

## 2009 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	2009 <sup>2,4</sup>	2008 <sup>1</sup>	2007 <sup>2</sup>	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 <sup>3</sup>	2001
Boating Fatalities	15	12	15	14	23	15	17	30	16
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	72	77	113	102	93	73	94	135	129
Non-Boating Drownings	28	33	26	49	45	30	32	42	53
<small>1. 2008 tied w/ 1996 as the lowest year on record for boating deaths – 12            2. 2007 &amp; 2009 were the lowest and second lowest years on record for non-boating drownings – 2007-26 &amp; 2009-28            3. Last year of the \$500 minimum on property damage accidents, In 2003 it was changed to \$2,000            4. 2009 had the lowest number of reportable non-fatal boating accidents in the past 35 years (71 occurred in 1974)</small>									

### Boating Fatalities

1. 5/9/09 – Le Sueur Co. – Saber Lake – One teenager drowned and two others made it to shore, after the small boat they were in capsized. The victim, a 17-year-old Waterville boy, disappeared in the southeast part of the lake, after high waves overturned the 12-foot boat with an electric motor shortly after 9 a.m. The two survivors told rescuers that the wind from the northwest was gusty. When they turned the boat into the wind, the waves came over the bow, filling the boat and flipping it. The victim and one of the survivors attempted to swim to shore. The other survivor, who could not swim, stayed with the capsized boat. Both of the survivors eventually made it to safety. By that time, the victim had disappeared. There were three life jackets in the boat, but none were worn when the boat capsized. Authorities searched the lake until shortly after 1 p.m., when victim's body was found in 8 ft. of water. The sheriff's office, as well as local and fire & rescue units were assisted by boats & dive teams from surrounding communities, as well as DNR conservation officers, (*Life jacket worn – No*)
2. 6/1/09 – St. Louis Co. – Pelican Lake – An 84-year-old Royal, Arkansas man died after his 17-foot outboard boat and a 19-foot outboard boat collided about 4:10 pm near Indian Point. Two persons were in the second boat. The collision took place as both boats were coming around the point from opposite directions. The two occupants of the second boat also had minor injuries and were treated at a hospital in Cook. The passenger in the other boat entered the water to assist the victim after the collision. Another nearby boat also arrived to assist in getting him to shore. The Arkansas man was pronounced dead by EMS personnel on shore, after attempts to revive him failed. (*Life jacket worn – No*)
3. 6/12/09 - Crow Wing Co. - Bay Lake - An 81-year-old Minnetonka man drowned while trying to swim back to a 28-foot pontoon boat around 3:10 pm. A buoy chain somehow became entangled in the outboard's lower unit. He was able to enter the two feet of water and untangle the chain. Unfortunately, the boat started to drift and he was not able to re-board. He struggled on the surface as those on the boat threw him life jackets. He then went underwater in the 62-degree lake, but a nearby boater dove in and pulled him out in less than a minute. Efforts to resuscitate him were unsuccessful, however, and he was pronounced dead at a Crosby hospital. (*Life jacket worn – No*)
4. 6/20/09 – Morrison Co. – Unnamed Pond - A 46-year-old Ripley Township man capsized his 14-foot canoe and hung onto the side of it for awhile before going under. Help was summoned around 6:30 pm. Witnesses located and pulled the victim out of the water approximately 20 minutes after he went under, and then started CPR. Deputies and EMS personnel arrived and took over resuscitation efforts, including the use of an automatic external defibrillator (AED). Unfortunately, they were unable to save the victim. (*Life jacket worn – No*)
5. 6/21/09 – Beltrami Co - Little Sandy Lake - A 45-year-old Bemidji man died, and his 76-year-old father was rescued, after their 12-foot boat with an electric motor capsized around 6:30 pm on the lake - north of Bemidji. The victim was found around 8 pm in about five feet of water, about 30 feet from shore. He was pronounced dead at the scene. The father, who stayed with the overturned boat in the water, was rescued by a lake resident and taken to a Bemidji hospital to be treated for immersion hypothermia. (*Life jacket worn – No*)
6. 6/25/09 – Lyon Co. – School Grove Lake - A 49-year-old Marshall man apparently drowned after jumping out of a 16-foot boat that caught fire around 1:20 pm. He and three others were on board when the fire started. Estimates were that the boat was about 100 feet from shore at the time. Of the three who made it to shore, two were taken to a Marshall hospital for treatment and the third appeared to be uninjured. Numerous local & county agencies and DNR conservation officers assisted in the recovery operation. His body was recovered about 75 feet from shore at 5:40 pm. (*Life jackets worn – No*)

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## **Boating Fatalities – Contd.**

- 7-8. 7/14 – Beltrami Co. – Blackduck Lake - An 18.5-foot boat, carrying four Little Falls area men and a dog, capsized in stormy weather (25 mph winds and 4-5 foot waves) about 4:15 pm. All occupants entered the water. A nearby pontoon boat came to the scene and rescued two of the men (both 21 years-of-age). The other two men (23 & 33 years old) were not to be found, and apparently drowned. The dog made it to shore. Help was summoned and a search operation was started. A number of counties, as well as local and state agency personnel, were involved. Operations were halted at 9 pm due to severe weather and started up again during the morning of the 15th. Recoveries were made on the 15<sup>th</sup> around 1: 30 pm (23-year-old) and 3 pm (33-year-old). (*Life jackets worn – No*)
9. 7/15 – St. Louis Co. – Lake Vermilion - A DNR Fisheries employee, doing creel census work, found an unoccupied 16-foot outboard boat on the west end of the lake. There was fishing line hanging over the side and a life jacket was on the floor of the boat. The DNR employee towed the boat to the nearest resort. It was the same facility that the missing angler was staying, and his party was awaiting his return for dinner. Authorities were contacted at about 6 pm and the body of the 67-year-old Mascoutah, Illinois man was recovered floating about 8:30 pm. (*Life jacket worn – No*)
10. 7/19 – Steele Co. - Pond – A 59-year-old Blooming Prairie woman apparently drowned after falling out of her 12-foot jon boat. She was fishing on a pond. It is unknown when she actually entered the water; it may have been up to two hours before help was summoned by a neighbor's son around 4 pm. He had noticed her boat, floating with no one on board. He then went out with his mother's boat to investigate. He found the victim floating face down in the water and called for help. Her body was recovered by deputies. EMS and law enf. personnel then performed CPR – but to no avail. (*Life jacket worn – No*)
11. 8/6 – Douglas Co. – Pocket Lake - A 32-year-old Colorado man died, when the tube he was being towed on, struck a docked pontoon boat around 5:30 pm. The man was being towed behind a 16-foot outboard boat, operated by a relative, and suffered injuries to his back. His life jacket stayed on and despite being damaged on impact, it kept him afloat. A 911 call came in at 5:39 p.m. from a residence on the west side of the lake, located southwest of Alexandria. In addition to the county sheriff's office, other state and local responders also assisted. He was taken by ambulance to a hospital in Alexandria where he died. (*Life jacket worn – Yes, by victim*)
12. 8/26 – Dakota Co. – Burr Oak Parks Pond - A 23-year-old Waterloo, Iowa man drowned in an Eagan pond. He was visiting family members who live on the shore of the pond, and apparently capsized a canoe around 10:30 pm. Witnesses saw him alone in the craft, saw it capsize and then heard cries for help. They called 911 and authorities started to search the pond, which is about 9 feet deep, and has a very heavy weed growth. This growth hampered the search & recovery operation during the dawn to dusk operations over four days. Searchers used side-scan sonar, a State Patrol helicopter and dragging. On August 30<sup>th</sup>, deputies spotted the body floating on the surface of the pond and removed it about 8 am. (*Life jacket worn – No*).
13. 8/28 – Washington Co. – Twin Lakes – A 51-year-old man apparently entered the water somehow from his canoe around 7:30 pm. He shouted for help upon entering the water and two men in a boat on the lake, along with a resident on shore, responded. The lake resident on shore paddled out in his canoe to the accident site, preceded by the two men in the rowboat. One of the rowboat occupants saw the victim's face about a foot below the surface. He jumped in and between the two rescuers they were able to get him aboard the rowboat. The rescuer from shore then climbed aboard and rowed the boat to shore. One of the trio called 911 at 7:32 pm on a cell phone. The operator assisted with CPR instructions while they were getting back to shore. A deputy arrived in his car around 7:35 and commandeered a canoe to help get the rowboat to shore faster. Once on shore, deputies continued resuscitative efforts, and made use of an automatic external defibrillator (AED). EMS personnel then arrived and continued resuscitative efforts, but to no avail. (*Life jacket worn – No*).
14. 10/2 – Martin Co. – Iowa Lake – A 20-year-old Fairmont man drowned after capsizing a 17-foot canoe. The man and a 15-year-old girl went out on the lake at night and the craft capsized around 10 pm. Air temperature was 46 and water temperature was 50. The girl was able to swim to shore and summon help through 911 around 10:30pm. When authorities arrived, the girl was taken to a Fairmont hospital and treated for hypothermia. The sheriff's office and a number of other agencies (from both Minnesota and Iowa) began the search for the 20-year-old victim until 2:40 am the following day. They then resumed operations at 8:30 am on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and recovered his body at 11:40 am. (*Life jackets worn – No*)
15. 11/14\* – Becker County – Rat Lake – A 60-year-old Minneapolis man drowned after apparently falling overboard from a 10-foot duck boat. The victim had been in the area hunting for some days and left his van at the boat access. A citizen called the White Earth Tribal Police just before 9 am on the 17<sup>th</sup> to report that the vehicle had been parked there since Saturday morning. They, in turn, contacted Becker County. The boat was found

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## **Boating Fatalities – Contd.**

15. (contd.)

overturned on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> and his body was located in 5-6 feet of water at 2:30 pm that afternoon. Water temperature was 38 degrees. (Life jacket worn – No) \* estimated date of accident

*Summary: 14 fatal accidents, involving 16 boats (one was docked) - resulting in 15 deaths, 3 additional injuries and \$16,370 in property damage. There were 1.84 deaths per 100,000 registered boats, compared to the US rate in 2008 of 5.6. Of the 14 accidents, 13 were single boat accidents - classified as 5 falls overboard, 5 capsizings, 1 collision with a floating object, 1 where a towed tube occupant collided with a docked boat and 1 fire/explosion. There was also 1 fatal collision between 2 motorboats Life jackets were known to be worn by only one victim (being pulled on a tube) out of the total of 15 (7%). Most common operator & victim age range was 41 years and older. Alcohol was listed as a factor in four of the accidents.*

## **Non-Fatal Boating Accidents**

Capsizing	3
Collision w / fixed/floating object	7
Collision w / another watercraft	23
Collision w / underwater object	0
Fall in boat	3
Fall overboard	9
Fire/Explosion	6
Grounding / Hitting Bottom	0
Struck by Propeller	3
Sinking / Flooding / Swamping	5
Water skiing, wake boarding or tubing	11
Other	2
<b>Total Non-Fatal Boating Accidents</b>	<b>72</b>

### NOTES:

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

*Summary: 72 reportable non-fatal boating accidents (second lowest on record), involving 103 boats, resulting in: 1) 76 injuries, 2) \$315,966 in damage to boats and 3) \$7,869 in damage to other property. Most common operator age range was 41-50 years old. Most common age ranges for victims with injuries were 41-50 years of age (16 injuries), followed by 31-40 years of age (15 injuries).*

## **Non- Boating Drownings**

1. Unknown Date – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – A 45-year-old Minneapolis man entered the river somehow during the winter months, and his body was recovered after being spotted by a passerby on May 6<sup>th</sup>. He was found face down in the river underneath the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. Bridge. He was dressed for cold weather.
2. 2/21/09 – Hennepin Co. – Hotel Hot Tub - A 46-year-old Sartell man drowned in a Bloomington hotel hot tub. He was observed in the tub around 4 pm and after a short time, a witness went over to see if he had left. He was found underwater and the witness tried to pull him out, but was not able to do so. She called for help via 911 and other bystanders in the area pulled him out and performed CPR until Bloomington fire and police departments arrived. The victim was taken to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead.
3. 3/31/09 – Ramsey Co. – Mississippi River – The body of a 48-year-old Minneapolis man was found in the river in downtown St. Paul around 7 pm on the 31<sup>st</sup>. It is unknown how or when he entered the river.
4. 4/3/09 – Yellow Medicine Co. – Community Swimming Pool – A 10-year old Montevideo boy on a class outing to the pool in Granite Falls, was found unresponsive in 7 feet of water around 1 pm. He was pulled out, 911 was called and lifeguards started CPR. Upon arrival, paramedics and law enf. personnel continued resuscitation. He was taken to a local hospital and then transferred by helicopter to Minneapolis. He was pronounced dead at that location.
5. 4/5/09 – Ramsey Co. – Mississippi River - An 18-year-old Eveleth man, attending college in St. Paul, went missing in the early morning hours of April 5th, after leaving a party. He was last known to be walking along the Mississippi River bluffs and somehow slipped and fell into the river. A search ensued. Around 11 a.m. on May 1<sup>st</sup> his body was finally found by workers at the hydropower plant adjacent to Lock & Dam #1. The body was caught in a grate near the power plant. They called authorities, who recovered the body.
6. 4/26/09 – Ramsey Co. – Mississippi River – A 30-year-old St. Paul man drowned after being swept into the river

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## Non Boating Drownings - continued

6. Contd.

- from the storm sewer that he and another man (who survived) were exploring. The two were in the sewer around 10:15 am when rain caused an increase in water flow. They tried to get out of the tunnel, but the strong current swept them both into the Miss. River, just north of the Lake Street / Marshall Ave. Bridge. Two members of a nearby rowing club (and a police officer who joined them) used their motorboat to respond to the cries for help. The three spotted the victim's back pack floating in the water downstream from the bridge. They grabbed onto the pack, got him to shore and started CPR until paramedics arrived. He was rushed to a Mpls. hospital where he was pronounced dead at 11:44 am. The other victim made it to shore and was treated at the scene.
7. 5/2/09 – Dakota Co. – Lion's Park Pond – A 25-year-old St. Paul woman drowned after jumping off a fishing pier and into a pond around 10:45 pm to go swimming. Air temperature was 45<sup>o</sup> F and the water was 60<sup>o</sup> F. The woman's fiancée, who was with her at the time, stayed on the pier. The victim swam around for awhile and indicated to him she would do "one more lap." She then disappeared and the fiancée first jumped in to try and find her, and then left by car to summon help. Contact was made with 911 and local police and rescue units arrived on the scene. They found the victim about 11:15 pm. CPR was started and she was taken to a St. Paul hospital where she was pronounced dead.
  8. 5/8/09 – Otter Tail Co. – Eddy Lake - A 2-year-old boy, who was visiting his grandparents, wandered away and somehow entered Eddy Lake (east of Erhard). His family searched for him for 10 to 15 minutes before finding him unresponsive in the water, just before noon. The victim was taken by ambulance to a Fergus Falls hospital, where doctors were able to regain a pulse. He was then flown by helicopter to a Fargo hospital. Unfortunately, he died during the evening of May 10th at that hospital.
  9. Unk. – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – A 24-year-old St. Cloud man apparently entered the river somehow. His body was spotted by a passerby just north of the Hennepin Ave. Bridge on 5/15 and removed from the water around 12:10 pm.
  10. 5/21/09 – Becker Co. – Sewage Pit – A 2-year-old Ogema boy fell into a residential sewage pit around 4:30 pm. He was last seen playing outside and was going back to the barn to see his grandfather. The adults there noticed he was missing and started a search to find him. They found him in the pit around 4:45 pm. CPR was started and a call to 911 was made. He was then taken by ambulance into a Detroit Lakes hospital, where he was pronounced dead.
  11. 6/4/09 – Aitkin Co. - Big Sandy Lake – A 71-year-old Red Wing man left a campground sometime between 6 and 6:30 am and entered the water somehow. His body was spotted next to shore at 7:13 am, face down. He was adjacent to his boat which was also next to shore.
  12. 6/6/09 – Cook Co. – Cascade River – A 20-year-old Virginia, MN man drowned in the Cascade River. He was fishing the stream on foot and was last seen around 4:30 pm. He was reported missing at 8:30 pm on the 6<sup>th</sup>. A search was conducted until almost midnight and then resumed early the next day. His body was recovered in the stream around 5:30 am on the 7<sup>th</sup>.
  13. 6/12/09 – Otter Tail Co. – Little Pine Lake - A 40-year-old Perham man apparently drowned while working on his dock. A friend found him; face down, in about two feet of water next to the dock. Tools were found in the bottom, near the dock. The 911 call was made around 7:10 pm.
  14. 6/20/09 – Ramsey Co. – Lake Josephine – A 16-year-old boy apparently drowned while swimming at the beach, close to the deep water markers. He was with family members at the Roseville lake when he went under around 6:30 pm. A companion alerted lifeguards, who recruited volunteers to search, found the body in about a minute (about 60 yards from shore in seven feet of water), pulled him from the water, summoned help and started CPR. Deputies and paramedics arrived at beach off Lexington Avenue within minutes and took over resuscitation. The victim was unresponsive and was transported to a St. Paul hospital where he died.
  15. 6/24/09 – Ramsey Co. – Long Lake - A 6-year-old boy died after being pulled from the water around 2:30 pm, while on a supervised summer school outing at the public beach. Lifeguards noticed him swimming in eight feet of water near the swim raft and kept an eye on him. When they noticed he was missing, guards responded by doing some dives, getting all swimmers out of the water, summoning help and recruiting volunteers to assist in the search. The victim was found by a lifeguard in 15 feet of water, under the swim raft. He was taken to shore and then transported to a St. Paul hospital by ambulance. He died in the hospital overnight.
  - 16 -17. 6/28/09 – Itasca County – Lake Pokegama - Two Grand Rapids men, one 30 and the other 63, drowned while assisting a child that was in potential trouble in the 65-degree water. The church group was out in a houseboat on the lake and was beached on the calm side of Nesbitt Island. Some of the children in the group went wading and swimming off nearby sandbar. Between 5 & 6 pm, the two men noticed the children were being pushed by wind and waves toward a drop-off. All the kids, except for one boy, had their life jackets on. The two men waded out and the older one, who was wearing his PFD, gave it to that child to put on. The boy and his friends then made their way back to shore safely. Those still on the boat or shore then noticed that both men had disappeared. They

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## Non Boating Drownings - continued

16-17 contd.

- eventually spotted the older of the two men face down in the water and got him back to the island. The victim was taken by boat to shore, a 911 call was made, and CPR administered. He was then taken to a Grand Rapids hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The second victim was recovered by divers in 36 feet of water around 6:40 pm on June 29<sup>th</sup>.
18. 7/1/09 – Ramsey Co. – Home Bathtub – A 3-year-old girl apparently drowned in a home bathtub. The girl was in the tub, with a 3-year-old sibling, when her foster parent left the room momentarily. Another adult in the home checked the bathroom and found the victim submerged. A 911 call was made around 11:25 am. Police and paramedics arrived and started CPR. The girl was taken to a St. Paul hospital, where she passed away on July 4<sup>th</sup>.
  19. 7/4/09 – Cook Co. – Temperance River - A 45-year-old Ramsey man drowned in a deep pool on this North Shore river. He was swimming in the river around 6:25 p.m. just south of the Hwy 61 bridge, when a witness saw him being swept away by the current in one of the “kettles” located in that part of the stream. The 911 call was made at 6:51 pm. An extensive search involving a number of local, county, state and federal agencies ensued until about 10:30 pm. Operations resumed the next day and his body was recovered on 7/5 at 11 a.m., via Lake Superior, after being extricated from another kettle on the river.
  20. 7/7-9 – St. Louis Co. – Island Lake - A 41-year-old Duluth area man, who had been camping on a small island, apparently attempted to swim from the island to a public access, sometime between July 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>. A member of the public spotted the victim floating in the water on July 10<sup>th</sup> and called authorities around 2:40 pm. The victim, who was not reported missing and was fully clothed, was recovered floating in approximately 7 feet of water around 3 pm on the same day.
  21. 7/11 – Hennepin Co. – Apartment Pool – A 5-year-old Minnetonka boy drowned at a St. Louis Park apartment pool. He and his mother were at the apartment complex for a birthday party. He was swimming with other children and went missing. An older child discovered his body in five feet of water and help was summoned around 2:30 pm. He was rushed to a Minneapolis hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 4 pm.
  22. 7/11 – Blue Earth Co. - Hiniker Pond - A 23-year-old man from Honduras drowned after trying to swim across the 28-acre pond with another man. Others there attempted a rescue – but could not locate him. Help was summoned around 5 pm, and his body was recovered by divers in 17 feet of water just before 6 pm. CPR and other measures were then performed by EMS personnel and officers, but to no avail.
  23. 7/14 – Winona Co. – Goodview Lake - A 20-year-old college exchange student from China was at the park and beach with fellow students and university personnel. He entered the water and disappeared about 6:30 pm, after venturing out beyond the marked swim area. A search was conducted by those at the scene; his body was recovered in about three to six minutes and brought to shore. A request for assistance was made and bystanders at a company picnic responded immediately and started CPR. After 7-10 minutes of CPR they were relieved by EMS and enforcement personnel. Rescuers were able to get a pulse in the ambulance on the way to a Winona hospital. The victim was then airlifted to a LaCrosse (WI) hospital where he died on July 17<sup>th</sup> from complications due to near-drowning.
  24. 7/19-20 – Ramsey Co. – Apartment Bathtub – A 59-year-old St. Paul woman drowned sometime overnight in her apartment bathtub. A neighbor could hear the water was running for a long time (since 10 pm on the 19<sup>th</sup>) in the apartment below his, and also noticed water in the garage area. He called the building manager around 9 pm on the 20<sup>th</sup>. They opened the apartment to find the apartment flooded and the victim in the tub. The police were called shortly thereafter.
  25. 7/31 – Hennepin Co. – Home Hot Tub - A 39-year-old Minneapolis man was found dead, face down in a Robbinsdale home hot tub. Authorities were called about 1:30 pm. Death was due to drowning.
  26. 8/? – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River - A 23-year-old man from Minneapolis entered the river somehow. On 8/9 his body was spotted floating just upstream of the Plymouth Ave. Bridge by someone on the bridge around 1 pm. City and county personnel were called and his body was removed from the river around 1:45 pm.
  27. 12/6 – Ramsey Co. – Apt/Condo. Hot Tub - A 52-year-old St. Paul woman drowned in a hot tub. Assistance was summoned by phone at 8:52 pm, and both police and EMS personnel were on the scene within 5mins. The victim was pronounced dead shortly thereafter.

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## Non Boating Drownings - continued

28. 12/11 – Ramsey Co. – Home Bathtub – A 45-year-old St. Paul woman drowned in a bathtub. Help was summoned around 6:30 pm and the victim was pronounced dead shortly thereafter.

*Summary: 28 non-boating drownings (2nd lowest on record). Location of drowning: 9 in lakes, 8 in rivers, 6 in a hot tub or bathtub, 3 in a pond or pit and 2 in swimming pools. Two most common age ranges for victims: 18-25 and 41-50 years old. Victim's ages ranged from 2 to 63 years old.*