

Preliminary 2023 Minnesota Boating Accident and Drowning Summary

Prepared by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Boat and Water Safety as of 8/28/2023

Summary of Accidents – as of 8/28 each year

Accident Category and Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Boating Fatalities	9	10	18	13	9	10	11	14	10	10
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	40	67	59	78	76	54	81	71	59	29
Non-Boating Drownings	24	18	45	40	26	29	23	30	28	18

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	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Boating Fatalities	15	18	16	10	14	12	18	18	14	12
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	76	69	89	90	64	92	79	71	36	65
Non-Boating Drownings	30	53	49	35	40	31	40	35	29	30

2023 Statewide Summary – as of 8/28/2023

Boating Fatalities

- 5/5 – Lake Co. – Caribou River – A 20-year-old Minneapolis man drowned after his 11 ½-foot kayak capsized. The empty, overturned kayak, with a life jacket attached to it, was seen floating down the river about 11:46 a.m. and was reported to authorities. The river current was swift, and the capsized kayak continued down the river and into Lake Superior, where it was recovered. The man’s body was found on the shore of the lake, approximately 100 yards south of where the kayak was located, at 1:48 p.m. (*Life jacket: worn – yes, on board – yes*)
- 5/14 – Cook Co. – Seagull Lake – A 63-year-old Spring, TX man drowned after capsizing his canoe. He was paddling solo on the lake at about 2:00 p.m. He was reported missing by his friend at about 11:30 p.m. when he hadn’t returned to the campsite and couldn’t be reached on his phone. A search was started the following morning and his body was found in the water at about 8:30 a.m. (*Life jacket: worn – yes, on board – yes*)
- 5/31 – Stearns Co. – Mississippi River – A 39-year-old St. Cloud man drowned after his kayak somehow capsized. He was kayaking alone and did not arrive at the meeting point to be picked up. His overturned kayak was found floating down the river with a life vest inside. A search was started, and the man’s body was found in the river and recovered on 6/2. (*Life jacket: worn – no, on board – yes*)
- 6/21 – Cook Co. – Gillis Lake – An 18-year-old Glenwood City, WI man drowned when the 17-foot canoe he was in capsized. He and his passenger were fishing. The passenger caught a fish and the canoe capsized, putting both men in the water. Neither were wearing a life jacket. The man could not swim,

and the passenger tried to throw a life jacket to him. The man went under and didn't resurface. Others in their group helped search for the man before two portaged out to report the incident and get help. The man's body was recovered two days later. *(Life jacket: worn – no, on board – yes)*

5. 6/22 – Otter Tail Co. – Lake Six – A 13-year-old boy died after being struck by the prop of the 20-foot motorboat he was tubing behind. The watercraft was pulling the tube, which had two occupants. They both fell off. One occupant went back to the tube and the boy went back to the returning watercraft. The water was choppy from the returning boat and the prop struck the boy. He was taken to shore and CPR was started, to no avail. *(Life jacket: worn – yes, on board – yes)*
6. 7/3 – Itasca Co. – Swan Lake – A 52-year-old Pengilly man drowned after somehow being thrown overboard from his 19-foot motorboat. The empty boat was seen circling and a search for the operator was started. His body was located at the bottom of the lake that evening. *(Life jacket: worn – no, on board – yes)*
7. 7/10 – Cass Co. – Leech Lake – A 71-year-old Walker man drowned after somehow falling overboard from his 20 ½-foot motorboat. He had been out fishing alone and did not come home when expected. Authorities were called and his empty drifting boat was located. A water search was started. His body was found in 17 feet of water the following evening. *(Life jacket: worn – no, on board – yes)*
8. 8/9 – Crow Wing Co. – Star Lake – A 14-year-old Encinitas, CA boy drowned while fishing from a 10 ½-foot paddleboard. The water was calm, and he somehow fell head-first into the water and did not resurface. He was found in 12 feet of water after a short search. Lifesaving measures were started, but he was pronounced deceased on scene. *(Life jacket: worn – no, on board – no)*
9. 8/15 – Lake Co. – Lake Isabella – A 65-year-old Glendale, CA man drowned after falling overboard from the 18-foot canoe he was in. He and his passenger were canoeing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) when their map blew out of the canoe and the canoe capsized putting the men in the water. He was wearing a life jacket but started to have a hard time breathing. The passenger swam him to shore and waited for help. It was an hour before rescue arrived. *(Life jacket: worn – yes, on board – yes)*

Non-Fatal Boating Accidents

Type of Accident	Number
Capsizing	3
Collision with a fixed or floating object	1
Collision with another watercraft	19
Collision with an underwater object	1
Collision with swimmer or person in water	0
Falls in boat	1
Falls overboard	2
Fire/Explosion	4
Grounding, Hitting Bottom	1
Struck by Propeller	2
Sinking / Flooding / Swamping	1
Water-skiing, wake boarding or tubing mishap	5
Carbon Monoxide exposure	0
Other	0
Total reportable non-fatal boating accidents as of 8/28/2023	40

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. 1/6 – Ramsey Co. – private bathtub – A 52-year-old St. Paul woman drowned in her bathtub. She had been feeling ill and was preparing to take a bath. She was found over the side of the tub with her face in the water. CPR was started and she was transported to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
2. 1/7 – Otter Tail Co. – Otter Tail Lake – a 64-year-old Ottertail man drowned after driving his snowmobile into open water while operating on the ice with two other snowmobilers. It was foggy and there was limited visibility. He submerged and his companions could not locate him. They went to a nearby cabin to call for help. Authorities recovered him from the water just over an hour and a half later and lifesaving measures were started. He was transported to the hospital where he later died. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
3. 2/4 – Anoka Co. – residential bathtub – A 19-month-old Fridley girl drowned while in the bathtub. The girl's sibling was refusing to get in the tub and the mother left the room to get the sibling. Another sibling went in the bathroom to be with the girl and called the mother into the room because the girl was under the water. CPR was started and she was transported to the hospital where she later passed away. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
4. 3/12 – Aitkin Co. – pond – A 6-year-old Hinckley boy drowned after breaking through the ice next to the dock. He had been building a snow fort in the yard and had only been outside about 15 minutes when his grandmother saw her dog standing on the dock looking into the pond. She went out to the dock, saw his hat and gloves on the dock and the boy floating face-down in the water. She pulled him out and started CPR. 911 was called and he was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased. It is thought he may have fallen from the dock, through the ice into the water. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
5. 3/21 – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – A 61-year-old Bloomington man was reported floating in the river. He was recovered by authorities, lifesaving measures were started, and he was transported to the hospital, where he died on 3/24. It is unknown where or how he came to be in the water. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
6. 4/11 – Chisago Co. – St. Croix River – An 18-year-old Luck, WI man drowned after falling into the river. He was walking on a cliff along the river at a state park. He lost his footing and fell into the water. He struggled to swim, went under and didn't resurface. The river was high and running fast. A search was conducted but he wasn't located. His body eventually surfaced and caught on debris about 4 miles downriver from where he had fallen, on 5/26. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
7. 4/23 – Goodhue Co. – Mississippi River – A 42-year-old Minneapolis man's body was found floating in flood waters by a kayaker. It is unknown where, when, or how he came to be in the river. He had been reported missing on March 13 of this year. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
8. 5/12 – Dakota Co. – unnamed pond – A 70-year-old Lakeville woman drowned after somehow entering a pond near her house. She was reported missing that morning after having last been seen at her residence about 10:00 p.m. the previous night. Her body was located in the water just before noon. It is unknown when she entered the water. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
9. 5/14 – Olmsted Co. – residential bathtub – A 15-month-old Rochester boy drowned after somehow getting in the bathtub. His mother had just finished feeding him in his highchair and put him on the floor to play. She asked her daughter to run a bath. She turned around and didn't see her son. She ran to the bathroom and found him face-down in the water. CPR was started and he was transported to the hospital, where he later died. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*

10. 6/1 – Pine Co. – residential pool – A 2-year-old Pine City boy drowned after leaving the house unnoticed while his family was getting ready for a trip. He climbed on a 24” tall storage trunk and somehow pulled himself into the 54” tall above ground pool in the backyard. His father found him about 5 minutes later and started CPR. He was transported to the hospital where he died on 6/7. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
11. 6/8 – Washington Co. – Carver Lake – A 13-year-old St. Paul boy drowned while swimming at the beach with his girlfriend. They swam out to the corner of the marked swim area and as they were swimming back, they both started to struggle and submerged. Family members on shore saw what was happening and went in the water to help. They were brought to shore, and resuscitation was started. They were both transported to the hospital where the boy was pronounced deceased. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
12. 6/14 – Crow Wing Co. – Cross Lake – A 73-year-old Crosslake woman drowned after somehow falling into the water. She was found in the lake about 9:30 a.m., up against the shoreline at her residence. It is thought she may have been injured falling on the shoreline rocks and ended up in the water. It is unknown how long she had been in the water. The last known contact with her was the previous day. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
13. 6/25 – Lake Co. – Lake Superior – An 18-year-old South St. Paul man drowned after jumping off a rock ledge into Lake Superior. He was with a friend (see #12) who also jumped into the lake. He tried to swim to nearby rocks to get out of the water. The water was cold, the current was strong, and he was pulled away from shore. He struggled and submerged. His body was recovered about 6 hours later. *(Swimming ability – swimmer)*
14. 6/25 – Lake Co. – Lake Superior – An 18-year-old Inver Grove Heights man drowned after jumping off a rock ledge into Lake Superior. He was with a friend (see #11) who had also jumped into the lake. He tried to swim to nearby rocks to get out of the water. The water was cold, the current was strong, and he was pulled away from shore. He struggled and submerged. His body was recovered about 5 hours later. *(Swimming ability – swimmer)*
15. 6/28 – Ramsey Co. – apartment pool – A 19-year-old St. Paul man drowned while in the pool at his apartment complex. He was not a strong swimmer and was alone in the pool. He was near the edge of the pool and then started to panic and thrash around. He went under and came above water a few times before going under. He was found in the water and authorities were called. Lifesaving measures were started, and he was transported to the hospital, but was pronounced deceased. He had been under the water for about 30 minutes. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
16. 7/1 – Hennepin Co. – residential pool – A 72-year-old Lakeville man drown after entering the pool at a family member’s house. He had entered from the stairs, jumped forward, extended his arms and put his face in the water. He stayed that way and his family decided that something was wrong. They called to him, and he didn’t respond. They tried to get him from the pool and attempted rescue breaths. EMS arrived but could not revive him. *(Swimming ability – swimmer)*
17. 7/3 – Wright Co. – Lake Pulaski – A 20-year-old man who was here on an international exchange program, was with a group of people who were floating in the lake on tubes and paddleboards. The man had been using a tube and attempted to swim to shore after possibly losing the tube. He started to struggle and then went under the water. He was under for approximately 40 minutes before being recovered by a rescue diver. Lifesaving measures were started, and he was taken by ambulance to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
18. 7/3 – Goodhue Co. – Vermillion River – A 22-year-old Oakdale man drowned while swimming in the river, near where it joins with the Mississippi River, with two family members. They all started to struggle and another family member on shore went in the river to help them. One of the swimmers was saved, but this man, the other swimmer (see #16) and the rescuer (see #17) all went under and didn’t

resurface. His body was recovered from the Mississippi River on 7/5/2023 at 8:45 a.m. (*Swimming ability – non-swimmer*)

19. 7/3 – Goodhue Co. – Vermillion River – A 17-year-old Oakdale girl drowned while swimming in the river, near where it joins with the Mississippi River, with two family members. They all started to struggle and another family member on shore went in the river to help them. One of the swimmers was saved, but this girl, the other swimmer (see #15) and the rescuer (see #17) all went under and didn't resurface. Her body was recovered from the Mississippi River on 7/5/2023 at 8:45 a.m. (*Swimming ability – non-swimmer*)
20. 7/3 – Goodhue Co. – Vermillion River – A 41-year-old Oakdale man was on shore while three of his family members were swimming in the river, near where it joins the Mississippi River. All three swimmers started to struggle, and the man went in to help them. He was able to get one of the swimmers to shore and went back to help the other two (see #15 and #16). He started to struggle and all three went under and didn't surface. His body was recovered from the Mississippi River on 7/5/23. (*Swimming ability – non-swimmer*)
21. 7/5 – Hennepin Co. – hotel pool – A 53-year-old Winnipeg, Manitoba man was in the hotel pool with his son. He was not a strong swimmer. He was walking from the shallow end to the deep end of the pool when he apparently lost his footing and went under. He bounced off the bottom of the pool to try to keep his head above the water, but he went under. His son started to swim him to the shallow end, got him to the stairs and kept his father's head above the water. Bystanders came to help get the man from the water and the son began CPR. He was transported to the medical center, where he later died. (*Swimming ability – non-swimmer*)
22. 7/5 – Hennepin Co. – Lake Minnetonka – A 67-year-old Spring Park woman was reported missing from her place of residence. She was known to go near the water and her shoes were found floating in the lake. A search was begun, and her body was located in the water under the docks. It is thought she may have been in the water for about an hour and a half. (*Swimming ability – unknown*)
23. 7/6 – Ramsey Co. – Mississippi River – A 37-year-old St. Paul woman drowned after somehow entering the water. Her body was seen floating in the river and was reported. Authorities arrived and removed her body from the water. It is unknown when or where she entered the river, but it is thought she had been there for more than a day. (*Swimming ability – unknown*)
24. 7/30 – Beltrami Co. – Lake Julia – A 13-year-old Moorhead girl drowned while swimming from an anchored pontoon boat. She was not wearing a life jacket and had gone under and didn't resurface. Attempts were made by others on the boat to locate her but were unsuccessful and 911 was called. Her body was recovered almost three hours later. (*Swimming ability – unknown*)

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