

2008 Minnesota Boating Accident and Drowning Summary

Prepared by the Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources
Boat & Water Safety Section

Summary of Accidents – Compared to Prior Years							
Accident Category & Year	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Boating Fatalities	12	15	14	23	15	17	30
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	77	113	102	93	73	94	135
Non-Boating Drownings	33	26	49	45	30	32	42

Boating Fatalities

1. 4/26 – Crow Wing Co. – Fawn Lake – a 20-year-old Rice man drowned after the canoe he and another man were in overturned sometime around 3 pm. The two men were making their first trip of the season in 27-degree weather onto the 73-acre lake, located just southwest of Crosslake. They were fishing for panfish when their canoe flipped. There were no seats in the canoe and folding rocking chairs were used in their place. There were two Type IV cushions and no wearable life jackets on board when they went into the 40-degree water. After capsizing, the two tried to swim for shore and then returned to the still-floating canoe to attempt to right it. That failed and they both set out for shore. The survivor made it to shore, but the victim struggled and went down in 17 feet of water about 90 feet from shore. Authorities were notified about 3:38 pm and divers recovered the victim just before 5:45 pm. *(Life jackets worn – No)*

2. 6/2 – Lake Co. – Lake One – A 43-year-old Albia, Iowa man apparently drowned after the canoe he and another family member were in capsized around 3 pm while in the rapids at the mouth of the river flowing into the lake. A cooperative effort between Lake & St. Louis Counties and the US Forest Service recovered the body in about 15 feet of water at 8:40 pm. *(Life jacket worn – No)*

3. 6/6 – Hennepin Co. – Cedar Island Lake - A 14-year-old boy drowned after the canoe he and two other boys (13 & 14) were in capsized in high winds at about 11 am on the 61-acre lake. The two survivors attempted to help the victim (who could not swim) to safety in the 58-degree water, but to no avail. No life jackets were aboard the canoe. The two boys made it to shore and summoned help. The body was recovered with the aid of sonar and divers about 2:10 pm in seven feet of water. *(Life jackets worn – No)*

4. 6/7 – Anoka Co. – Coon Lake - An 18-year-old man was reported missing and presumed drowned after the paddle boat he was on with a friend apparently capsized around 12:30 am on June 7th. When the boat capsized he swam one way and the friend who survived went the other way. He was reported missing Saturday afternoon, June 7th around 3 pm, when it was realized he might have never made it to shore. Diving and sonar operations took place on the 7th and 8th and continued surface search operations followed on subsequent days after that. His body was recovered on the surface about 5:30 am on June 11th. *(Life jackets worn – No)*

5. 6/17 – St. Louis Co. - Jeanette Lake - A 56-year-old Mendota, Illinois man died when the 15-foot boat with a 20-horsepower outboard he was riding in hit a submerged rock about 100 yards from shore, and he was ejected into the water. The accident happened around 6:20 pm. The motor quit at the time of the accident and the operator of the boat had to try to row back to the victim in the water. A man on shore nearby heard the accident and went out in his boat to help. The rescuer from shore reached the victim (who was floating face down), pulled him from the water about 6:30 pm and started CPR – but attempts to revive the victim failed. *(Life jacket worn – Yes)*.

6. 6/25 - Winona Co. – Miss. River - A 70-year-old Winona man drowned after apparently falling into the water in an attempt to get from his 14-foot jon boat to a boathouse around 8:50 am. A witness nearby attempted a swimming rescue but was unsuccessful. The county dive team found his body around 9:35 am in 12 feet of water. *(Life jacket worn – No)*.

7. 6/28 – Itasca Co. – Maple Lake - A 54-year-old rural Hill City man drowned after falling from or capsizing his canoe while fishing. A call for assistance came in about 2 pm on Sat. 6/28. His unoccupied canoe and paddle were found empty and floating upright and his vehicle was parked at the access. The victim was recovered in nine feet of water on the north end of the lake at around 3 pm on 6/30. *(Life jacket worn – No)*

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Boating Fatalities – contd.

8. 8/24 – Hennepin Co. – Lake Minnetonka – A 49-year-old Deephaven man entered the water somehow after 10 pm on the 23rd – or early in the morning of the 24th, from an anchored boat just off the dock near his home and drowned. The event was unwitnessed. He, his son and friends had been sleeping on the 28-foot cruiser and an adjacent anchored sailboat. He was eventually reported missing to authorities around 9 am on the 24th and his body was recovered by divers that same day about 4:40 pm in 6-8 ft. of water, about 20 yards from the boat. *(Life jacket worn –No)*
9. 8/29 – Morrison Co. – Fish Trap Lake – A 75-year-old Cushing man drowned after apparently falling overboard from his anchored 24-foot pontoon boat, while trying to reach for something off the bow. A boater, who had heard the man’s grandson call for help, pulled the man out of the water around 8:30 pm and took him to shore. CPR was attempted by rescue crews, but to no avail. *(Life jacket worn – No)*
10. 8/30 – Hennepin Co. – Lake Minnetonka - A 36-year-old Minnetrista man riding a personal watercraft (PWC) died from injuries sustained after being struck by another personal watercraft operated by 37-year old man, also from Minnetrista. The collision occurred on Phelps Bay around 6:30 pm. The victim was thrown off the PWC and landed in the water unconscious. A passing pontoon boat assisted the victim until rescue personnel arrived. The victim was being taken to shore for transport on an air-care helicopter when he died at 6:52 pm. *(Life jackets worn – Yes, by both operators)*
11. 10/29-30? – Mille Lacs Co. – Lake Mille Lacs - A 59-year-old Maple Grove man apparently drowned after falling overboard from his 18-foot boat. He launched the boat from Sha Bosh Kung Bay on the west side of the lake sometime during the evening of 10/29. The first indication that he was missing came when his unoccupied and upright boat (with a life jacket, fishing gear and other equipment still on board) drifted up on the north shore of the lake on Oct. 30th about 11am – some 12-15 miles away from the launch area. The boat did have a GPS on board, and searchers used this data in an attempt to trace the path it took across the lake and narrow the search area on the 132,000-acre body of water. A number of counties, the DNR, the Minnesota National Guard and the State Patrol were involved in the search. They utilized surface searches, side-scan sonar, divers, dragging and aircraft. The search operation continued until late November, and resumed when the ice went out in the spring of 2009. The victim’s body was found near shore on June 20, 2009, one-third mile north of the Garrison public access. Someone walking on shore spotted it and called authorities, who then recovered it. *(Life jacket worn – No)*
12. 11/8 – Pine Co. – Pokegama Lake - A 19-year-old Coon Rapids man drowned after the paddle boat he and another man were on started taking on water around 4 am and both tried to swim to shore. The victim could not make it and went under in the 46-degree water. Air temperatures at the time were in the low 30’s with snow. The other man made it to shore and help was summoned. Personnel and equipment from Pine and Chisago counties, the Pine City Fire Dept. and DNR conservation officers were utilized in the search for the victim, who was located by dragging about 10:15 am. The body was recovered about 100 yards from shore. *(Life jackets worn – No)*

Summary: 12 fatal accidents, involving 13 boats - resulting in 12 deaths, no additional injuries and \$3,000 in property damage. 2008 had the lowest deaths per 100,000 registered boats (1.38) on record and also tied for lowest number of boating deaths on record (12) with 1996. Of the 12 accidents, 11 were single boat accidents - classified as 5 falls overboard, 4 capsizings, 1 collision with an underwater object and 1 swamping. There was also a fatal collision between 2 personal watercraft. Six of the deaths involved non-motorized craft and 6 were motorized (of those that were motorized, three were at anchor or docking at the time of the accident). Life jackets were known to be worn by only two of victims out of the total of 12 (17%). Most common operator age range was 31-60 years old. Alcohol was listed as a factor in five of the accidents - involving 4 non-motorized and 1 motorized craft.

Non-Fatal Boating Accidents¹

Capsizing	5
Collision w / fixed/floating object	4
Collision w / another watercraft	24
Collision w / underwater object	1
Fall in boat	1
Fall overboard	12
Fire/Explosion	4
Grounding / Hitting Bottom	6
Sinking / Flooding / Swamping	4
Water skiing, wake boarding or tubing	12
Other	4
Total Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	77

1. Reportable non-fatal accidents are those where there was: a) at least \$2,000 in property damage or b) an injury beyond first aid.

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Non-Fatal Boating Accidents – contd.

Summary: 77 reportable non-fatal boating accidents (third lowest on record), involving 104 boats, resulting in: 1) 62 injuries, 2) \$670,337 in damage to boats and 3) \$17,500 damage to other property. Most common operator age range was 31-50 years old. Most common age ranges for victims with injuries was 61 years of age and over (12), followed by 41-50 and 51-60 years old (10 injuries in each age category).

Non-Boating Drownings

1. 2/14 – St. Louis Co. – Home Bathtub – A 14-month-old baby girl from Duluth drowned in a bathtub just before 3:30 pm. The baby's father was giving her a bath and went to check on clothes in the dryer. When he returned he found her face down in the tub. He called 911 and dispatchers talked him through CPR. Responders arrived and took over CPR. The baby was rushed to the hospital, but to no avail.
2. 2/19 – Hennepin Co. – Hotel Pool – A 17-year-old Sioux Falls, SD boy drowned in an indoor hotel pool after partying with other teenagers. He and two companions were staying overnight after their plane connection at the MSP airport was cancelled. The three, along with two local teenagers, then went to the pool and when the rest left sometime after midnight, he remained behind and was noticed on some steps by the hotel clerk at 12:30 am. Upon re-checking he discovered his body in the pool around 1:20am. The clerk then called for help and a Bloomington police officer arrived and pulled him from the pool, but it was too late.
3. 3/3 – Ramsey Co. – Miss. River – Around 2 pm, a passerby spotted a body of a 44-year-old St. Paul man in the river near the Robert Street Bridge. The fire and sheriff's department responded and removed it from the water around 3:15 pm. The victim apparently fell from the bank under unknown circumstances at some point.
4. 3/3 – Ramsey Co. – Hotel Pool – A 69-year-old Bismarck, ND woman drowned in a Roseville hotel hot tub. She was last seen alive around 4:30 pm. At 6 pm another patron found her face down in the water and pulled her out. Paramedics were summoned – but to no avail.
5. 4/25 – Hennepin Co. – Home Bathtub – A 13-month-old baby drowned in a whirlpool-type home bathtub in Brooklyn Center around 11:10-11:15 am. The victim and his sibling were in the tub. The mother went to answer the phone and pulled the drain plug before doing so. She returned to find the victim unconscious and not breathing in the tub and called 911. He was rushed to the hospital – but could not be resuscitated.
6. 5/2 – Ramsey Co. – Miss. River – The body of a 42-year-old Green Bay, WI man was recovered on 5/2 around 8:40am caught-up on some debris near the moored barges. The victim had earlier been reported missing.
7. 5/5 - Ramsey Co. – Miss. River – Around 12:40 pm deputies were dispatched in response to a charter boat passenger's report of a body floating in the river near the Smith Ave. Bridge. The body was that of a 30-year-old Mpls. man. The fire and sheriff's departments responded and removed it from the water for transport to the medical examiner. The victim apparently entered the river under unknown circumstances at some point.
8. 5/10 – Anoka Co. – Backyard Pool – A 60-year-old Andover man drowned while cleaning the pool in his backyard. He had been last seen around 1 pm and had talked to someone by phone subsequent to that. At around 6 pm others noticed he was missing and they summoned help. Responders were notified at 6:17 pm and arrived at 6:22 pm. They found him in six feet of very murky water. They attempted resuscitation, but to no avail.
9. 5/20-21 (est.) – Ramsey Co.- Miss. River – A 17-year-old St. Paul boy apparently drowned after somehow entering the water. He was last seen on May 20th when he left his home. A search of the area was conducted with few results. On August 19th a worker at the Lock and Dam #1 hydro plant spotted a badly decomposed body floating underneath the grated walkway, upstream of the dam. The body was removed and on 10/28 it was identified through DNA as the missing victim.
10. 6/14 – Washington Co. – Backyard Pool – A two-year-old boy drowned in his parent's backyard pool in Stillwater. Around 1 pm the child was missing and the parents then found him in the deep end of the pool (8 feet of water). The father started CPR until EMS arrived. The child was taken to a St. Paul hospital where he was pronounced dead around 2:30 pm
11. 6/15 – Ramsey Co. – Miss. River – A 25-year old St. Paul man drowned after somehow entering the river. His clothing was found on shore three days before and just upstream of where his body was found in the river.

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Non-Boating Drownings – contd.

12. 6/18 - Cass Co. – Seven Mile Creek – a two-year-old Pillager boy died after falling into the creek near his parent's home. He was outside with his mother, who was mowing the lawn when she noticed him missing just before 5 pm. She called 911 after briefly searching and then the father found the boy in the creek at 5:13 pm. First responders started CPR and the boy was airlifted to a St. Cloud hospital and then eventually to the Twin Cities, where he died.
- 13-14. 6/25 – Cook Co. – Temperance River – A 17-year-old Rosemount girl who was wading, and a 29-year-old Maple Lake woman, who attempted to save her, both died after being swept down the river around 8:30 pm. They then went over a series of falls and through a gorge. The strong current took them a half-mile downstream where bystanders pulled them from the water around 8:40 pm. CPR was attempted, but to no avail.
15. 6/29 – Carlton Co. – Private Pool – A three -year-old Wrenshall boy was found by his grandfather, unresponsive in a 16-foot diameter, 3-foot deep home pool. Help was summoned about 5:30 pm. Resuscitation was started and the child was taken to a Cloquet hospital, but all efforts failed.
16. 7/2? – Hennepin Co. – Minn. River – A 23-year-old Edina man drowned after somehow entering the river near the 494 bridge. His body was recovered on 7/3 after being spotted by a boater near Pike Island around 4:45 pm.
17. 7/4 – Cass Co. – Gull Lake – A 19-year-old Brainerd man apparently drowned around 1:25 pm while swimming with friends near Gull Point. He went underwater and never resurfaced in an area that has a sharp drop-off. His body was recovered through a combined effort between Cass and Crow Wing Counties at 2:26 pm.
18. 7/7 – Hennepin Co. – Lake Calhoun - A 20-year-old Seattle man drowned while swimming near the North Beach on the lake. He was found in the water, unresponsive, around 3:10 pm. Resuscitation was started and he rushed to a Mpls. hospital where he was pronounced dead at 2:55 pm on July 8th.
19. 7/13 – Hennepin Co. - Lake Mtka. – A 41-year-old Edina man drowned in 19 feet of water around 2:40am after jumping off a boat with another person. The second person was able to swim back to the boat. The victim's body was recovered around 6:10am on 7/16, close to where he went in the water.
20. 7/23-24 (est.) – St. Louis Co. - Rouchleau / Virginia Mine Pit - A 37-year-old Virginia man apparently drowned after somehow entering the water. He was last seen on 7/23. His body was discovered in the pit while searchers were looking for another victim. Maximum water depth in the pit is 400 feet. His body was recovered around 10:30 am on 8/7.
21. 8/2 – Hennepin Co. - Indoor Apt. Pool – A 6-year-old St. Cloud girl drowned after somehow entering the indoor pool at a Brooklyn Center apartment complex. A call was made to 911 about 3 pm, after the girl was pulled from the pool by persons at the complex. EMS personnel tried to resuscitate her for 45 minutes, without success.
22. 8/5-6 (est.) – St. Louis Co. – Rouchleau / Virginia Mine Pit – A 28-year-old Mt. Iron man apparently drowned after somehow entering the water. He was reported missing on 8/6. A land search was started and eventually extended into the water. Maximum water depth in the pit is 400 feet. His body was recovered around 3:20 pm on 8/8.
23. 8/9 – Kandiyohi Co. – Games Lake - A 17-year-old boy from Eagle Pass, Texas drowned when he was swimming with his friends and family at the beach. He went under about 3 p.m. Two lifeguards immediately responded, as did a deputy on the sheriff's water patrol. The lifeguards found him quickly in six feet of water and pulled him out. CPR was started and he was brought aboard the water patrol boat – which headed back to the boat access. In spite of all their efforts, rescuers were unable to revive him.
24. 8/10 – Hennepin Co. – Lake Calhoun – A 19-year-old Minneapolis man and his friend were swimming at Thomas Beach in about 12 to 15 feet of water when witnesses said one of them appeared to struggle near one of the furthest buoys from shore. The 19-year-old's friend tried to help but swam back to the beach when he began to struggle. Lifeguards pulled the 19-year-old to shore around 5:30 pm and began CPR. The sheriff's water patrol also responded. He was taken to a Minneapolis hospital where he died five days later.
25. 8/10 – Hennepin Co. – Apartment Pool - A 10-year-old Milwaukee girl visiting family members at the apartment complex, died on 8/14, after being pulled from an apartment pool in Crystal on 8/10. She was observed sitting by the edge of the pool without supervision. Bystanders later spotted her on the bottom in 6 feet of water and pulled her from the pool at 4:21 pm. CPR was started and help was summoned sometime after that time. She was rushed to a Robbinsdale hospital and on 8/14 pronounced dead from drowning.

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Non-Boating Drownings – contd.

26. 8/15 – Ramsey Co. – Apartment Pool – A 28-year-old Little Canada man drowned in the pool at his apartment complex. Nearby residents called 911 at 9:13 pm to say they had pulled the man out of the pool and were doing CPR. Deputies and EMS personnel took over the CPR. He was taken to a nearby hospital and pronounced dead.
27. 8/16 – Becker Co. – Lake Maud – A 56-year-old Fargo man drowned after somehow falling out of his floating chair. He was last seen by his wife in a floating chair by his dock about 9:30 pm. Shortly after 11 pm she went looking for him and found him unresponsive in about 3-4 ft of water near the dock. Assistance was summoned at 11:12pm. CPR was started and he was rushed to a Detroit Lakes hospital, but to no avail.
28. 8/18 - Hennepin Co. - Condominium Pool - A 78-year-old Minneapolis man drowned in the pool at his downtown condominium building. He had been swimming laps earlier in the evening. A 911 call was made around 9 pm when he was spotted on the bottom of the pool, and after a half hour of resuscitation attempts he was pronounced dead at the scene.
29. 8/24 – Crow Wing Co. – Whipple Lake – A 6-year-old girl died from drowning after being pulled from Whipple Lake in Baxter on Monday, August 24th by a family member. She was celebrating her birthday at Whipple Beach Park when she was found face down in about 3 feet of water about 60 to 75 feet from shore around 7:30 p.m. CPR was done and she was taken to a Brainerd hospital, then airlifted to a Minneapolis hospital. She was pronounced dead at that hospital on 9/1.
30. 9/4 – Stearns Co. – Home Bathtub – A 62-year old St. Cloud man drowned in his bathtub sometime around 8:10 pm and help was summoned at 8:31 pm. Resuscitation was attempted and he was rushed to a St. Cloud hospital where he was pronounced dead.
31. 11/23-24 – Clay Co. – Buffalo River - A 66-year-old Hawley man drowned after somehow entering the river while crossing a footbridge. He left his son's house at approximately 9:15 pm on the 23rd and was reported missing around 5:30 am on the 24th. His body was recovered downstream at 7:30 am, about a mile downstream partially submerged at an old dam.
32. 12/7 - Hennepin Co. – Medicine Lake – A 56-year old Brooklyn Park man drowned after falling through the ice while skating. A call was placed for assistance at 1:50 pm when another skater noticed a hat in the open water. The victim was pulled from the lake at about 3 pm and rushed to the hospital. Attempts to resuscitate him were in vain and he was pronounced dead at the hospital.
33. 12/9 – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – A 39-year old Edina woman apparently drowned after falling through the ice just upstream of the Camden Ave. Bridge in Minneapolis. A person passing by the scene reported a dog near a hole in the ice about 2 pm. Responders arrived and started searching. They found a wet cell phone and gloves on the ice. The victim was recovered about 8 pm, 125 feet from shore and in 8 feet of water under an ice shelf. A stationary sonar unit was used in the search operation to locate the victim.

Summary: 33 non-boating drownings (5th lowest on record). Location of drowning: 8 in lakes, 11 in rivers, 8 in swimming pools 2 in a mine pit and 4 in a hot tub or bathtub. Two most common age ranges for victims: 0-5 and 18-25 years old. Two of the 33 drownings were falls through the ice. Significant alcohol use was noted in nine of the drownings. Victim's ages range from 13 months to 78 years.