

Preliminary 2021 Minnesota Boating Accident and Drowning Summary

Prepared by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Boat and Water Safety
as of 9/30/2021

Summary of Accidents – as of 9/30 each year

Accident Category and Year	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Boating Fatalities	17	15	10	14	12	14	12	10	10	11
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	57	84	85	60	91	76	67	33	61	67
Non-Boating Drownings	29	44	31	32	24	35	30	22	27	36

There is usually a delay in the reporting of non-fatal accidents.

Summary of Accidents for the Entire Year – January - December

Accident Category and Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Boating Fatalities	16	10	14	12	18	18	14	12	15	16
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	89	90	64	92	79	71	36	65	72	61
Non-Boating Drownings	49	35	40	31	40	35	29	30	40	50

2021 Statewide Summary – as of 9/30/2021

Boating Fatalities

- 4/14 – Mille Lacs Co. – Mille Lacs Lake – A 35-year-old Garrison man drowned after falling overboard when his 16-foot motorboat flooded with water. He and three passengers had gone out to do some fish netting. After about 20 minutes, they decided to turn around and go back to shore because the water was getting too choppy. Waves came over the boat causing the front to dip, putting the four men into the water. One passenger held a life jacket and swam toward shore, two were able to climb back into the boat (one was wearing an inflatable PFD). The operator was found unresponsive in the water and was taken to shore by another boat. Lifesaving measures were started and he was transported to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
- 4/30 – Cass Co. – Leech Lake – A 68-year-old Pierz man drowned after falling overboard from his 16-foot motorboat. He had noticed water in the back of the boat and thought he had a leaking drain plug. He grabbed another plug, lifted the motor and leaned over the transom to replace the faulty plug. His passenger heard him fall in and threw him a life jacket and a throwable flotation device, and then tried to move the boat to rescue him. The man was under water and the passenger jumped in and held the man's head above water. Others arrived and helped them to shore where CPR was started, to no avail. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
- 5/17 – Wabasha Co. – Weaver Bottoms, Mississippi River – An 88-year-old Cochrane, WI man drowned after somehow falling overboard from his 18-foot motorboat. He had been out fishing by himself since late morning. A fisherman saw the unoccupied boat driving in circles and called authorities at about 7:43 p.m. His body was recovered at about 9:20 p.m. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

4. 5/29 – Dakota Co. – Crystal Lake – A 36-year-old Burnsville man drowned while attempting to save his girlfriend, who had gone into the water from the 21-foot motorboat she was a passenger on. He jumped in the water from the boat, in an attempt to help her get back to the boat. She was able to get back in the boat, but he told her he thought he was going to drown. She put on a life jacket and threw one toward him. He went under the water and she couldn't see him. She jumped in the water, but couldn't locate him. She called 911. His body was recovered about 6 hours later. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
5. 5/31 – St. Louis Co. – Trout Lake – A 51-year-old Bowlus man drowned after falling overboard from the 16-foot motorboat in which he was a passenger. He and the other two occupants were fishing while slowly trolling. The man was in a seat on the raised casting deck and the operator noticed he was dozing off. They were still trolling when suddenly the operator heard a splash. He looked over and saw the man had fallen in. The man briefly came to the surface and then went under. The operator jumped in to help him but couldn't hold him up without going under himself and he had to let go. Another boat came over to help and they got the man to shore and started CPR. The lake is in the BWCA with water access only and ambulance staff arrived with assistance from a U.S. Forest Service float plane. Lifesaving efforts were unsuccessful. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
6. 6/1 – Ramsey Co. – Lake Gervais – A 20-year-old St. Paul man drowned when the 14 ½-foot canoe he and two others were in capsized at about 7:30 p.m. All three went into the lake, but only two resurfaced. None of the three were wearing a life jacket. A nearby witness came to help. He tried to grab the operator, who was still submerged, but couldn't. He got the two passengers, who were struggling in the water, into his boat. The operator went below the water line and was no longer visible. A search was started and he was recovered at about 11:15 p.m. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
7. 6/6 – Kandiyohi Co. – Big Kandiyohi Lake – A 32-year-old Danube man drowned while swimming from an unanchored 17-foot motorboat. The boat was stopped to let the man and three children swim. No one was wearing a life jacket in the water. It was windy and wavy, and the boat was drifting. One child began to struggle and the man tried to help. He began to struggle and went under the water before the boat could reach him. The child was saved from the water. The man's body was recovered on 6/9. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
8. 6/11 – Aitkin Co. – Big Sandy Lake – A 34-year-old North Branch man died after he fell overboard, at about 11:30 p.m., from a 20-foot pontoon boat, which was underway. He was a passenger and was on the front of the boat when he fell. He went under the boat and was possibly struck by the motor. He sank in the water. His body was located and recovered just after 5:00 p.m. the following day. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
9. 6/24 – Itasca Co. – Little Splithand Lake – A 30-year-old Grand Rapids man drowned after falling overboard from the side-door on his 20-foot pontoon boat. The boat was drifting while the passenger was fishing from the bow of the boat. The man was at the back of the boat. The passenger heard him walk to the port side of the boat and heard him fall into the water from the side door. She jumped in the water to save him but was unable to locate him. She swam back to the boat and yelled for help. A nearby angler came to help and called 911. A search was started and the man's body was recovered on 6/29/21. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
10. 6/30 – Hennepin Co. – Lake Minnetonka – A 15-year-old Chanhassen boy died after an 11-foot personal watercraft (PWC) collided with the 9-foot PWC he was operating. The operators were friends that were out riding and jumping wakes. The victim's PWC stopped suddenly and was hit by the one his friend was operating, causing injury to the boy and damage to both watercraft. *(Life jacket worn – yes)*
11. 7/12 – Hubbard Co. – Little Mantrap Lake – A 65-year-old Brooklyn Park man drowned after falling overboard from his 14-foot motorboat. Witnesses said they heard a boat speed past their boat while they were fishing. They then heard a loud bang and looked up to see a boat driving in circles and a man in the water. They went over to help and threw a life jacket to the man, but he wasn't able to grab it and he went under. One witness tried to dive for the man but couldn't find him. His body was found and recovered almost 3 hours later. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

12. 7/19 – St. Louis Co. – Loon Lake – A 73-year-old Fort Lupton, CO man drowned after the 17-foot canoe he was paddling capsized in the BWCAW. He and his passenger were camping when they were advised of park closures due to wildfire activity in the area. They packed up camp and as they were paddling toward another lake, a storm came up. They turned toward shore and a large wave capsized the canoe. The passenger swam toward shore and the man held on to the canoe. When the passenger reached shore, he could not see the man anywhere. He used a satellite phone to call for assistance. The man's body was recovered about four hours later. *(Life jackets worn – no)*
13. 8/10 – Aitkin Co. – Waukenabo Lake – A 63-year-old Lakewood, CO man drowned after he jumped from an unanchored pontoon boat to swim. He started to struggle in the water and life jackets were thrown to him but missed. He went under the water and did not resurface. His body was recovered by authorities about nine hours later. *(Life jackets worn – no)*
14. 8/12 – St. Louis Co. – Sand Lake – A 21-year-old Roseville man drowned while trying to swim to shore from a capsized 18-foot canoe. He had been fishing while his friend was paddling the canoe. They encountered high winds and large waves and the canoe took on water and capsized. They stood on the submerged canoe and eventually tried to swim to shore. The operator made it to the island, but the victim never arrived. His body was recovered on 8/16. *(Life jackets worn – no)*
15. 8/16 – Crow Wing Co. – Ruth Lake – A 66-year-old Towanda, KS man apparently drowned after diving off the drifting 19-foot pontoon boat he was a passenger on. The operator felt that something was wrong and then saw the man struggling and beginning to panic. The man was hanging on to the side of the pontoon but couldn't continue. The operator threw several life jackets to him. Another boater heard calls for help and got the man in their boat and back to the public access. First responders rendered aid, but the man was pronounced dead at the scene. *(Life jackets worn – no)*
16. 8/19 – Cass Co. – Leech Lake – A 65-year-old Oak Grove man apparently drowned after going in the water from his drifting 24-foot pontoon boat. A witness in another boat saw him in the water with his dog as they went by. When they came by again, they saw the dog swimming away from the boat and the man was nowhere to be seen. They called 911. The man's body was recovered about 1 ½ hours later. *(Life jacket worn – no)*
17. 8/20 – Ramsey Co. – White Bear Lake – A 43-year-old Brooklyn Park man drowned while swimming from a rented 22-foot pontoon boat. He was a passenger on the drifting boat and was in the water swimming. He became distressed and went under water. The others on the boat attempted to find him but were unsuccessful. Authorities arrived and started searching. He was located, put in a boat (where CPR was started) and brought to shore. A waiting ambulance took him to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead. He had been in the water a little more than an hour. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

Non-Fatal Boating Accidents

Type of Accident	Number
Capsizing	2
Collision with a fixed or floating object	5
Collision with another watercraft	20
Collision with an underwater object	1
Collision with swimmer or person in water	0
Fall in boat	3
Falls overboard	8
Fire/Explosion	4
Grounding, Hitting Bottom	3
Struck by Propeller	1
Sinking / Flooding / Swamping	3

Type of Accident	Number
Water-skiing, wake boarding or tubing mishap	7
Carbon Monoxide exposure	0
Other	0
Total reportable non-fatal boating accidents as of 9/30/2021	57

Notes:

1. Reportable non-fatal boating accidents are those where there was at least \$2000 in property damage, an injury beyond first aid or total loss of the boat.
2. There is usually a delay in the reporting of non-fatal boating accidents.

Non-Boating Drownings

1. 1/10 – Beltrami Co. – Lake Irving – A 58-year-old Bemidji man drowned after the pick-up truck he was driving on the ice went into open water near where the Mississippi River exits the lake. He had been in his fish house, and left about 3:00 a.m. Authorities were called later that day when friends and family were unable to make contact with him. They followed the vehicle tracks from the fish house to the open water. The truck was located in the water, but the man was not in it. His body was found on 1/11, about 40-50 yards from the truck, with the assistance of a ROV drone.
2. 1/12 – Ramsey Co. – residential bathtub – A 34-year-old New Brighton woman drowned while taking a bath. She was found with her face in the water. It is thought she may have had a medical incident while she was bathing, causing her to drown.
3. 1/28 – Dakota Co. – Lemay Lake – A 13-year-old Bloomington boy drowned after falling in the lake. He was reported missing about 1:30 p.m. His boot was found floating near some broken ice, in open water from a drainpipe, at about 2:15. He was recovered by a county sheriff's diver at about 3:30 p.m. It is thought he may have been on the edge of the ice when it gave way, causing him to fall in the water.
4. 2/5 – Fillmore Co. – water bucket – A 1-year-old Harmony girl drowned while playing with water in a mop bucket. She was found with her head in the bucket. CPR was started by her father. Emergency services were called, but resuscitation was unsuccessful.
5. 3/13 – Washington Co. – hot tub – A 64-year-old Birchwood Village man drowned while in his hot tub. His wife woke from a nap and could not find him. She eventually located him submerged face down in the hot tub. Lifesaving measures were unsuccessful.
6. 4/16 – Isanti Co. – drainage pond – A 3-year-old Cambridge boy was found in a nearby drainage pond after being reported missing. He had been playing in the backyard and was somehow able to open the gate. A search was started and he was located in the pond. CPR was started and he was transported to the medical center, and then airlifted to another hospital, where he died on 4/21.
7. 5/2 – Washington Co. – residential bathtub – A 38-year-old Oak Park Heights man drowned in his bathtub. He lived alone was found by a family member with his head and shoulders submerged in the water. It is unknown how long he had been in the water. His last contact with family members was the evening of 4/30.
8. 5/5 – Dakota Co. – residential bathtub – A 32-year-old woman drowned while bathing at her apartment. Neighbors reported hearing loud music about 9:30 p.m., and the water running about 11:00 p.m. She was found deceased in the bathtub on 5/6 at 6:45 p.m.
9. 5/20 – Hennepin Co. – hotel pool – A 4-year-old Minneapolis boy was found floating in the pool at the hotel. His siblings flagged down a man who jumped in the pool grabbed the boy and started CPR. Paramedics arrived and transported the boy to the medical center, where he died on 5/24/2021.
10. 5/26 – Dakota Co. – apartment pool – A 5-year-old Burnsville boy drowned after he somehow entered the pool at an apartment building. He had been reported missing by his parents about 40 minutes

before he was spotted face down in the pool by a passerby. 911 was called and he was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

11. 6/5 – Nicollet Co. – park pool – A 9-year-old North Mankato boy was swimming in the pool at the swim facility. He went under and didn't resurface. He was found unresponsive by a lifeguard. Lifesaving measures were started and he was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased. He had been under water about 9 minutes.
12. 6/6 – Anoka Co. – Moore Lake – A 26-year-old Fridley man drowned while attempting to help a child. The family was floating on inflatable tubes in the lake. The man had one child on the tube with him and another child was alone on a tube. That child started to fall off, and the man went to help her, and they all went in the water. The mother attempted to help but she and the child she was with also went in the water. While they were being rescued, the man went under water and couldn't be located. He was recovered by a diver about 20 minutes later. He was taken to the hospital, but later died.
13. 6/7 – Ramsey Co. – Mississippi River – A 12-year-old St. Paul boy was swimming at Hidden Falls Regional Park, at about 7:00 p.m., when the strong current swept him away and he went underwater. A search was started that evening and continued until midnight. It continued the following day and again on the morning of 6/9, when his body was recovered about 4.6 miles downstream from where he had been swimming.
14. 6/12 – Washington Co. – St. Croix River – A 46-year-old Plymouth man drowned while swimming with his children in the river at William O'Brien State Park. All three started to struggle and a bystander was able to pull the children from the water. The man went under water and didn't resurface. He was found in 8 feet of water, about 25 feet from shore, about an hour later. Life saving measures were attempted, with no results.
15. 6/12 – Anoka Co. – Lions Park pond – A 2-year-old Coon Rapids boy drowned after wandering away and going into the pond. He was found by deputies and removed from the water. Lifesaving measures were started and he was transported to the hospital, where he died a week later.
16. 6/12 – Stearns Co. – Quarry 2 at Quarry Park – An 18-year-old St. Cloud man drowned after jumping into the water at the swimming quarry. He was with friends who were in the water and formed a circle for him to jump into. He jumped off the dock into the circle and didn't come back up. The friends dove to try to find him, but the water was too deep. He had little prior swimming experience. The county dive team found him in 25 feet of water and brought him to shore, where life saving measures were started. He was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.
17. 6/13 – Wright Co. – Lake Cedar – A 52-year-old Monticello man jumped into the water to assist some children who had drifted away from an anchored pontoon boat. The kids were wearing life jackets while they were in the water swimming. It was windy and the boat was drifting on its anchor line. The man got one child back to the boat, went under water and didn't resurface. Deputies found the man in the water and started CPR. He had been under about 17 minutes. He was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced dead. All the children got back to the boat safely.
18. 6/13 – Washington Co. – Carver Lake – A 9-year-old St. Paul boy drowned while swimming at the beach. He was reported missing and a human-chain search of the swim area was started when officers arrived. He was located in the water and lifesaving measures were started. He was transported to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead.
19. 6/28 – St. Louis Co. – Bailey's Lake – A 30-year-old Virginia woman was reported missing on 6/29. She had been seen swimming in the lake, a common practice for her, about 6:30 p.m. on 6/28. A search of the lake was started and her body was located in 44 feet of water on 7/1.
20. 7/3 – Red Lake Co. – Red Lake River – A 24-year-old man from the Grand Forks Air Base drowned while with a group of friends. They were going to tube down the river, but the man couldn't swim and because the water levels were low, he decided to walk in the river alongside his group. He got to a deeper area

with a strong current, stepped into a deep hole and went under. The friends dove, but were unable to locate him, and 911 was called. His body was recovered about two hours later.

21. 7/4 – Dakota Co. – Lake Marion – A 28-year-old St. Paul man drowned after falling off a float. He was floating outside the swimming area at a park beach at about 3:30 p.m. After he fell off the float, it started to get pushed by the wind and current toward shore. The man attempted to swim after it. The water was rough from many boats in the area, and he went under. His body was recovered from 5 feet of water about 4 ½ hours later.
22. 7/4 – Kandiyohi Co. – North Long Lake – A 28-year-old Paynesville man drowned while retrieving his bobber. He had been fishing from a dock when he lost his bobber. He jumped in to get it and began struggling. His girlfriend jumped in to help, but he pulled her down and she swam to shore. He went under and was recovered about 30 minutes later in 8 ½ feet of water. CPR was attempted, to no avail.
23. 7/5 – Washington Co. – St. Croix River – A 38-year-old Brooklyn Park man drowned while swimming in the river at Point Douglas Park. He began to struggle and went under the water. 911 was called. He was found on the bottom of the river by a bystander who was helping with the search. CPR was started by deputies and he was transported to the hospital, where he later died.
24. 7/10 – Ramsey Co. – creek – A 90-year-old St. Paul woman was reported missing by her family in the morning of 7/9. They had been searching the area in the evening on 7/10 when they found her in a nearby creek. Her walking cane and shoes were nearby. It is thought she may have gotten lost and fell in the creek.
25. 7/17 – Otter Tail Co. – East Battle Lake – A 35-year-old Creston, IA man drowned while swimming. He was with family on a point north of the cabin when he decided to swim back to the cabin. He started struggling and a family member swam out to help him. He was able to get the man above the surface. A boat came to assist getting them back to shore, where paramedics took over. It is thought he was under water for about 4 minutes.
26. 7/18 – Dakota Co. – Earley Lake – A 20-year-old Eagan man drowned after entering the water. Authorities received a call regarding some personal items found near the edge of the water. A search for the owner was started and a drone was used to search the water. The man's body was found about 55 feet from shore, fully submerged.
27. 7/24 – Carver Co. – Lake Minnewashta – A 13-year-old Bloomington girl was reported missing while swimming from a floating water mat that was tethered to an anchored boat. She had been swimming and doing deep dives. She was last seen on the anchored boat, and about a minute later was determined to be missing. A search of the water was started and 911 was called. The county water patrol and divers searched the water, and she was located in 13 feet of water about 3 hours later.
28. 8/20 – Lake Co. – Lake Superior – A 58-year-old Knife River woman drowned while swimming in the lake with her husband. She was the better swimmer and went out farther than the husband wanted to, so he went back to shore. The waves were 2-3 feet high, and he saw her swimming out farther and down the beach. She was found face-up in the water by a man on the beach about an hour later. CPR was started and she was transported to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased.
29. 9/3 – Ramsey Co. – Mississippi River – A 67-year-old St. Paul man was found floating in the river under a marina dock. It is unknown where, how or when he came to be in the water.

There are also several water incidents pending – waiting for accident reports or verification of drowning to be submitted.