

2023 Minnesota Boating Accident and Drowning Summary

Prepared by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Boat and Water Safety

Summary of Accidents – Compared to Prior Years

Accident Category and Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Boating Fatalities	9	15	18	16	10	14	12	18	18	14
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	59	76	69	89	90	64	92	79	71	36
Non-Boating Drownings	48	30	53	49	35	40	31	40	35	29

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)*
- 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)*
- 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 an 18-foot canoe. 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)*

Summary: There were 9 fatal accidents, involving 9 watercraft, resulting in 9 deaths and no additional injuries. There were no damages to watercraft or other property. There were 1.1 deaths per 100,000 registered watercraft, compared to the U.S. rate of 4.9. All 9 incidents were single watercraft accidents, classified as 5 capsizings, 3 falls overboard and 1 struck by prop (tuber). Six of the deaths involved non-motorized craft (3 canoes, 2 kayaks, 1 paddleboard), and 3 deaths involved open motorboats (19 ft. – 20 ½ ft. long). Three of the incidents occurred in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Six of the 9 watercraft had a single occupant. Eight of the 9 watercraft had life jackets on board, and life jackets were known to be worn by 4 of the 9 victims (44%). The most common victim age range was 61 years and over (3) followed by 13 – 17 years (2) and 18 – 25 years (2). The oldest victim was 71 years old and the youngest was 13 years old. Alcohol was listed as a factor in 1 of the 9 incidents (11%).

Non-Fatal Boating Accidents

Type of Accident	Number
Capsizing	5
Collision with a fixed or floating object	4
Collision with another watercraft	24
Collision with an underwater object	2
Collision with swimmer or person in water	0
Falls in boat	1
Falls overboard	2
Fire/Explosion	6
Grounding, Hitting Bottom	4
Struck by Propeller	2
Sinking / Flooding / Swamping	2
Water-skiing, wake boarding or tubing mishap	6
Carbon Monoxide exposure	0
Other	1
Total Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	59

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.

Summary: There were 59 reportable non-fatal boating accidents, involving 88 watercraft, resulting in 46 injuries, \$629,736 in damage to watercraft and \$12,376 in damage to other property. The most common watercraft

length ranges were 16 – 18 feet (21), 21 – 26 feet (21), and 12 feet and under (17). The most common operator age range was 31 – 40 years old (16), followed by 61 years and older (13), and 41 – 50 years old (12). The most common age ranges for persons with injuries was 13 – 17 years old (10) and 18 – 25 years old (8). Life jackets were on board 77 of the 88 watercraft and were being worn by 25 of the 46 injured parties. Alcohol was known to be a factor in 10 of the 59 total non-fatal incidents (17%).

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 at about 6:30 p.m. 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 at 1:20 p.m. 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. 3/17 – Rice Co. – Straight River – A 52-year-old Faribault man drowned in the river while he was out walking his dogs. One dog returned home without him, and the other dog was found in the park with his leash partly in the water. The man was located and recovered from the water by firefighters, CPR was begun, and he was transported to the hospital. He was then flown to a medical center in the Twin Cities, where he died hours later. It is unknown how he came to be in the water. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
6. 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)*
7. 4/7 – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – The body of a 21-year-old Minneapolis woman was seen floating face-down in the middle of the river near the University of Minnesota boathouse at about 3:00 p.m. It is unknown when or where she had entered the river. She had been missing since mid-November of 2022. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
8. 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 the water 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)*

9. 4/17 – Koochiching Co. – Rainy Lake – A 52-year-old International Falls man drowned after his ATV broke through 4-inches of ice in a channel. He was reported missing after he left to go ice fishing on 4/14 and hadn't returned home. His body was found under the ice on 4/17/2023. It is unknown when he went into the water. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
10. 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)*
11. 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)*
12. 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)*
13. 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)*
14. 6/8 – Washington Co. – Carver Lake – A 13-year-old St. Paul boy drowned while swimming at the beach with his girlfriend. He was not a good swimmer and he started to struggle and submerged. He was pulled to the beach by two bystanders. CPR was started and he was transported to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
15. 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)*
16. 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 #17) 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)*
17. 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 #16) 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)*
18. 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)*

19. 7/1 – Hennepin Co. – residential pool – A 72-year-old Lakeville man drowned 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)*
20. 7/2 – Clearwater Co. – Lake Lomond – a 20-year-old Bagley man drowned after diving off the swim platform at the public beach. He did not resurface, and when his family noticed he was missing they called 911. His body was found in about 19-feet of water by the county dive team, about 3 hours later. *(Swimming ability – swimmer)*
21. 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)*
22. 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 #23) and the rescuer (see #24) 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)*
23. 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 #22) and the rescuer (see #24) all went under and didn’t resurface. Her body was recovered from the Mississippi River in the morning of 7/5/2023. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
24. 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 #22 and #23). 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)*
25. 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)*
26. 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 found 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)*
27. 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)*

28. 7/8 – Scott Co. – pond – A 79-year-old Belle Plaine man drowned after falling into the pond with his riding mower. He had gone for a drive around the property about 3:15 p.m. At 6:00 p.m., his family became concerned when he hadn't come back and went looking for him. He was found in the water about 3 feet from shore, along with the upside-down lawn mower. It appeared he had been mowing around the pond, but it is unknown how he came to be in the water. *(Swimming ability – swimmer)*
29. 7/13 – Freeborn Co. – Fountain Lake – A 66-year-old Albert Lea man drowned while loading his boat onto the trailer. He was seen by a witness struggling in the water. The witness went over to help him, but by the time he got there, the man had gone under the water. He didn't resurface. A search was begun, and his body was located about an hour later, in about 8-feet of water. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
30. 7/20 – Dakota Co. – residential pool – A 5-year-old Eagan boy was reported missing after he left his house and took off running. A neighbor reported seeing him running between houses and officers started searching the area. He was eventually found floating in a nearby backyard pool. Lifesaving efforts were started and he was transported to the hospital, where he was eventually pronounced deceased. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
31. 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)*
32. 8/2 – Ramsey Co. – Bald Eagle Lake – A 62-year-old White Bear Lake man drowned while swimming after a pool noodle floatie that had escaped from his anchored pontoon boat at about 8:00 p.m. As he was swimming to the floatie, something happened and he called out to his girlfriend, then sank under water. He didn't resurface. 911 was called and a search was started and continued until his body surfaced the evening of 8/4/2023. *(Swimming ability – swimmer)*
33. 8/3 – Anoka Co. – residential pool – A 57-year-old Oak Grove man drowned in his above ground pool where he had been swimming. He was found unresponsive, under water, by his girlfriend. 911 was called and lifesaving measures were performed, but he was pronounced deceased on scene. He had been in the water for less than an hour. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
34. 8/12 – Ramsey Co. – neighborhood pond – An 80-year-old White Bear Township man drowned after somehow falling into the pond near his residence. He was found floating in the water by a neighbor just after 8:00 p.m. It is unknown when he entered the pond, and it's thought that he may have fallen in while trying to treat the pond. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
35. 8/18 – Cook Co. – Lake Superior – A 73-year-old Hovland man drowned while apparently swimming to shore after the aircraft he was flying went down in the lake. He had been reported missing at 8:18 p.m. and a search of the area was started and continued each day until 8/24, when his body was located in 44-feet of water, about 400 feet from shore. It is believed he had survived the crash and began swimming to shore, shedding his jacket and footwear on the way. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
36. 8/19 – Stearns Co. – Quarry #2 – A 23-year-old Little Canada man drowned after jumping from a 9-foot cliff into the water in the quarry with friends. He didn't resurface. 911 was called and a dive team member recovered the man from about 42-feet of water about an hour later. He was taken to the hospital where he was declared deceased. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
37. 8/28 – Washington Co. – pond – A 9-year-old Woodbury boy drowned in a pond near his residence. He had run from his mother and got outside their apartment. He was seen playing on playground equipment and then went to a nearby pond/water run-off. A neighbor called 911 to report a possible child face-down in the water. Lifesaving measures were performed, and he was transported to the hospital where he later died. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*

38. 8/28 – Dakota Co. – retention pond – A 51-year-old Burnsville man drowned after somehow entering the pond. The police department was notified at 2:20 p.m. of a suspicious vehicle parked near the pond. While they were checking things out, the owner's shoe was found nearby. The victim was found deceased, about 30 yards from the shoe, down an embankment and in the water at the shoreline at 4:00 p.m. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
39. 8/29 – Anoka Co. – Harris Lake – A 4-year-old Fridley boy drowned after wandering away from his home. He was reported missing, and a search of the area was started. A bystander saw something under the surface of the water of the nearby lake and the boy was found just under the surface. CPR was started and he was transported to the hospital but was later pronounced deceased. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
40. 8/31 – Hennepin Co. – unnamed pond – A 65-year-old Brooklyn Park woman drowned in the pond behind her residence. It is unknown how she came to be in the water. It is thought she had been there for a couple of hours. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
41. 9/2 – Hennepin Co. – Lake Nokomis – An 11-year-old Minneapolis girl drowned while swimming near the beach at about 7:30 p.m. She was with two other people, about 30-feet from shore, when she went under. She was outside the designated swim area and there were several drop-offs in the vicinity. The other two swimmers were able to make it to shore. The dive team recovered the girl's body from the lake bottom, in 10-12 feet of water, about 9:00 p.m. *(Swimming ability – non-swimmer)*
42. 9/14 – Hennepin Co. – Bde Maka Ska (lake) – A 33-year-old Minneapolis man drowned after somehow entering the water. He was found floating in the lake near the shore. It is unknown how, when or where he entered the water. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
43. 9/27 – Ramsey Co. – condominium pool – A 78-year-old Roseville man drowned while swimming in the pool where he lived. He was found on the bottom of the pool in 9-feet of water by the building engineer. He was removed from the water by first responders and CPR was started but it was not successful. It is unknown how long he had been underwater. He had been an avid swimmer and swam every day. *(Swimming ability – swimmer)*
44. 9/29 – Wright Co. – residential bathtub – A 63-year-old woman drowned in her bathtub while bathing. She was found submerged in the water by her husband. Lifesaving measures were attempted but were not successful. It is unknown how long she had been under water. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
45. 10/11 – Hennepin Co. – Shingle Creek – A 37-year-old Brooklyn Center man was found floating in the creek at 2:30 p.m. It is unknown how, when or where he came to be in the water. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
46. 11/14 – Carver Co. – residential bathtub – A 34-year-old Chanhassen man drowned while taking a bath around 11:00 p.m. He was located by his mother under the water and unresponsive. 911 was called and CPR was started. He was pronounced deceased on scene. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
47. 12/23 – Becker Co. – Toad Lake – A 67-year-old Osage man drowned after his 4-wheeler went through thin ice. Authorities were notified at 2:05 a.m. when he had not returned home from ice fishing. After a search with an airboat, the man and the 4-wheeler were found in 5-feet of water at 3:25 a.m. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*
48. 12/28 – Lake of the Woods Co. – Lake of the Woods – A 78-year-old Prairie Du Sac, WI man drowned after the tracked vehicle he was riding in submerged in the water. The vehicle was hauling people to their fishing destination at about 8:12 a.m. when the ice broke away causing the vehicle to become submerged. All occupants, aside from the man, were able to escape the vehicle. The man's body was recovered from inside the vehicle at 1:00 p.m. *(Swimming ability – unknown)*

Summary: There were 48 non-boating drownings. Location of drowning: 19 in a lake, 10 in a river or creek, 7 in a pool, 7 in a pond, and 5 in a bathtub. The age ranges for the victims were: 61 years and older (16), 18 – 25 years old (9), 51 – 60 years old (6), 0 – 5 years old (5), 31 – 40 years old (4), 6 – 12 years old (3), 13 – 17 years old (3)

and 41 – 50 years old (2). 15% of the victims were known to have swimming ability, 31% had no swimming ability and 54% were listed as unknown swimming ability. Alcohol use was listed in 12.5% of the non-boating drowning incidents.