	60	13
Cloudy	17	23	13	0
Fog	1	1	0	0
Rain	3	4	1	0
Snow	0	0	0	0
Hazy	1	1	2	0
Total	160*	240*	76*	13

*NOTE: These numbers are higher than the actual totals because more than one category of weather condition could be selected.

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY WIND CONDITIONS

Wind	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
None	20	30	13	2
Light	84	128	41	7
Moderate	42	64	20	2
Strong	6	7	0	0
Stormy	2	3	0	0
Unknown	5	6	1	2
Total	159	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY VISIBILITY

Visibility	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Good	141	216	66	12
Fair	10	11	6	0
Poor	3	4	1	0
Unknown	5	7	2	1
Total	159	238	75	13

ACCIDENT TYPE

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY TYPE OF ACCIDENT

Type Of Accident	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Collision w/Vessel	66	133	29	2
Falls Overboard	15	16	10	5
Struck Submerged Object	14	15	2	1
Capsizing	11	11	7	4
Flooding/Swamping	10	10	1	0
Collision w/Fixed Object	9	11	5	0
Skier Mishap	8	10	7	0
Fall in Boat	7	8	5	0
Collision w/Floating Object	4	6	1	0
Grounding	4	4	0	1
Fire Explosion (Fuel)	2	2	2	0
Starting Engine	2	2	3	0
Struck by Prop	2	3	2	0
Fire Explosion (Other)	1	1	0	0
Sinking	1	1	0	0
Struck by Boat	1	2	0	0
Other	1	1	0	0
Unknown	1	2	1	0
Total	159	238	75	13

ACCIDENTS STATISTICS BY ACCIDENT TYPE AND CAUSE OF DEATH

Accident Type	Cause Of Death		
	Drowning	Trauma	Total
Capsizing	4	0	4
Collision W/Vessel	1	1	2
Falls Overboard	4	1	5
Grounding	0	1	1
Struck Submerged Object	1	0	1
Total	10	3	13

BOAT INFORMATION

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY TYPE OF BOAT

Type Of Boat	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Open Motorboat	106	42	7
Personal Watercraft	73	23	1
Cabin Motorboat	24	4	0
Pontoon	8	2	0
Sail (Auxiliary)	5	1	0
Sail (Only)	4	0	0
Rowboat	3	0	3
Houseboat	2	0	1
Canoe/Kayak	1	0	1
Other	4	2	0
Unknown	8	1	0
Total	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY OPERATION AT TIME OF ACCIDENT

Vessel Operation	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Cruising	127	43	4
Drifting	25	8	4
Changing Direction	16	4	0
Changing Speed	14	3	1
At Anchor	13	9	1
Tied to Dock/Mooring	10	1	0
Docking/Undocking	9	3	0
Sailing	3	0	0
Launching	2	1	0
Rowing/Paddling	2	0	2
Other	7	2	1
Unknown	10	1	0
Total	238	75	13

ACCIDENT CAUSES

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY PRIMARY CAUSE OF ACCIDENT

Primary Cause	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Careless/Reckless	26	48	11	1
Hazardous Waters	26	28	9	1
Operator Inattention	24	39	9	1
Operator Inexperience	16	27	6	0
Congested Waters	12	19	4	0
Passenger/Skier Behavior	11	12	8	3
Alcohol Use	7	10	10	4
Excessive Speed	6	10	7	0
Rules of the Road Infractions	5	10	2	0
Hull Failure	4	4	0	0
Machinery Failure	4	7	1	1
No Proper Lookout	4	5	2	0
Restricted Vision	2	4	1	0
Weather	2	3	0	0
Dan/Lock	1	1	0	1
Equipment Failure	1	1	1	0
Failure to Vent	1	1	1	0
Ignition of Spilled Fuel/Vapor	1	1	1	0
Improper Anchoring	1	1	0	0
Lack of or Improper Boat Lights	1	2	1	0
Overloading	1	1	0	0
Sharp Turn	1	2	0	0
Standing/Sitting on Gunwales	1	1	1	0
Other	1	1	0	1
Total	159	238	75	13

Only seven accident reports listed alcohol use as the primary cause of the accident. However, there were 21 accidents involving 30 vessels where alcohol was confirmed to have played a role. Eight accidents involving ten vessels resulted in 8 fatalities. Thus, 62% of the fatal accidents were alcohol related.

OPERATOR INFORMATION

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY OPERATOR EDUCATION

Operator Education	#Vessels Operators	#Injuries	#Fatalities
State Course	12	4	1
U.S. Power Squadron	13	2	0
U.S.C.G. Auxiliary	14	1	0
American Red Cross	5	3	0
Informal	9	4	0
None	142	53	6
Unknown	43	8	6
Total	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY OPERATOR EXPERIENCE

Operator Experience	#Vessel Operators	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Under 10 hours	39	18	0
10 - 100 hours	43	14	1
Over 100 hours	124	40	9
Unknown	32	3	3
Total	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY OPERATOR AGE

Operator Age	#Vessel Operators	#Injuries	#Fatalities
< 10	0	0	0
10 - 12	1	0	0
13 - 17	13	5	0
18 - 19	5	2	1
20 - 29	58	15	4
30 - 39	62	20	2
40 - 49	46	23	2
50 - 59	23	6	2
60 - 69	11	3	2
70 +	5	0	0
Unknown	14	1	0
Total	238	75	13

STATISTICS BY BOAT TYPE AND OPERATOR EXPERIENCE

	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Auxiliary Sail			
10 - 100 hours	1	0	0
Over 100 hours	4	1	0
	5	1	0
Cabin Motorboat			
Under 10 hours	2	0	0
10 - 100 hours	2	1	0
Over 100 hours	17	3	0
Unknown	3	0	0
	24	4	0
Canoe/Kayak			
Over 100	1	0	1
	1	0	1
Houseboat			
Over 100	2	0	1
	2	0	1

STATISTICS BY
BOAT TYPE AND OPERATOR EXPERIENCE
Cont.

	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Open Motorboat			
Under 10 hours	8	7	0
10 - 100 hours	13	3	1
Over 100 hours	76	31	6
Unknown	9	1	0
	106	42	7
Personal Watercraft			
Under 10 hours	28	9	0
10 - 100 hours	25	9	0
Over 100 hours	13	4	0
Unknown	7	1	1
	73	23	1
Pontoon			
10 - 100 hours	2	1	0
Over 100 hours	2	0	0
Unknown	4	1	0
	8	2	0
Rowboat			
Over 100 hours	1	0	1
Unknown	2	0	2
	3	0	3
Sail (Only)			
Over 100	4	0	0
	4	0	0
Other			
Under 10 hours	1	2	0
Over 100 hours	3	0	0
	4	2	0
Unknown			
Over 100 hours	1	1	0
Unknown	7	0	0
	8	1	0
TOTAL	238	75	13

ACCIDENT LOCATION

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY BODY OF WATER

Body Of Water	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Argyle Lake	1	1	1	0
Big Lake	1	1	0	1
Bureau Creek	1	1	2	0
Cal. Sag Channel	3	4	1	1
Candlewick Assoc. Lake	1	1	0	0
Carlton/Rockwood Lake	1	1	4	0
Carlyle Lake	7	10	3	0
Centralia Lake	1	1	1	0
Channel Lake	1	2	1	0
Chicago River	4	7	1	0
Clinton Lake	8	12	4	0
Crab Orchard Lake	1	1	0	1
Crooked Lake	1	2	0	0
Deep Lake	1	1	0	1
Des Plaines River	3	5	0	0
Diamond Lake	1	3	5	0
Farm Pond	1	1	0	1
Fox Lake	2	4	0	1
Fox River	6	10	2	0
Glenn Shoals Lake	1	2	1	0
Grass Lake	2	3	0	0
Heidecke Lake	1	1	0	0
Holiday Shores Lake	1	2	0	0
Illinois River	22	33	13	1
Kankakee River	10	16	4	1
Kaskaskia River	6	10	3	0
Kinkaid Lake	4	6	2	0
Lake Catherine	1	2	0	0
Lake Decatur	2	4	1	0
Lake Holiday	1	2	0	0
Lake Marie	1	2	0	0
Lake Michigan	12	19	3	0
Lake Mingo	1	1	0	0
Lake of Egypt	2	4	1	0
Lake Shelbyville	7	11	1	1
Lake Springfield	1	1	1	0

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY BODY OF WATER Cont.

Body Of Water	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Lake Taylorville	3	3	3	0
Lake Thunderbird	1	2	0	0
Lake Vermilion	1	1	1	0
Little Wabash River	1	1	0	1
Mill Creek	1	2	1	0
Mississippi River	12	13	5	2
Rend Lake	5	6	2	0
Rock River	12	19	6	0
Wildwood Lake	1	1	0	1
TOTAL	159	238	75	13

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY COUNTY

County	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Boone	1	1	0	0
Brown	1	1	0	1
Calhoun	4	5	2	0
Christian	3	3	3	0
Clark	1	2	1	0
Clinton	7	10	3	0
Cook	17	27	4	1
DeWitt	8	12	4	0
Effingham	1	1	0	1
Fayette	1	1	0	0
Franklin	3	3	2	0
Fulton	1	1	0	1
Grundy	8	13	8	0
Hancock	2	2	0	0
Henderson	2	3	1	0
Henry	1	1	0	1
Jackson	4	6	2	0
Jefferson	1	1	0	0
Jersey	3	4	2	1
JoDaviess	1	1	1	1
Kane	1	2	1	0
Kankakee	5	8	3	0
LaSalle	11	18	3	1

ACCIDENT STATISTICS BY COUNTY
Cont.

County	#Accidents	#Vessels	#Injuries	#Fatalities
Lake	13	23	9	2
Lee	2	4	0	0
Macon	2	4	1	0
Madison	2	3	0	0
Marion	1	1	1	0
McDonough	1	1	1	0
McHenry	4	6	1	0
Montgomery	1	2	1	0
Moultrie	2	3	0	1
Ogle	1	2	0	0
Peoria	5	6	2	0
Pike	1	2	0	0
Putnam	2	3	2	0
Randolph	2	4	2	0
Rock Island	2	2	0	0
Sangamon	1	1	1	0
Shelby	5	8	1	0
St. Clair	3	5	1	0
Vermilion	2	2	1	0
Whiteside	3	4	5	0
Will	8	12	1	1
Williamson	3	5	1	1
Winnebago	6	9	4	0
	159	238	75	13

NARRATIVES

1999 Boat Accident Narratives

1. A vessel struck a submerged object on the Illinois River in LaSalle County rendering the motor inoperable. The operator engaged the trolling motor and attempted to motor the boat to the shore near the dam. The current of the dam pulled the boat and its three occupants through the dam. One passenger drowned. The operator was arrested for OUI. He had a blood alcohol content of .093. Metabolites of cannabis and cocaine were also present in his blood. The deceased was not wearing a PFD.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Operating under the influence of alcohol and other drugs
   2. Failure to wear PFD.

2. A victim's relatives found his unoccupied 12' jon boat adrift on Wildwood Lake in Brown County. An oar was floating in the water nearby. The victim's body was recovered a few hours later by the local rescue squad. The victim was not wearing a PFD and there were no PFDs available in the boat. No autopsy was performed on the elderly victim at the family's request.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Failure to wear PFD or have them available in the watercraft.

3. A canoeist drowned in the boil of a dam on the Little Wabash River in Effingham County. Witnesses stated that the operator was intoxicated at the time that he launched the canoe. No PFDs were worn or were available in the canoe. The coroner's report revealed that the victim's BAC was .194. Metabolites of cannabis were also present.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Operating under the influence of alcohol and other drugs;
   2. Failure to wear PFD or have them available in the watercraft.

4. A vessel struck a submerged object in the Mississippi River in JoDaviess County. Both occupants were thrown out of the watercraft. The operator was injured and subsequently drowned. The passenger suffered injuries but was rescued. PFDs were available in the boat but were not used.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Hazardous waters;
   2. Failure to wear PFD.

Boat Accident Narratives cont.

5. Two men were fishing from a boat on Big Lake in Fulton County. The operator was sitting on a pedestal seat. It is unknown why he fell off of the seat. His companion tried to throw him a PFD but it fell short. The companion then jumped into the water with a PFD and swam to the operator. The operator disappeared under the surface of the water before his companion could reach him. The victim was a non-swimmer and was not wearing a PFD.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Unknown what contributed to operator falling overboard;
   2. Failure to wear a PFD.

6. A vessel collided with a barge on the Cal-Sag River in Cook County. Four of the seven occupants jumped into the water before impact. Three of the four stayed with the boat and were able to climb onto the barge. The victim drowned before he could be rescued. PFDs were available on the boat but were not used. The operator of the boat submitted to a breath test 6.9 hours after the accident. His BAC at that time was .047. A forensic toxicologist, reviewed the case and reported that the operator's BAC at the time of the accident was probably .15 - .185.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Operating under the influence of alcohol
   2. Failure to wear PFD.

7. The operator of a personal watercraft (PWC) had been operating his PWC at a high rate of speed in and out of a no wake area near the shoreline of the Kankakee River near the Des Plaines Conservation Area in Will County. Witnesses reported that after jumping the wake of a large watercraft, the operator drove his PWC at a high rate of speed directly toward the shore. He struck a submerged log near the shore line which sent the PWC airborne. The PWC hit several trees before coming to rest on the ground. Although the operator was wearing a PFD, he was killed from the injuries sustained in the crash.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Careless/reckless operation
   2. Excessive Speed

8. The passenger of a pleasure boat fell overboard and was struck and killed by the boat prop on Crab Orchard Lake in Williamson County. An investigation revealed that the victim had jokingly warned the operator that he was going to jump overboard. The victim stood up, put his arms in the air and fell overboard. It was not clear whether or not the act was intentional or a joke gone awry. The operator of the boat jumped into the water with a PFD to assist the victim. Other nearby boaters also stopped to help but the victim died from massive blood loss. The operator was arrested for OUI. The coroner's inquest revealed that the victim's BAC was .098.

   Contributing factors:
   1. Operator and victim under the influence of alcohol,
   2. Failure of victim to wear a PFD.

Boat Accident Narratives cont.

9. A passenger boat was traveling on the Mississippi River in Jersey County when a passenger fell overboard while he was urinating off of the second deck. The operator had told the passenger to go below deck to relieve himself, but the victim ignored the operator's request. The operator reported that he was traveling at no wake speed when the passenger fell overboard. The victim was not wearing a PFD so the operator threw a ring buoy in the general area where the victim entered the water. He never resurfaced. The coroner's report revealed that the victim's BAC was .263.

    Contributing factors:
    1. Victim under the influence of alcohol,
    2. Failure to wear a PFD.

10. A man was reported as failing to return from a fishing trip on Lake Shelbyville in Moultrie County. The investigating officers found the subject's boat about two hours after receiving the report. The fisherman's body was found floating several feet downwind. The investigator's concluded that the subject fell overboard, attempted to climb back into the boat but succumbed to hypothermia and drowned. The victim was not wearing a PFD although they were available in the boat.

    Contributing factors:
    1. Failure to wear a PFD

11. A fisherman drowned after his 8' foot jon boat capsized on a farm pond in Henry County. The victim was fishing with a friend who was fishing from shore. The victim was paddling toward the shore with a grain shovel when he lost his balance, capsizing the boat. His companion on shore was a non-swimmer and ran to call for help. There was no safety equipment in the boat and the victim was not wearing a PFD. The coroner's report revealed that the victim's BAC was .263.

    Contributing factors:
    1. No PFD worn or available in the boat.

12. The passenger of a boat was killed instantly when the boat she was in was struck by a second vessel on Fox Lake in Lake County. The second vessel completely passed over the first vessel, striking and killing the passenger. The operator of the second vessel was arrested for OUI and had a BAC of .15.

    Contributing factors:
    1. Operator of offending vessel was under the influence of alcohol.

Boat Accident Narratives cont.

13. The deceased and six companions stole a small rowboat and took it out on Deep Lake in Lake County. They took 42 cans of beer with them. They began using the rowboat as a diving platform when it capsized. The victim was not wearing a PFD and none were available in the boat. The victim was not a good swimmer and drowned. Witnesses reported that the subject had consumed 15 - 20 beers prior to getting in the boat.

Contributing factors:

1. Alcohol consumption by victim (no BAC known),
2. Failure to wear or have PFDs available,
3. Careless/Reckless operation (horse play),
4. Overloading.