

BOATING FATALITIES IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

A Special Report from The Lifesaving Society

2003 Edition



Mostly Male Victims

Fifty-five people became victim of water-related boating activity in Newfoundland and Labrador in the past five years. Powerboating was involved in 37 deaths, 14 of which were small powerboats (5.5m and under). While canoes, rowboats, and kayaks were involved in a total of 16 deaths (see chart #1).

Of the 55 victims, 54 were male. Seventy-one percent (71%) were between the ages of 18-49. Of the 37 powerboating fatalities, all were male and 23 were between the ages of 35-64. All 6 canoe, 8 rowboat, 2 kayak fatalities were also male in the 18-49 age group. ■

Lack of PFD Usage Still a Major Contributor

Seventy-one percent (71%) of the total water-related boating fatalities did not wear a PFD or lifejacket. However, 35% of the time a PFD or lifejacket was present.

People need to realize that a lifejacket/PFD is like a seat belt in a car or a helmet on a motorcycle. It does save lives. ■

Capsizing/Swamping Most Common Cause

Sixty-two percent (62%) of the water-related boating fatalities were the result of capsizing/swamping, with falling or being thrown overboard contributing to 20%.

Out of the 23 deaths caused by powerboats over 5.5m (18 feet), 13 were capsized/swamped and 6 had fell or been thrown overboard. Powerboats 5.5m and under accounted for 14 deaths, 9 of which were capsized/swamped and 3 were thrown or had fell overboard. ■

Most Boating Fatalities Occur During Daylight

Sixty-four percent (64%) of the total boating incidents occurred during daylight, 18% occurred in the dark with 7% occurring during twilight.

Twenty-four powerboating fatalities happened during daylight hours, 6 occurred in the dark, with 3 occurring during twilight.

Eleven small powerboating fatalities occurred during daylight, with 1 occurring at twilight as well as in the dark.

Two canoeing incidents occurred during daylight 1 occurring at twilight as well as in the dark.

Thirty-eight (38%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred in cloudy/overcast weather, 29% occurred in clear weather, and 24% occurred during rain or fog.

Fourteen powerboating fatalities occurred in cloudy/overcast weather, 10 in clear weather, 7 while it was raining and 2 in foggy weather.

Four small powerboating incidents occurred in cloudy weather, 6 in clear weather, and 2 occurred while it was raining.

Four canoeing incidents occurred in cloudy/overcast weather and just a single fatality during clear weather. ■

Ocean Still the Deadliest

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred on the ocean, 20% on lakes/ponds, and 5% on rivers/streams.

Thirty-one powerboating incidents occurred on the ocean, with 5 more occurring on lakes/ponds. Eight small powerboating incidents occurred on the ocean, the remaining 6 occurred on lakes/ponds. Three canoeing incidents occurred on the ocean with 1 on lakes/ponds, and the remaining 2 on rivers/streams. ■

Most Boating Fatalities Occur on the Weekday

By day of week, 56% of all water-related boating fatalities occurred during the weekday (Monday thru Thursday). The remaining 44% occurred on the weekend (Friday thru Sunday) (see chart #3).

Twenty-two powerboating incidents occurred during the weekday - Tuesday having 9. However, 15 occurred on the weekend - Saturday having 4.

Small powerboating incidents were equally split between the weekday and weekend, each having 7 fatalities occur, with 6 on Tuesday and 4 on Sunday.

Four canoeing incidents occurred during the weekday - Tuesday having 2. The weekend saw 2, one on Saturday and one on Sunday. ■

Afternoon Most Popular Time of Day

By time of day, 24% of the total water-related boating deaths occurred in the morning (5:00am-11:59). Twenty-four percent (24%) occurred during the afternoon (12:00-17:59), with 18% occurring at night (18:00-04:59). There were 17 cases where the time of day was unknown or missing.

Most powerboating incidents occurred during the afternoon (10) followed by the morning (9). Seven small powerboating incidents occurred in the afternoon, followed by 4 in the morning and 2 after midnight.

Most canoe incidents took place in the evening (2) with 1 occurring in the afternoon as well as the morning. ■

Chart 1: Type of Boat

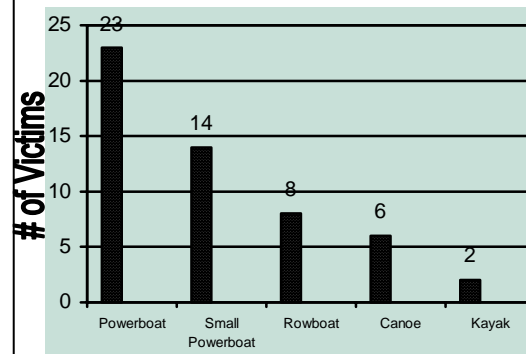


Chart 2: Type of Activity

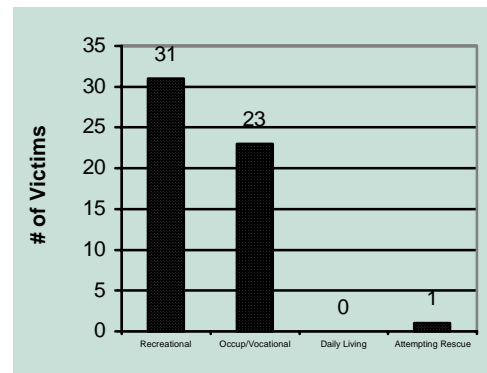
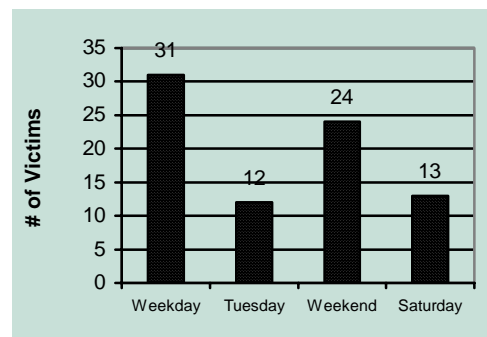


Chart 3: Day of Week



Most Boating Fatalities Involved in Occupational/Vocational Activities

Forty-two percent (42%) of the total water-related boating fatalities were involved in occupational/vocational activities (commercial fishing). Fifty-six percent (56%) were involved in recreational activities, with the remaining 2% being accounted for by attempting a rescue at the time the incident occurred (see chart #2).

Fourteen powerboating victims were engaged in recreational activities and 23 were engaged in occupational/vocational activities, all 23 were involved in commercial fishing. Nine of the small powerboat victims were engaged in recreational activities and 5 were engaged in occupational/vocational activities, once again, all 5 involved commercial fishing.

All 6 canoeing victims were involved in recreational activities. ■

More Common to be With Others

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the total water-related fatalities occurred while the victim was with others.

Twenty-eight power boating fatalities were with others at the time of the mishap, while 9 were alone. Eleven small powerboating victims were with others, while only 3 were alone.

All 6 canoeing victims were with others at the time of the incident. ■

More Water-Related Boating Fatalities in Newfoundland than Labrador

Ninety-five percent (95%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred in Newfoundland. With the most incidents occurring in the central and western regions, accounted for 62% of the total deaths. The remaining 5% took place in Labrador.

Powerboating saw 35 victims in Newfoundland; Labrador saw 2. There were 13 small powerboating fatalities in Newfoundland and just the one in Labrador. Five of the six canoeing deaths occurred in Newfoundland, with one remaining occurring in Labrador (see chart #4). ■

May to August Most Popular Time of Year

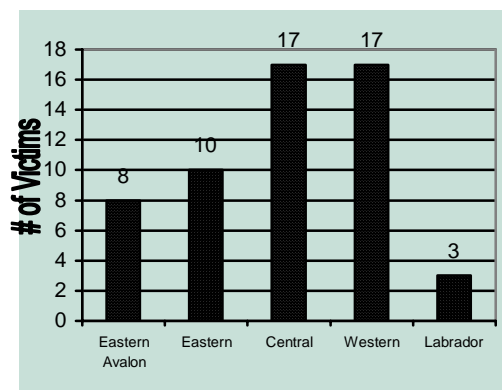
By time of year, 64% of the water-related boating fatalities occurred between May and August, 27% between September and December, and the remaining 9% between January and April.

Twenty-two powerboating incidents took place between May and August. Thirteen more occurred between September and December, while 2 occurred between January and April.

Ten small powerboating incidents occurred between May and August. Four took place between September and December. There were none between January and April.

Three canoeing incidents happened during the months of May to August. January through April saw 2 and 1 occurred between September and December. ■

Chart 4: District



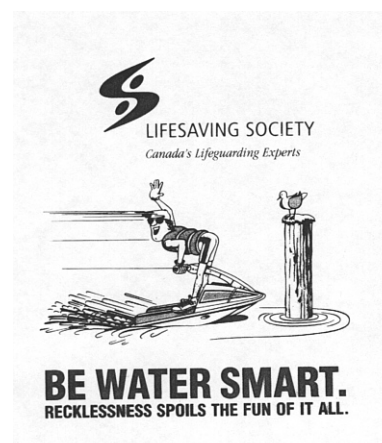
Major Contributing Factors

Thirty percent (30%) of the total water-related boating fatalities occurred in choppy/small wave waters, 27% occurred in rough-white cap waters and 15% occurred in calm waters.

Alcohol consumption was a contributing factor in 33% of all boating fatalities

Eight victims of powerboating, 5 victims of small powerboating, and 3 victims of canoeing incidents did consume alcohol. In 94% of these cases, the alcohol consumption was above the legal limit.

Overall, drowning attributed to 98% of all boating incidents, with hypothermia/exposure to cold attributing to 18%. ■



The Future

Much drowning prevention work remains to be done in Newfoundland and Labrador. Risk taking behaviour such as alcohol consumption, not wearing lifejackets/PFDs and lack of boat operator training are the factors contributing to the high death rate among adult men. Initiatives such as new federal recreational boating safety regulations, which began to take effect in September 1999, and the LIFESAVING SOCIETY'S B.O.A.T. (Boat Operator Accredited Training) safety course will help reduce the drowning toll.

As well, the Society's Water Smart public education campaign educated Canadians about how to modify their high risk behaviour and assume greater responsibility for themselves and others when in, on, or near water.

The Society's lifesaving and lifeguarding training programs teach self-rescue and how to rescue others. ■

Be A Water Smart Boater...

- 1) **Know The Boating "Rules Of The Road"!**
 MORE DETAILS AVAILABLE FROM THE CANADIAN COAST GUARD (WWW.CCG-GCC.GC.CA), BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THE RULES HAVE CHANGED AS OF SEPTEMBER 1999:
 - No child under 12 years of age may operate a powerboat with more than a 10 HP motor.
 - Youth 12 to 15 years of age may only operate a powerboat with a motor over 40 HP if accompanied and directly supervised by someone 16 years or older.
 - Minimum age for operating a personal watercraft (PWC) is 16 years of age.
 - Operators of powerboats must have proof of operator competency. As of September 1999, this applied to any person under 16 years. As of September 2002, it applies to any person operating a powerboat less than 4 metres, including PWC's. As of September 2009, it applies to all operators of all powerboats and PWC's.

2) Get Trained On Boating Safety!

- Youth and adults can take the LIFESAVING SOCIETY'S B.O.A.T. (Boat Operator Accredited Training) safety course at a local facility.

3) Know Before You Go!

- Avoid potential danger by taking a few minutes with a simple checklist... What's the weather forecast? Any local hazards? Have your maps or charts? Have your PFD's? Have your first aid kit, tools and spare parts? Is all the safety equipment working? Have enough fuel? Have you let someone know where you are going and when to expect you back?

4) Always Wear A Lifejacket!

- Don't just have it in the boat, pick one and **wear** it... only 15% of Newfoundland drowning victims were wearing a lifejacket or personal floatation device (PFD) properly when 35% of the time a PFD or lifejacket was present.

5) Wear the Right Gear!

- Your PFD of course, but also good sunglasses and appropriate clothing.

6) Boat Sober... Don't Drink and Drive Your Boat!

- Alcohol intensifies the effect of fatigue, sun, wind and boat motion to adversely affect your balance, judgment and reaction time.

7) Drive Your Powerboat or PWC Responsibly!

- Look before you at, stay low, drive at moderate speeds, be aware of changing weather conditions, and drive with extreme caution and proper lights after dark. ■

For More Information Contact:

Lifesaving Society
 Newfoundland and Labrador Branch
 P.O. Box 8065, Station "A"
 St. John's, NL
 A1B 3M9

Telephone: (709) 576-1953

Fax: (709) 738-1475

E-mail: lifeguard@seascape.com

Website: <http://lifesaving.nfld.net>



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