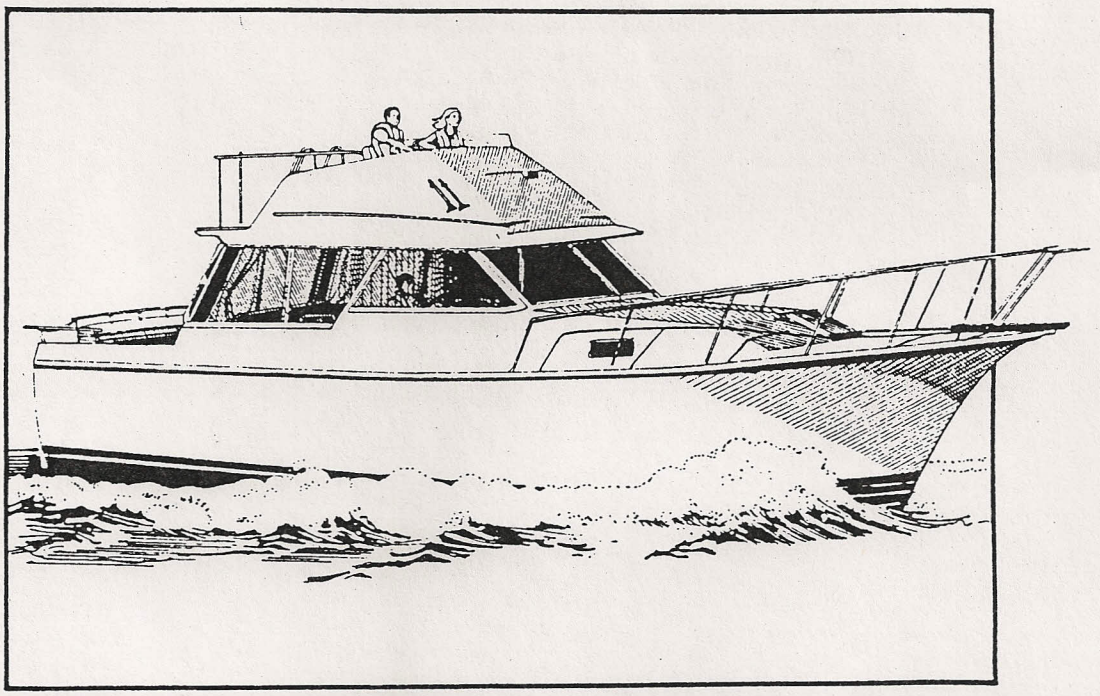
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

BOATING ACCIDENT REPORT

January 1,1990 - December 31, 1990



Illinois
Department of
Conservation
life and land together

In 1990 there were 146 boating accidents resulting in 26 deaths, 107 injuries and nearly $405,000.00 in property damage. Cook and Lake Counties, which include Lake Michigan and the Chain of Lakes, reported the highest number of accidents both years. Cook County was the site of 30 accidents, while 20 were recorded in Lake County. There were 19 accidents recorded on the Mississippi River and 15 on the Illinois.

When reviewing these statistics, one should bear in mind that these figures are compiled from the mandatory boat accident report forms submitted to the Department by the boat operators involved in the accidents. What we have learned in reviewing these reports is that the operator's are not inclined to implicate themselves in any wrongdoing involved in the accident. This is especially evident when alcohol is involved. Common sense has dictated that alcohol and boating do not mix. However, by relying on the accident reports from the operators as our source of information for our statistics, we never had the concrete evidence that alcohol kills. In Illinois, in 1990, we could not ignore the issue any longer. Several of our accident investigations conducted by Conservation Police Officers revealed an intoxicated boat operator. We received additional information from our county coroners. Illinois has a statutory requirement that coroners report to this office any boating fatalities occurring in their jurisdiction. Within that report, the blood alcohol content of the victim is to be indicated. As a result of compiling information from officer investigations and coroners reports, we now have more concrete evidence than ever before pointing to alcohol as a contributing factor in many of our fatal boat accidents. Seven of these accidents involve blood alcohol contents of .10 or greater. Three other fatalities are suspected to be alcohol related although definitive proof could not be obtained due to decomposition of the bodies.

These accidents point out the need for a renewed commitment to boat safety education with an emphasis on the proper use of safety equipment and the dangers of alcohol consumption. Hand-in-hand with safety education is the continued aggressive enforcement of our boat safety laws and investigation of boat accidents by our Conservation Police force. Perhaps through the combined efforts of our Division's dedicated Volunteer Services Coordinators, Volunteer Boat Safety Instructors and Conservation Police Officers, we will make boating on Illinois waters safer for the 1991 boating season.

STATE OF ILLINOIS

BOATING ACCIDENT REPORT

1990

Total Accidents	- 146	PROPERTY DAMAGE (total of all vessels involved)	
Injuries	- 107		
# of Drownings	- 22	Total $ Amount	$404,987
# of Deaths from injuries	- 04	Average $ Amount	3,522

Number of Registered Boats - Over 350,000

TIME & PLACE

MONTH

January	- 00	April	- 04	July	- 33	October	- 07
February	- 00	May	- 11	August	- 30	November	- 01
March	- 03	June	- 42	September	- 14	December	- 01
						TOTAL	- 146

DAY

Monday	- 09	Wednesday	- 20	Friday	- 08	Sunday	- 42
Tuesday	- 13	Thursday	- 09	Saturday	- 45	TOTAL	-146

COUNTY

Adams	- 01	Johnson	- 01	Moultrie	- 02
Calhoun	- 01	Kane	- 01	Ogle	- 02
Carroll	- 02	Kankakee	- 04	Peoria	- 01
Clinton	- 01	Lake	- 20	Pike	- 02
Cook	- 30	LaSalle	- 06	Randolph	- 01
DeWitt	- 02	Lawrence	- 01	Rock Island	- 06
DuPage	- 01	Livingston	- 02	Shelby	- 02
Edgar	- 04	Macon	- 01	St. Clair	- 01
Effingham	- 02	Macoupin	- 01	Tazewell	- 01
Fulton	- 01	Madison	- 01	Vermilion	- 03
Grundy	- 04	Marshall	- 01	Whiteside	- 01
Hancock	- 05	McHenry	- 07	Will	- 05
Jackson	- 05	Mercer	- 01	Williamson	- 02
Jefferson	- 01	Montgomery	- 01	Winnebago	- 05
JoDaviess	- 03	Morgan	- 01	TOTAL	-146

TIME

Midnight - 6:00 am	- 03
6:01 - 12 Noon	- 12
12:01 - 6:00 pm	- 94
6:01 - Midnight	- 38
TOTAL	-146

OPERATOR'S EXPERIENCE

Under 20 hrs	- 26
20 - 100 hrs	- 31
100 - 500 hrs	- 61
Over 500 hrs	- 47
Unknown	- 22
TOTAL	-187

FORMAL INSTRUCTION

None	- 93
U.S. Coast Guard Aux	- 25
U.S. Power Squadron	- 12
American Red Cross	- 03
State	- 08
Other	- 23
Unknown	- 23
TOTAL	-187

WATER CONDITIONS

Calm	- 64
Choppy	- 48
Rough	- 09
Very Rough	- 12
Strong Current	- 11
Unknown	- 02
TOTAL	-146

WEATHER INFORMATION

Clear	- 119
Cloudy	- 15
Fog	- 02
Rain	- 04
Hazy	- 04
Other	- 02
TOTAL	- 146

BOAT INFORMATION

Open Motorboat	- 95
Cabin Motorboat	- 27
Auxiliary Sail	- 16
Sail (only)	- 04
Rowboat	- 02
Canoe	- 08
Jet Ski	- 05
Other	- 26
Unknown	- 04
TOTAL	-187

WIND

None	- 23
Light	- 65
Moderate	- 34
Strong	- 14
Stormy	- 07
Unknown	- 03
TOTAL	-146

VISIBILITY

Good	- 123
Fair	- 15
Poor	- 06
Unknown	- 02
TOTAL	- 146

WEATHER ENCOUNTERED

Was as forecasted	- 99
Not as forecasted	- 07
No forecast obtained	- 29
Unknown	- 11
TOTAL	-146

OPERATION AT TIME OF ACCIDENT

Cruising	- 84
Approaching Dock	- 16
Water Skiing	- 15
Towing	- 01
Drifting	- 21
At Anchor	- 08
Tied to Dock	- 06
Fishing	- 05
Diving/Swimming	- 00
Hunting	- 01
Racing	- 05
Being Towed	- 01
Fueling	- 00
Other	- 24
Unknown	- 00
TOTAL	-187

OPERATOR'S OPINION/CAUSE OF ACCIDENT

Alcohol - Use	- 16
Weather Conditions	- 14
Excessive Speed	- 26
No Proper Lookout	- 26
Overloading	- 00
Improper Loading	- 02
Hazardous Waters	- 17
Fault of Other Person	- 71
Drug Use	- 00
Fault of Hull	- 03
Fault of Machinery	- 07
Fault of Equipment	- 08
Other	- 72
Unknown	- 06
TOTAL	-268

TYPE OF ACCIDENT

Grounding	- 03	Coll. with Float Obj.	- 12
Capsizing	- 21	Falls Overboard	- 06
Flooding	- 06	Falls in Boat	- 02
Sinking	- 08	Burns	- 00
Fire or Expl. (fuel)	- 04	Hit by Boat/Propeller	- 13
Fire or Expl. (other)	- 00	Other	- 19
Coll. with Vessel	- 36	Unknown	- 00
Coll. with Fixed Obj.	- 16	Total	-146

FIRE EXTINGUISHER USED

Yes	- 05
No	-117
Unknown	- 65
TOTAL	-187

BODY OF WATER

Apple Canyon Lake	- 01	Kankakee River	- 04
Bluff Lake	- 03	Kaskaskia River	- 01
Cache River	- 01	Kishwaukee River	- 01
Calumet River	- 02	Lake Decatur	- 01
Calumet Sag Channel	- 01	Lake Holiday	- 01
Carlyle Lake	- 01	Lake Jacksonville	- 01
Charlotte Lake	- 01	Lake Kinkaid	- 05
Chgo Ship/San Canal	- 01	Lake Lou Yeager	- 01
Chicago River	- 05	Lake Michigan	- 26
Clinton Lake	- 02	Lake Pistakee	- 01
Crab Orchard Lake	- 02	Lake Sara	- 02
Crooked Lake	- 01	Lake Shelbyville	- 04
Des Plaines River	- 02	Levings Lake	- 01
Dolphin Lake	- 01	Mississippi River	- 19
DuPage River	- 01	Nippersink Lake	- 01
Florence Lake	- 01	Paris Lake	- 03
Fox Lake	- 04	Private Club Lake	- 01
Fox River	- 09	Rend Lake	- 01
Gillespie Lake	- 01	Rock River	- 07
Grass Lake	- 02	Shangrila Lake	- 01
Holiday Shores Lake	- 01	Skokie Lagoon	- 01
Illinois River	- 15	Vermilion River	- 02
Iroquois River	- 01	Wabash River	- 01
		TOTAL	-146

AGE	Less than 20 hours	20 to 100 hours	100 to 500 hours	Over 500 hours	Unknown	Total
Teenage	06	04	02	01	02	15
20 - 29	08	12	24	10	02	56
30 - 39	07	08	14	13	07	49
40 - 49	04	06	09	11	04	34
50 - 59	01	01	10	07	02	21
60 - 69	00	00	00	04	05	09
70 -Over	00	00	02	01	00	03
Unknown	00	00	00	00	00	00
*TOTAL	26	31	61	47	22	187

NARRATIVES FOR 1990 FATAL BOATING ACCIDENTS

1. NARRATIVE: While traveling through fog on the Kankakee River, two boaters went over a low level dam. After much difficulty one of the boaters was able to get out of the boat and was rescued one-half mile downstream. The body of the other boater was recovered two months later in the Illinois River.

   CAUSE: Capsizing

2. NARRATIVE: Two commercial fishermen were traveling upstream on the Mississippi River when their boat motor struck a submerged log. The boat turned sharply and threw both men into the river. One boater was able to grab a float and made it to shore. The other boater drowned and his body was recovered by personnel from a tow boat which was in the area. No PFDs were worn.

   CAUSE: Falls overboard

3. NARRATIVE: A tree limb that was hanging from the shore capsized the canoe of a man and woman who were canoeing down a river. Knowing the woman was a good swimmer, the man went after the canoe. Due to the current, he was unable to retrieve the canoe. The woman was nowhere in sight when he looked for her. She was located later and transported to a hospital where she died four days later. She had been underwater for about 3 minutes. PFDs were not worn.

   CAUSE: Capsizing

4. NARRATIVE: Strong winds were blamed when a lone fisherman was thrown overboard and drowned. It's believed that the bow of the boat was caught by the wind which flipped the boat. The victim was standing in the boat and was not wearing a PFD.

   CAUSE: Falls overboard

5. NARRATIVE: A boat traveling at a high rate of speed hit a wake or wave throwing out the two occupants. The boat maintained high throttle and began turning in a circle. Rescue attempts were made by nearby boaters; one man was rescued and the other drowned. Neither man was wearing a PFD.

   CAUSE: Falls overboard

6. NARRATIVE: While leaning out of a boat, reaching for his fishing line, a fisherman fell backwards into the water. He surfaced and began swimming towards shore. He submerged and his fishing companion jumped in the water but was unable to locate him. The body of the victim was recovered by a county dive team. Victim was not wearing a PFD.

   CAUSE: Falls overboard

7. NARRATIVE: Three Kankakee River canoeists had just taken off their PFDs because it was hot. The canoe tipped over and all three occupants fell into the river. Two canoeists made it to shore and their companion was swept down river. The victim could not swim and after a short time disappeared under the water. His body was located by a dive team in 6-9 feet of water.

   CAUSE: Capsizing

8. NARRATIVE: Two boats were involved in a nearly head-on collision. Two people were thrown into the water from one boat. One person was rescued immediately, but the other person was not located. After three days, the victim's body was found by a fisherman floating 2 miles from the accident. An autopsy revealed that the victim suffered a head injury, but not serious enough to have caused death. Cause of death was drowning.

   CAUSE: Collision with vessel, thrown overboard

9. NARRATIVE: Two boaters were attempting to open a water control valve at the edge of a dam. The current was strong and caused the boat to be pulled over the dam. One boater, who was wearing a PFD, made it to shore. The other man, who was not wearing a PFD, went under and drowned.

   CAUSE: Capsizing

10. NARRATIVE: Two boats were traveling up the Illinois River, one boat behind the other. The lead boat made a sharp turn in front of the second boat. The second boat struck the lead boat and became airborne for about 50 feet. Two people in the lead boat were killed in the collision.

    CAUSE: Collision with vessel

11. NARRATIVE: A man and woman were rowing a dingy across a channel. Waves caused the dingy to sink. The man was unable to swim and the woman attempted to save him 3 times, but he kept pulling her under water. The man drowned. No PFD was worn.

    CAUSE: Sinking of vessel

12. NARRATIVE: Two men were fishing by a river dam. The boat was anchored at both ends when the current started pulling them toward the dam. They raised both anchors, but the boat filled with water. One man was able to swim to shore but the other fisherman couldn't make it and drowned. Neither were wearing PFDs.

    CAUSE: Sinking of vessel

13. NARRATIVE: A boat was traveling at a high rate of speed when it hit a wake. The boat shot out of the water vertically. All 7 passengers were thrown from the boat. Four of the people were rescued by a sailboat and three people drowned. Two of the victims were located 8 days later and the third victim was found 11 days later. This accident happened on Lake Michigan. No PFDs were worn.

    CAUSE: Falls overboard

14. NARRATIVE: A man drowned when he fell overboard into the Illinois River. Witnesses stated that the victim appeared very intoxicated when he boarded the cruise vessel. No PFD was worn.

    CAUSE: Falls overboard

15. NARRATIVE: A boat with 4 passengers was traveling at night when they saw a barge very near. The boat operator slowed the boat and the motor died. He told everyone to jump as the barge came nearer and hit the boat. One passenger was unable to make it to safety and drowned.

    CAUSE: Collision with vessel

16. A lone canoeist was on a river when the canoe capsized. The victim attempted to swim towards shore but went under and drowned. He was not wearing a PFD. Alcohol was a major contributor to this fatal accident.

    CAUSE: Capsizing

17. NARRATIVE: Two young men were getting into a canoe when it capsized throwing them into the river. They were carried downstream and one boy made it to safety but the other drowned. The victim was 15 years old and was not wearing a PFD.

    CAUSE: Capsizing

18. NARRATIVE: A man and woman were drifting down the river eating lunch when they noticed a barge approaching. The man tried, without success, to start the motor. He told the woman to jump as the barge hit the boat. The man was rescued by a passing boater. The body of the woman was found later that day. They were not wearing their PFDs.

    CAUSE: Collision with vessel

19. NARRATIVE: Two boaters were traveling about 55 to 60 mph when their boat hit a wave and a passenger was thrown from the boat. A PFD was thrown into the water but the victim was too far from the boat. The companion then jumped into the water and swam towards the victim but he was unsuccessful and the victim went under and drowned. They were not wearing their PFDs.

    CAUSE: Falls overboard

20. NARRATIVE: Three young boys were attempting to turn their canoe when it capsized. One boy swam to shore, one was rescued by a lifeguard and the other went down immediately. The victim was 14 years of age, and was not wearing a PFD.

    CAUSE: Capsizing

21. NARRATIVE: Four people were canoeing and horseplay began. The canoe overturned and one man, who was unable to swim, drowned. No one was wearing a PFD.

    CAUSE: Capsizing

22. NARRATIVE: A surveyor wearing chest waders was standing in a canoe surveying a bridge. The canoe capsized and the victim fell into the river and drowned. He was not wearing a PFD.

    CAUSE: Capsizing

23. NARRATIVE: A boater had just got his boat on plane when he saw a boat approaching with no lights on directly in front of him. He turned his boat, but not in time and crashed into the other boat. Three people in the unlighted boat were injured. One man died from a severe head injury.

CAUSE: Collision with vessel.

Accident narrative information compiled by:

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