



2024 Recreational Boating Incident Summary



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Introduction

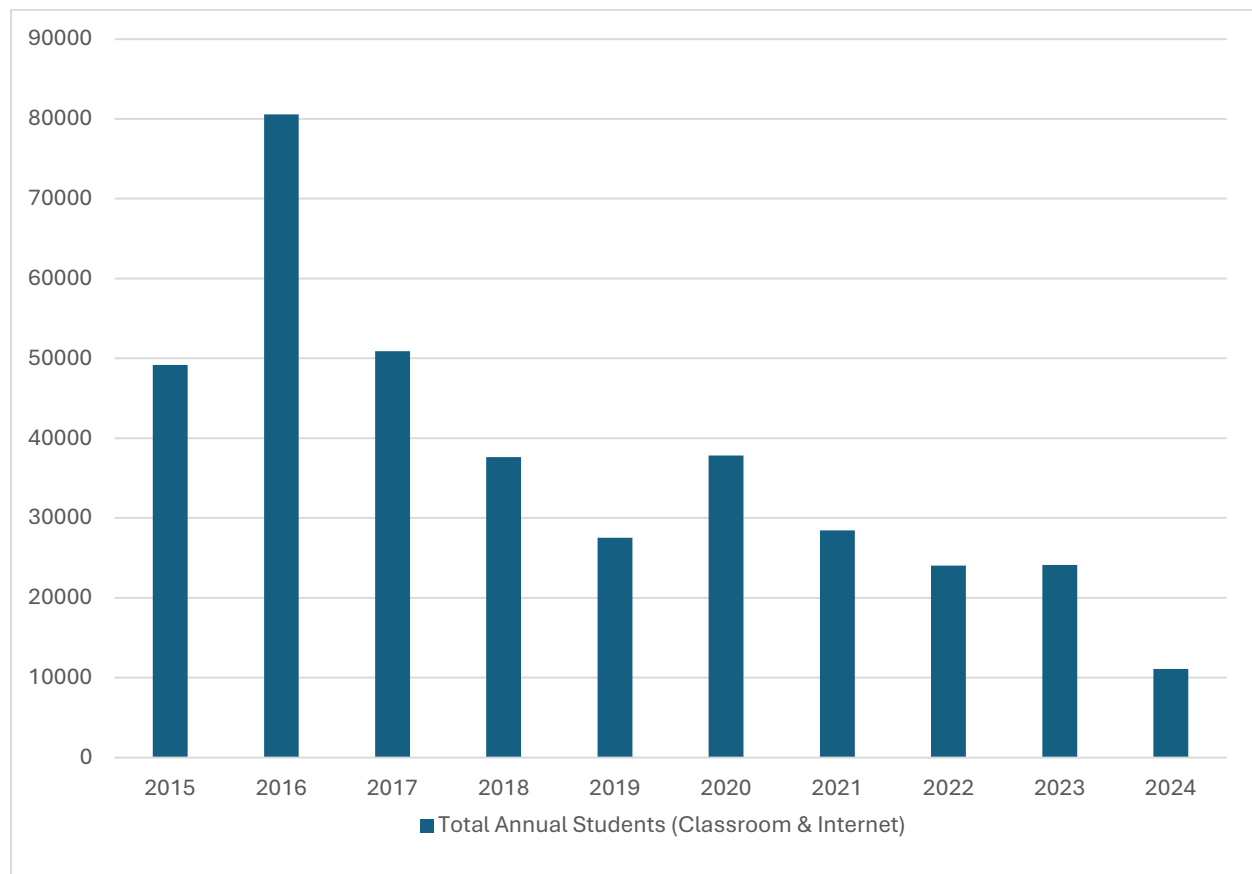
The 2024 Recreational Boating Incident Summary is compiled by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Boating Division. The data used in this report is retrieved by Reportable Boating Incident reports submitted by DWR Conservation Police, Virginia Marine Resources Commission Marine Police, and local law enforcement agencies. Data included in this report is for incidents which occurred during the 2024 calendar year.

To be considered a “reportable boating incident”, an incident must involve death, missing person, an injury which requires or should have required treatment beyond first aid, or property damage of \$2,000 or more. Virginia requires operators involved in an incident to immediately notify DWR and provide information to the investigating officer.

DWR works to ensure Virginians and visitors are safe when enjoying the water. This is accomplished through proactive law enforcement patrols and statewide boating safety efforts.

A cumulative total of nearly 486,000 Virginians have taken a boating safety education class.

Boating Safety Students 2015 - 2024



Boating in Virginia

- River Miles – 52,225 miles (source VDEQ)
- Coastline - 132 miles (source VIMS)
- Tidal Shore – 7,213 miles (source VIMS)
- Inland Lakes – 116,364 acres (source VDEQ)

Incidents that are required to be reported to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

- Damage over \$2,000 by or to the vessel or its equipment
- Injury requiring medical attention beyond first aid
- Loss of life
- Disappearance of any person from a vessel

2024 Virginia Boating Incident Summary *

- **Number of Incidents = 89**
- **Number of Vessels Involved = 106**
- **Number of Injured Persons = 46**
- **Number of Fatalities = 17**
 - **Alcohol was a factor in 0% of fatal incidents ****
 - **Paddlecraft (canoes, kayaks, etc.) were involved in 35% of fatal incidents**
 - **In 94% of fatal incidents, no life jacket was worn**
- **Property Damage = \$735,341**

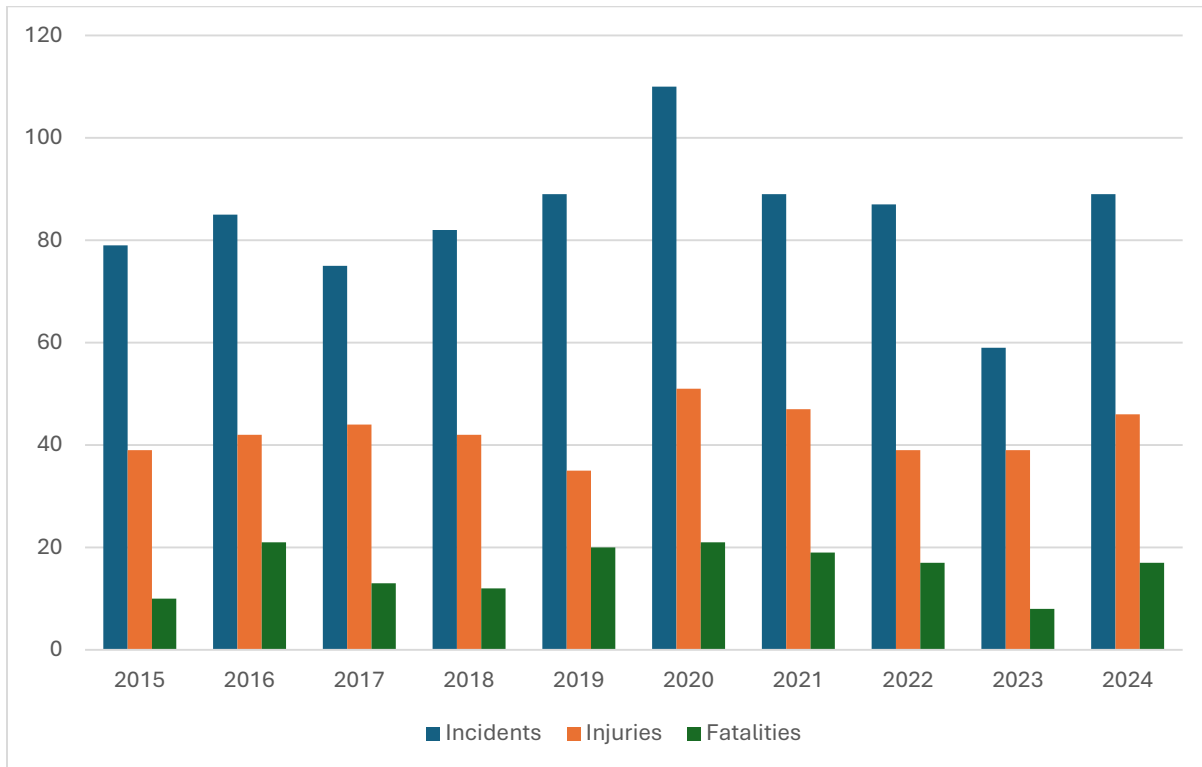
*Reported to DWR

**Primary, secondary, or tertiary

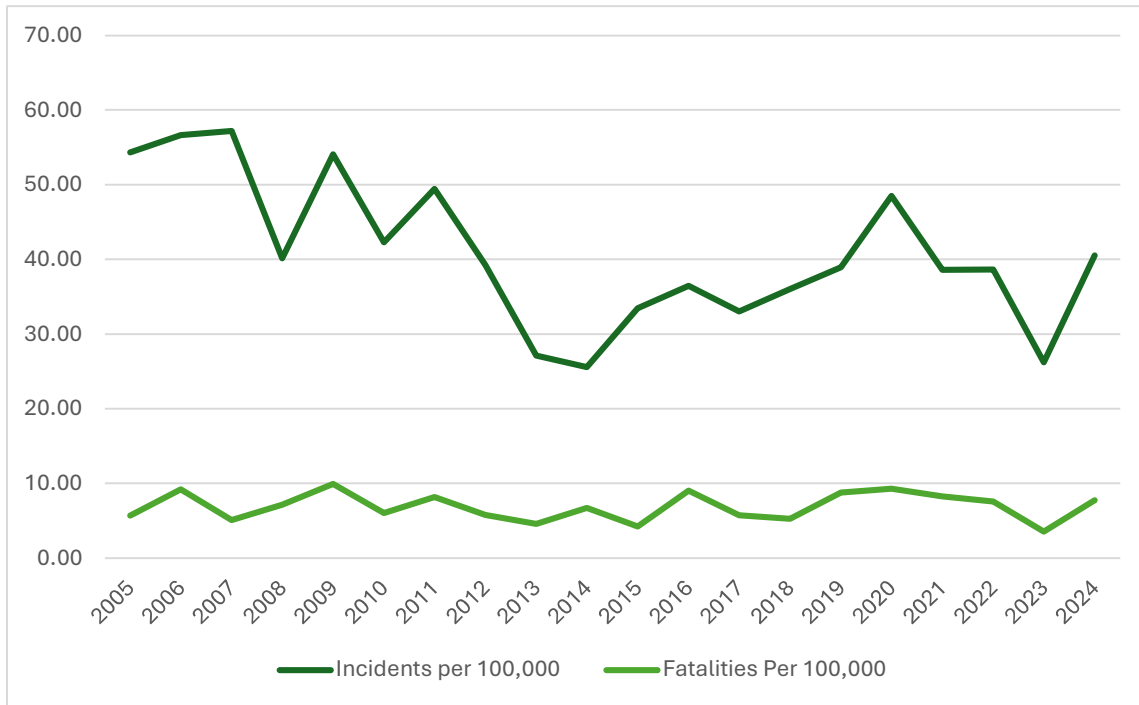
10 Year Boat Incident Summary

Year	Incidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Property Damage
2015	79	39	10	\$441,301
2016	85	42	21	\$576,546
2017	75	44	13	\$308,160
2018	82	42	12	\$411,961
2019	89	35	20	\$572,456
2020	110	51	21	\$641,143
2021	89	47	19	\$624,887
2022	87	39	17	\$454,450
2023	59	39	8	\$278,734
2024	89	46	17	\$735,341

10 Year Boat Incident Statistics



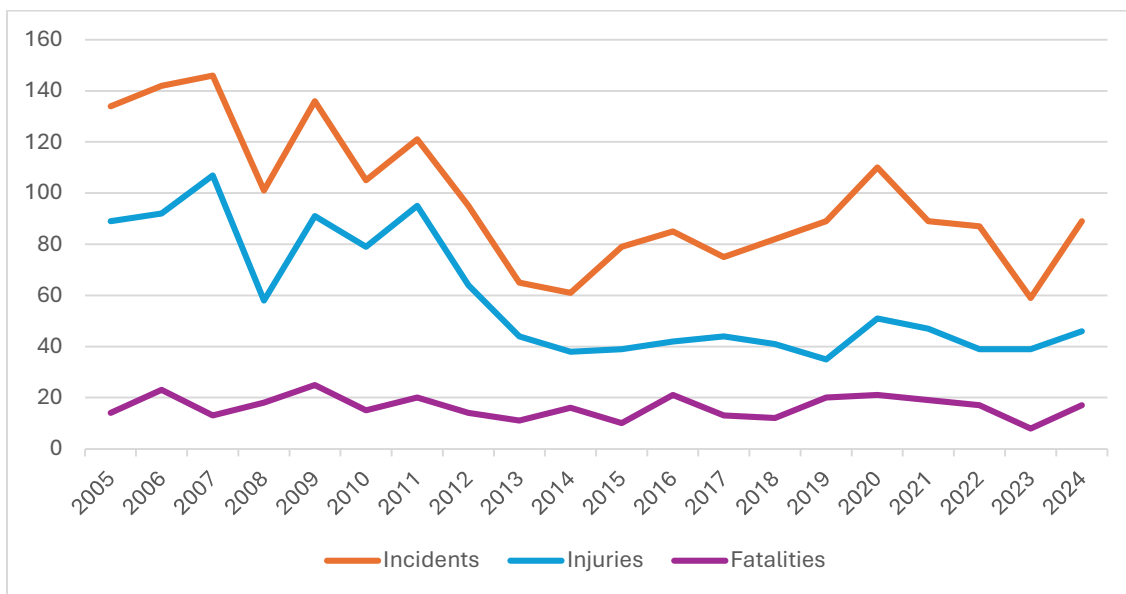
Annual Recreational Boating Incident Rate* 2005 – 2024 (per 100,000 Virginia Registered Boats)



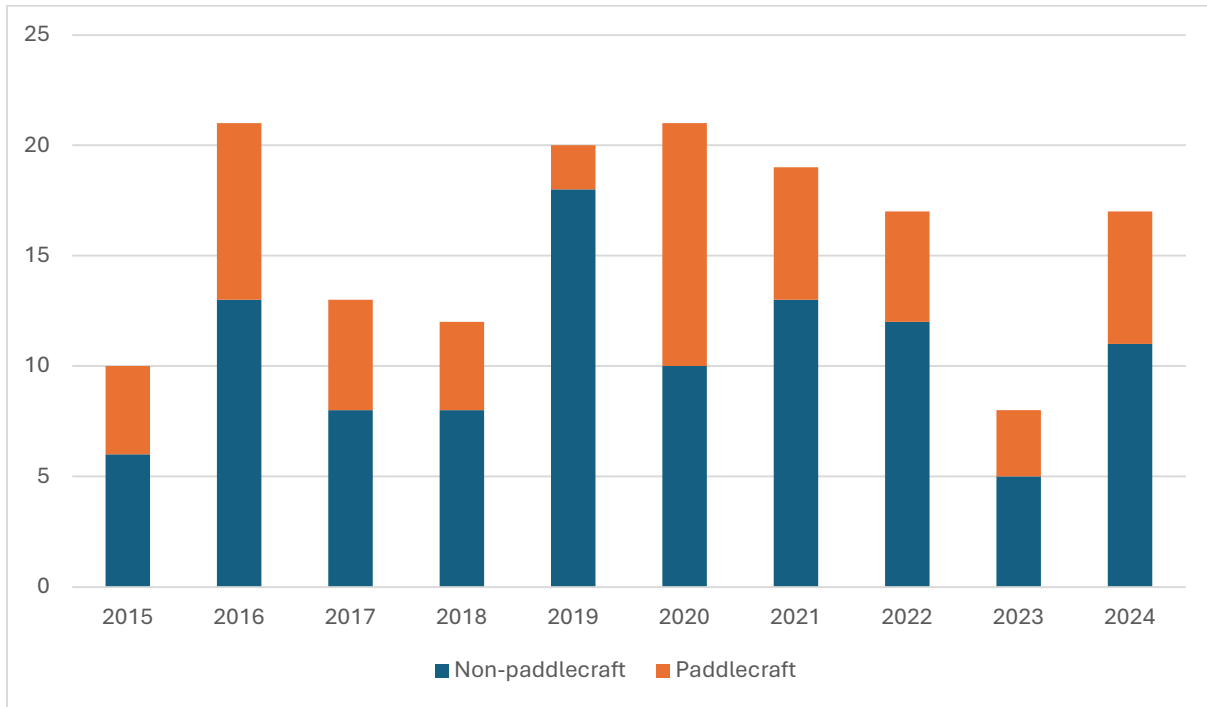
***These rates include paddlecraft incidents/fatalities although paddlecraft are not registered in Virginia.**

***These rates include incidents/fatalities involving boats registered in another state that were involved in incidents on Virginia’s waters.**

Fatalities, Injuries, and Incidents by Year 2005 – 2024



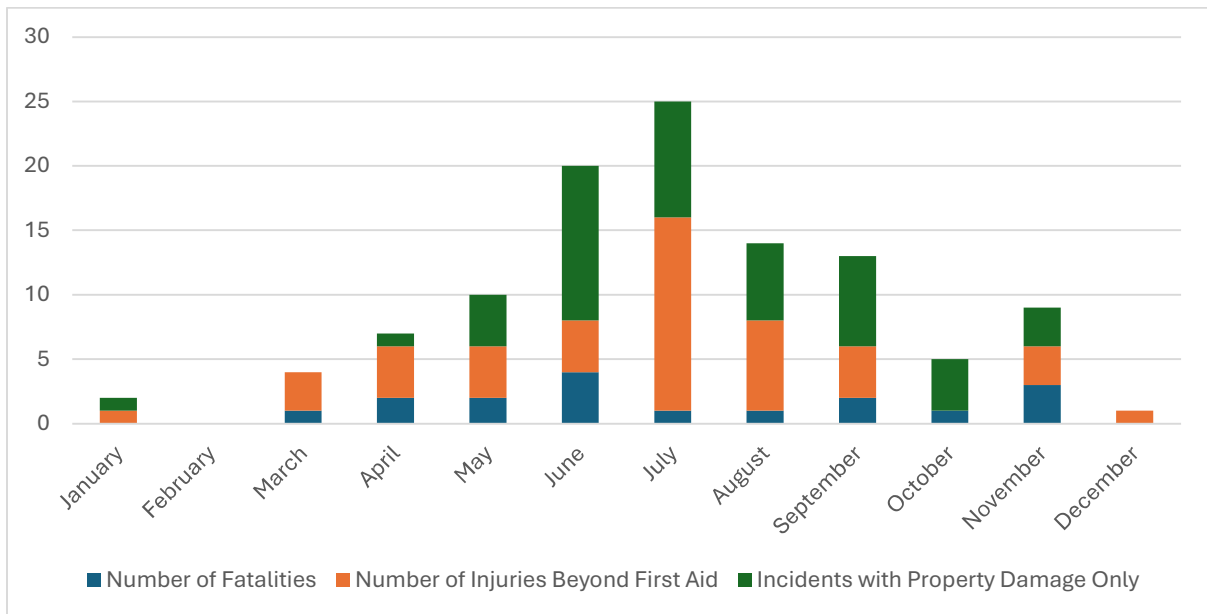
Fatalities – Paddlecraft and Powered Vessels Last 10 Years



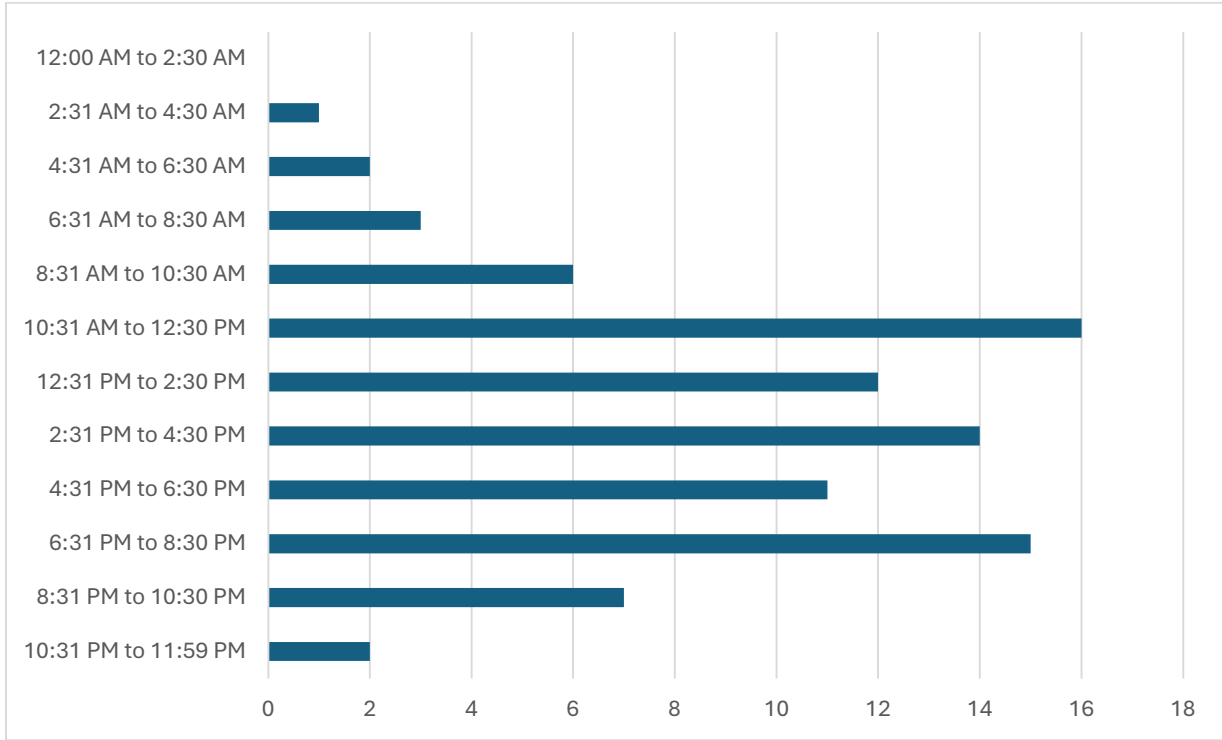
Non-paddlecraft includes motorized vessels, sailboats, & jon boats.

Paddlecraft includes canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, & catarafts.

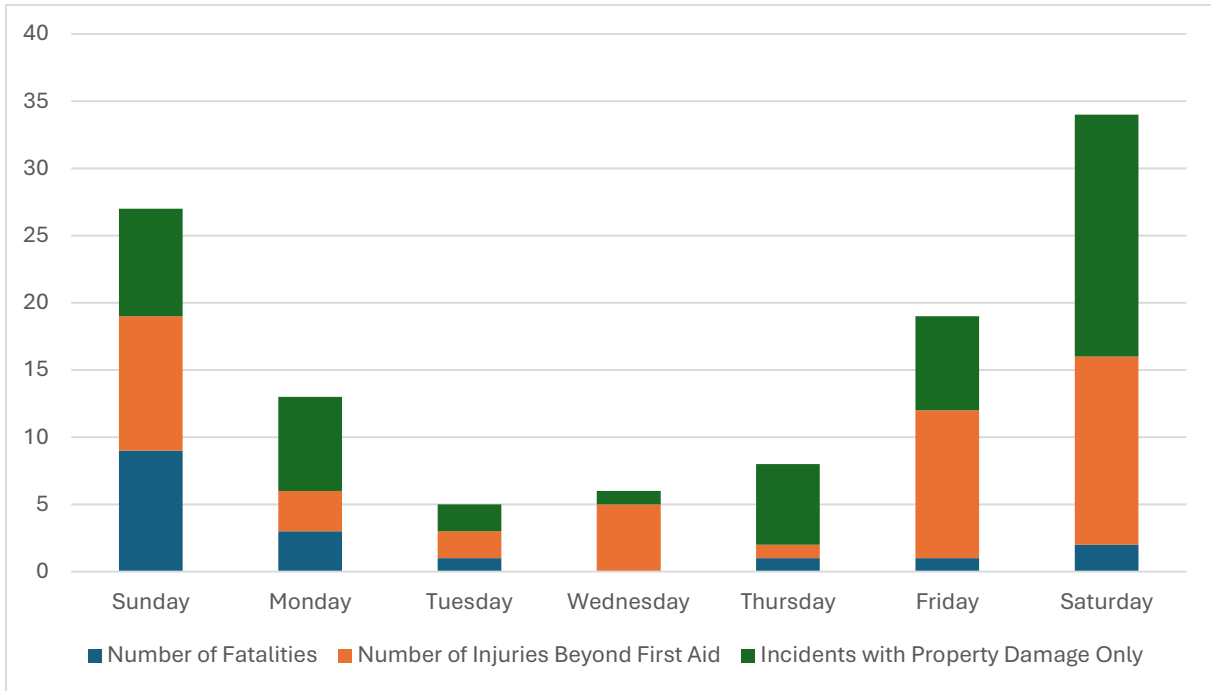
2024 Boating Incidents and Fatalities by Month



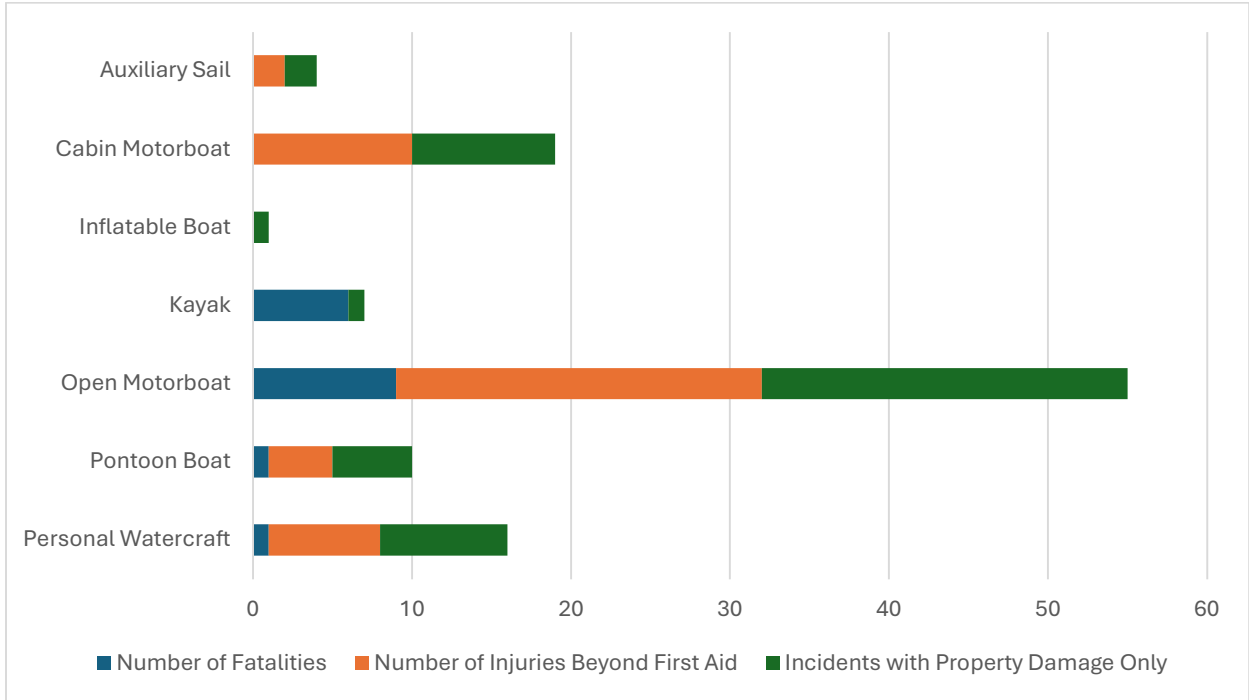
2024 Boating Incidents by Time of Day



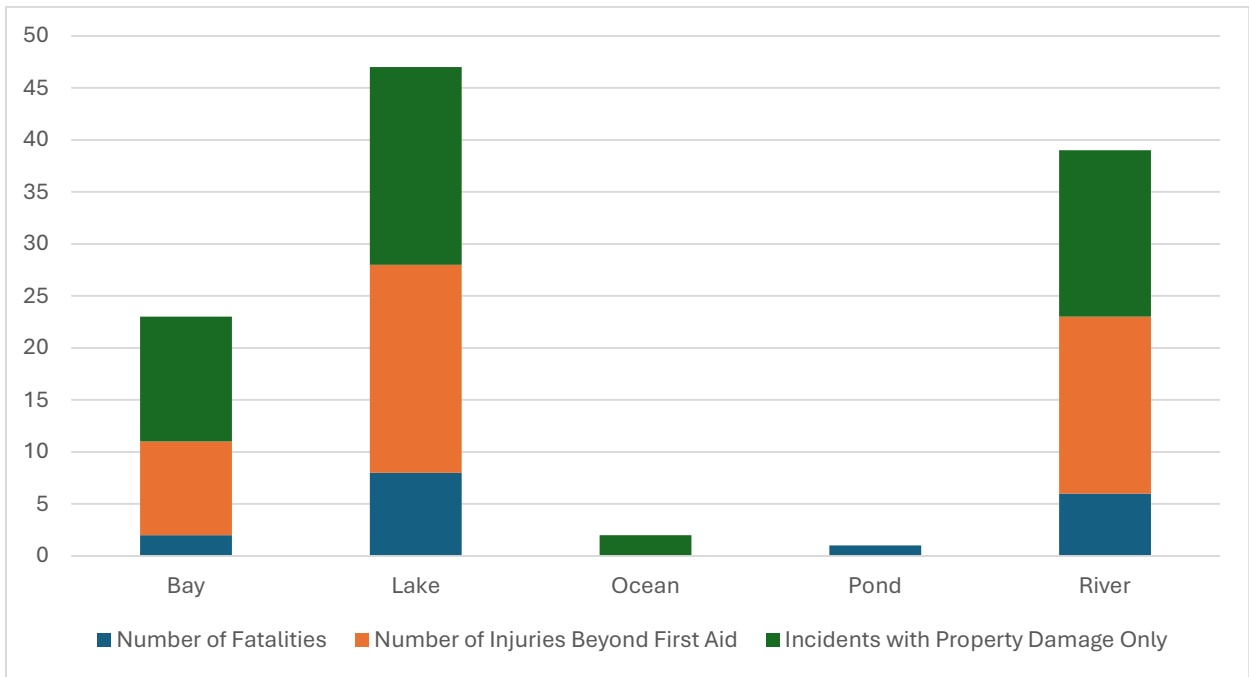
2024 Boating Incidents by Day of the Week



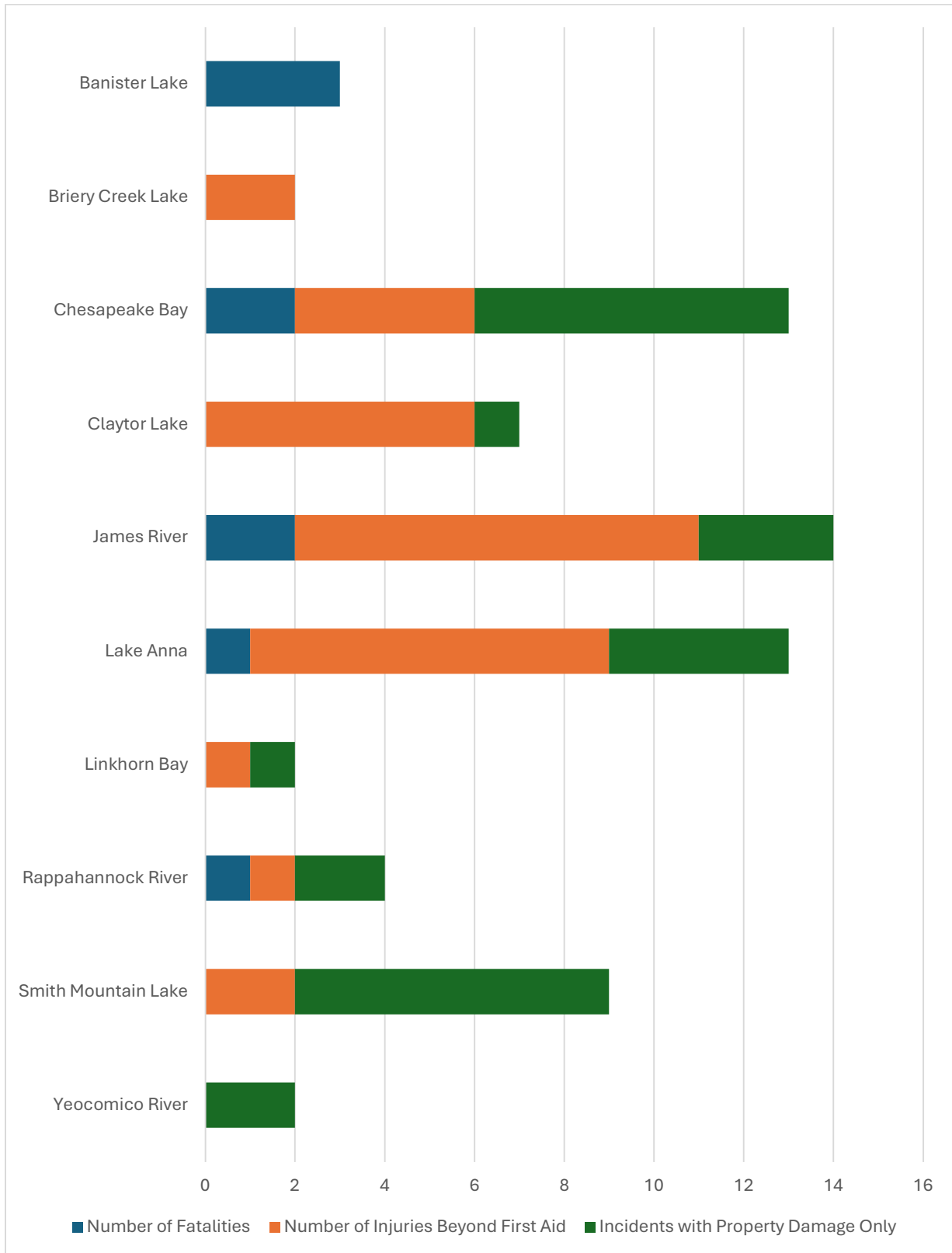
2024 Boating Incidents by Vessel Type



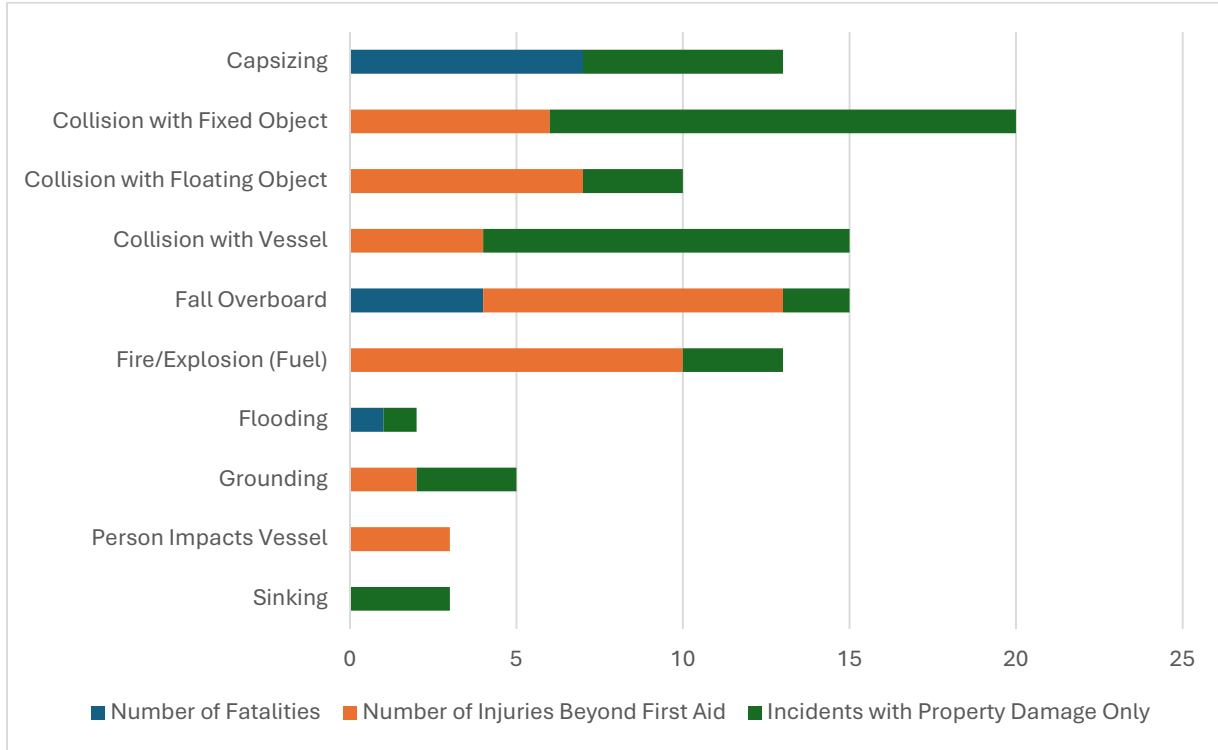
2024 Boating Incidents by Water Body Type



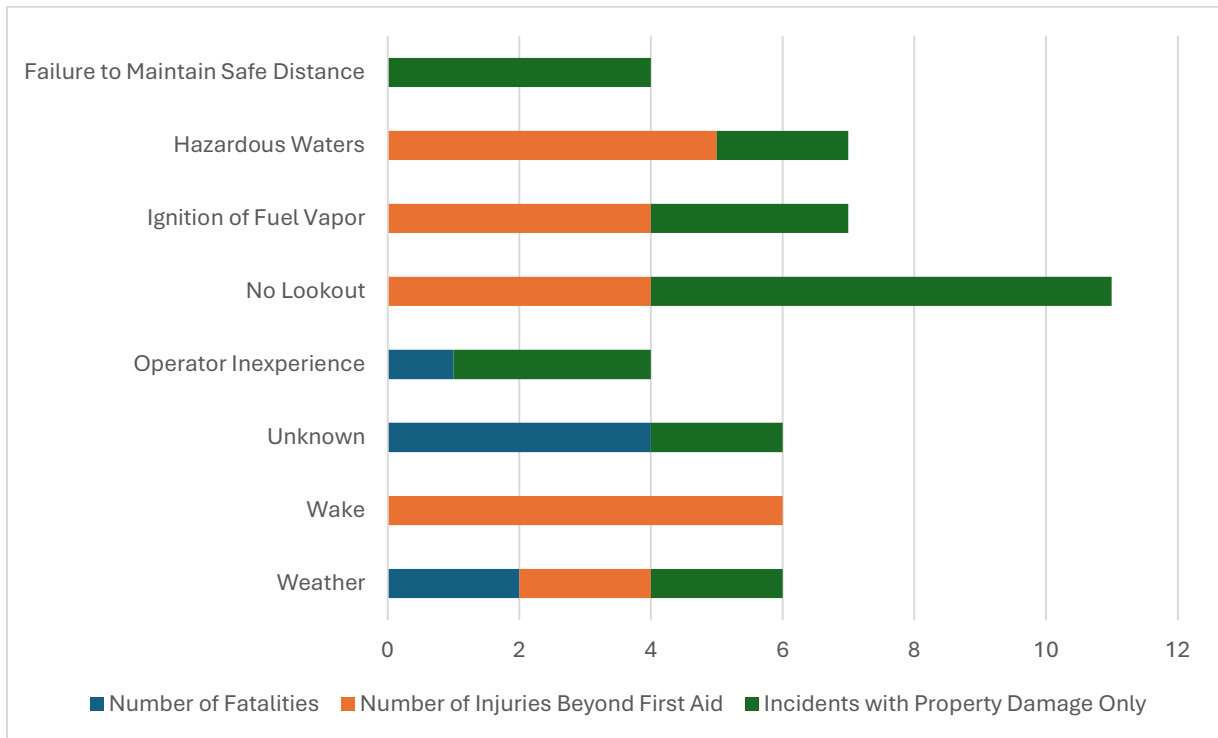
2024 Boating Incidents – Top 10 Locations



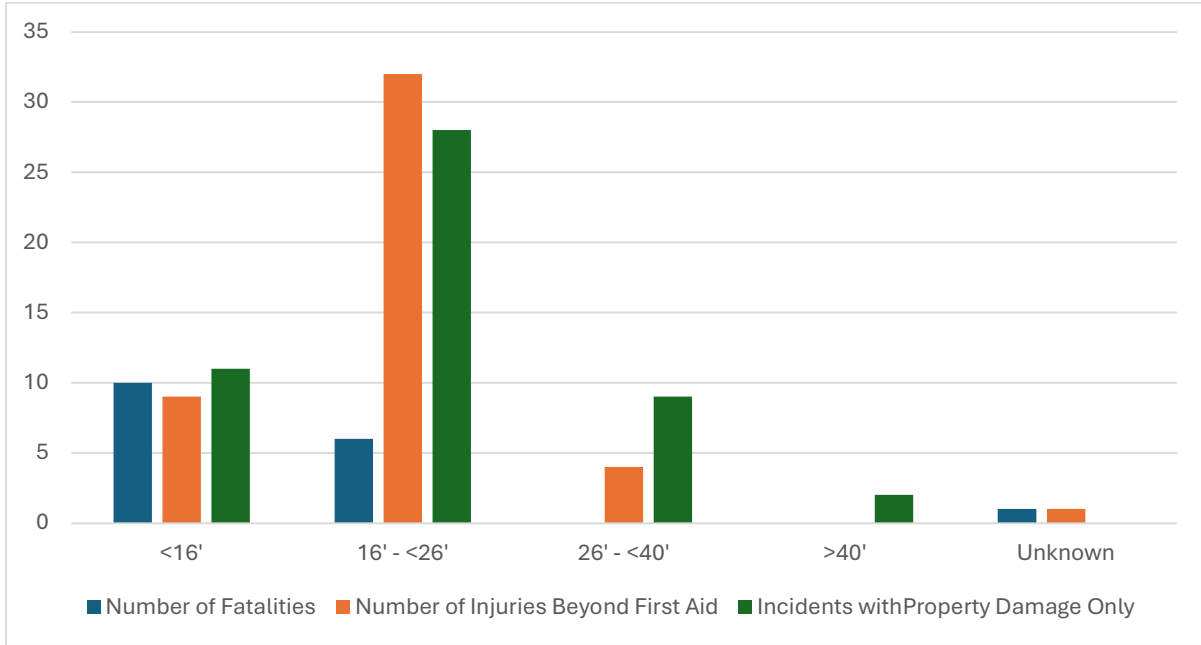
2024 Boating Incidents – Top Primary Incident Types



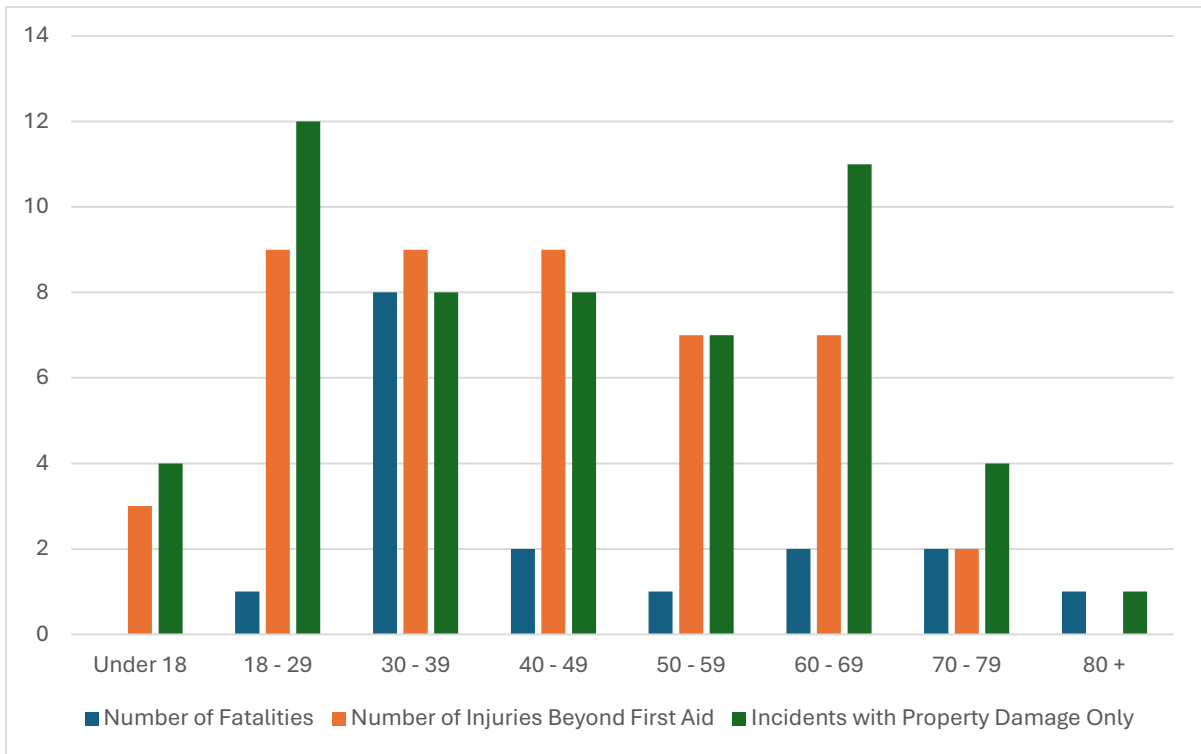
2024 Boating Incidents – Top Contributing Factors



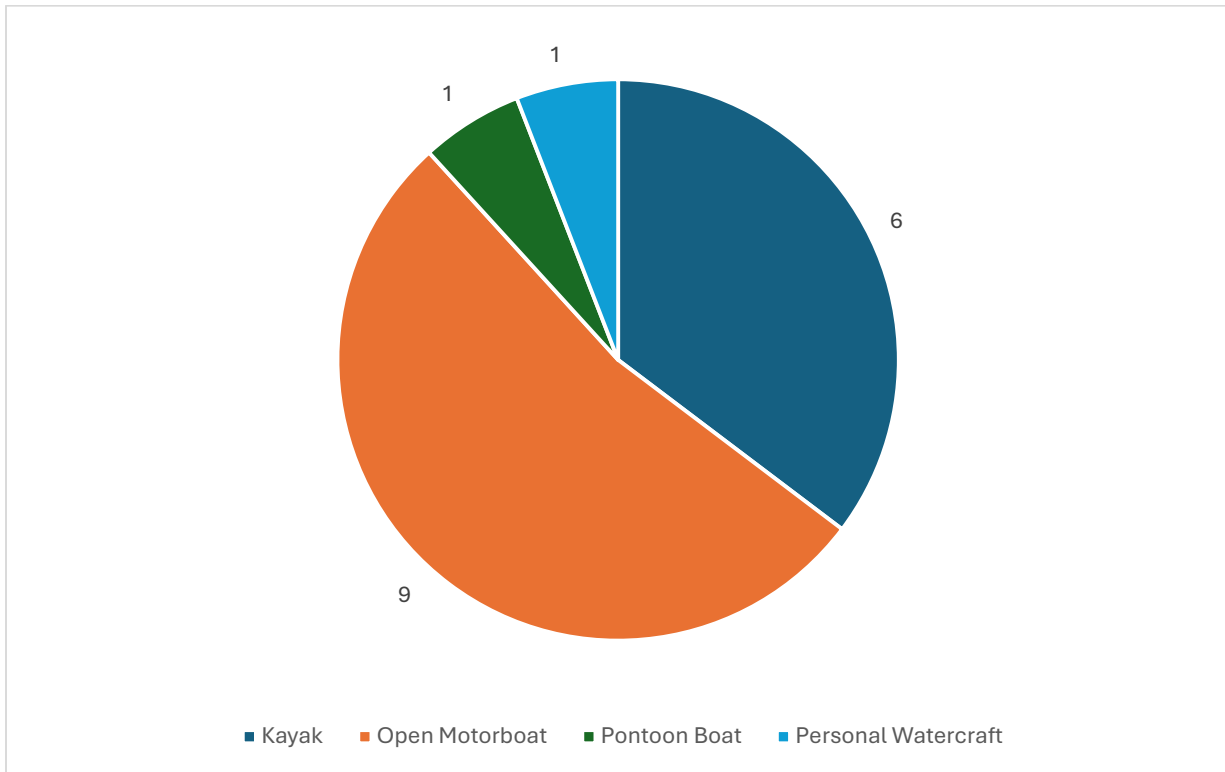
2024 Boating Incidents by Vessel Size



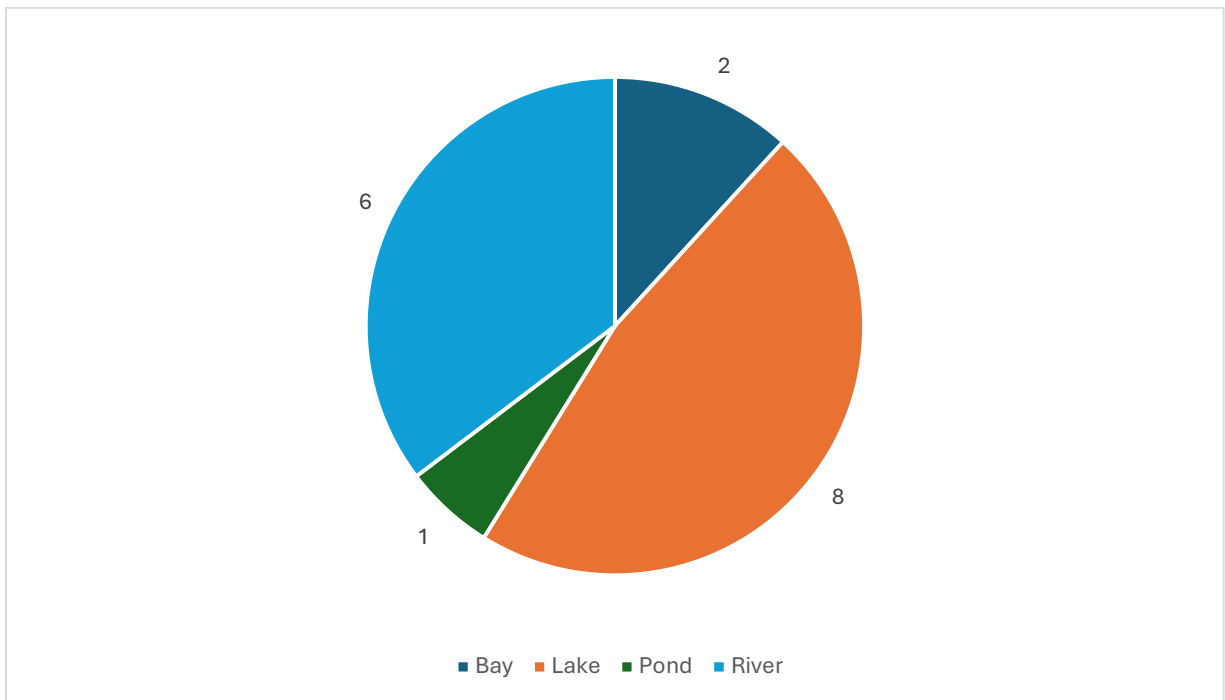
2024 Boating Incidents by Age of Operators



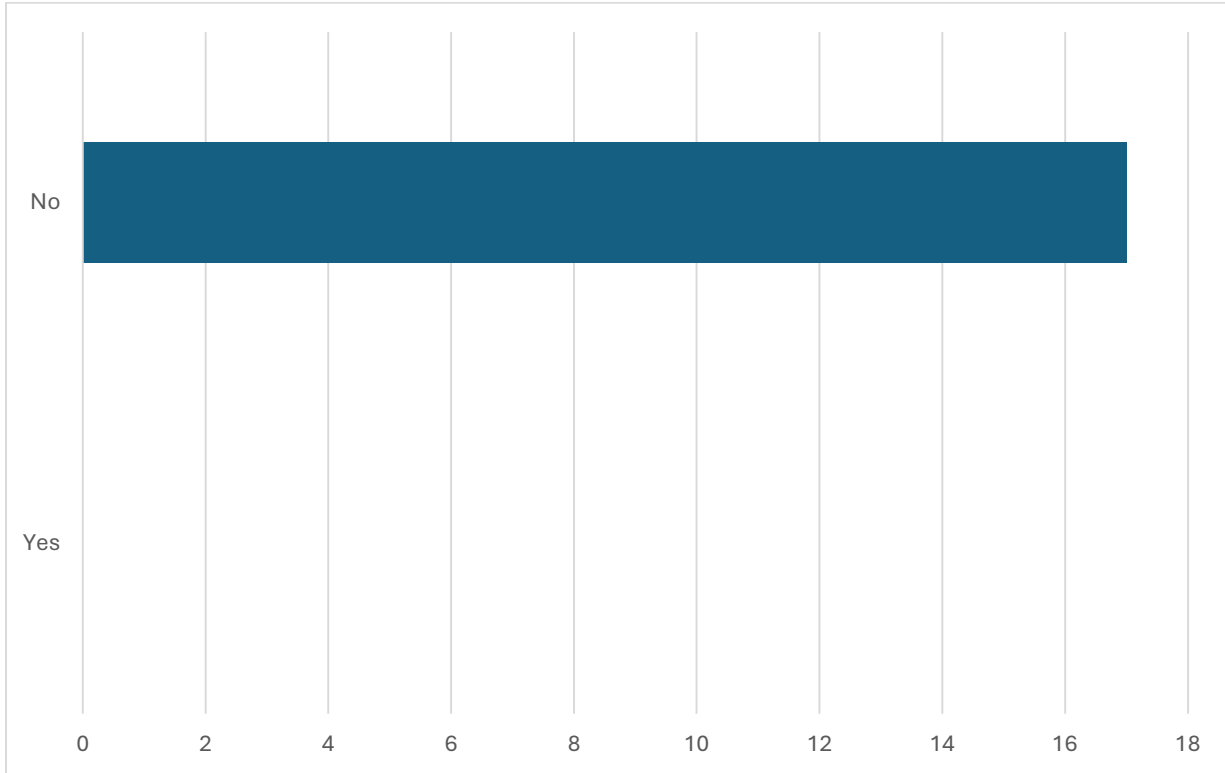
2024 Boating Fatalities by Vessel Type



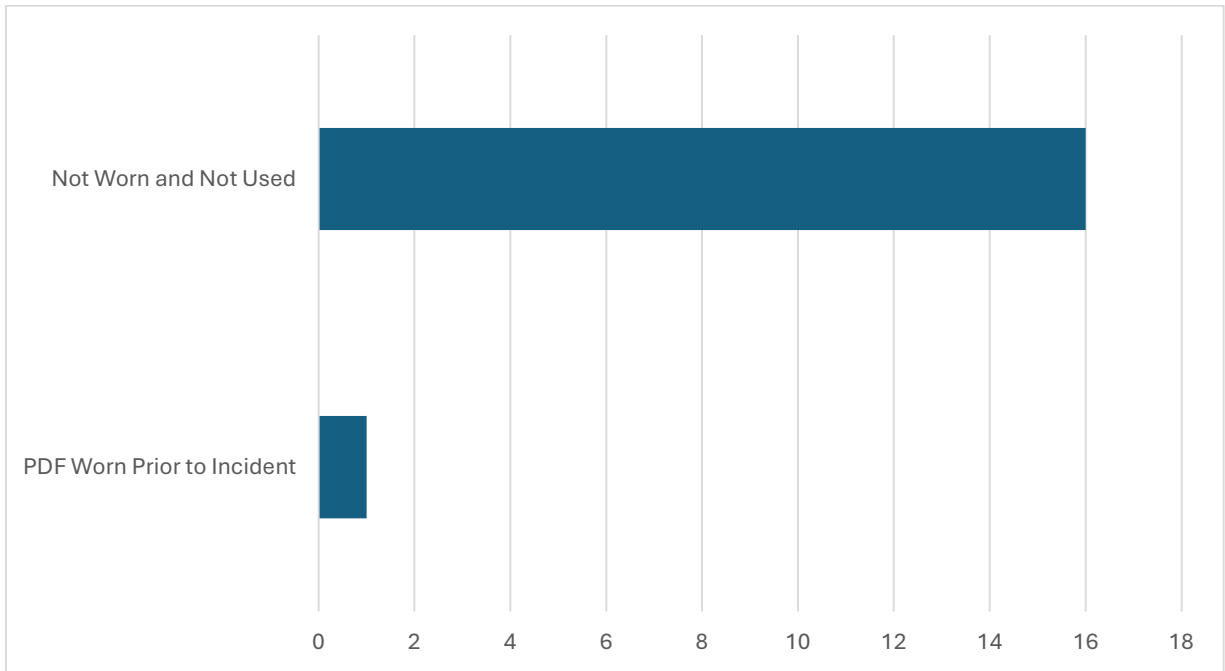
2024 Boating Fatalities by Waterbody Type



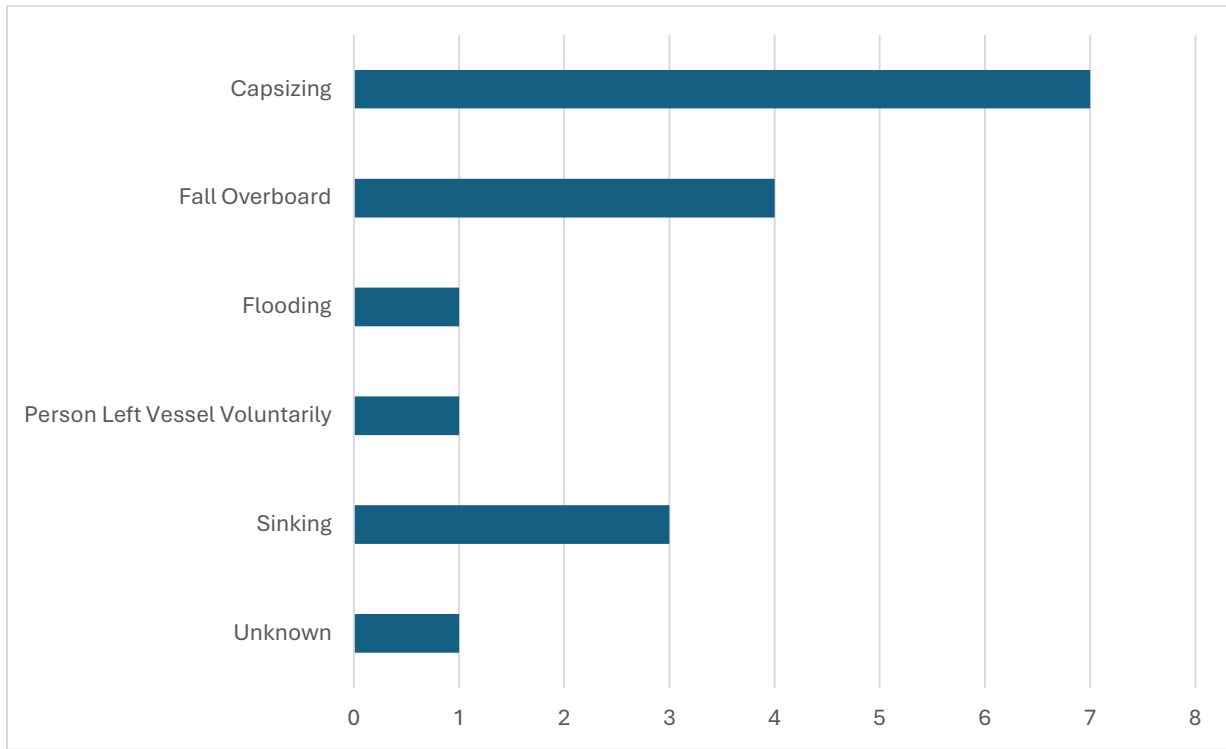
2024 Boating Fatalities – Alcohol a Primary Factor



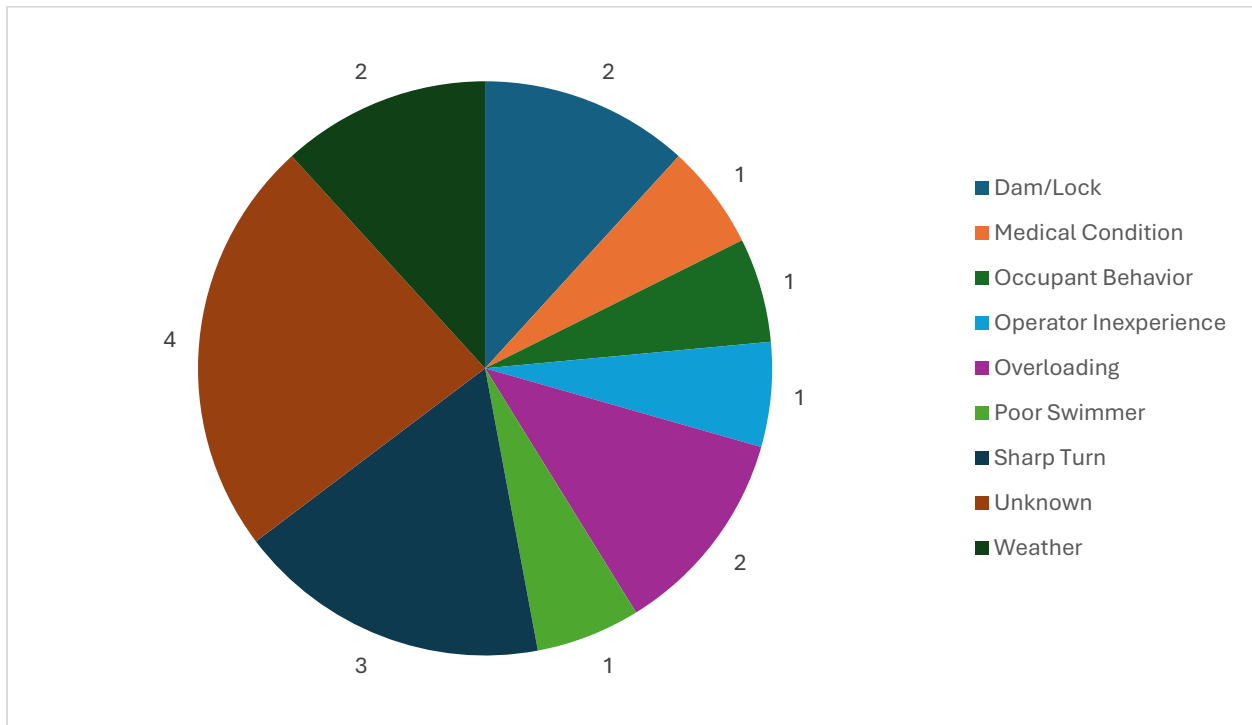
2024 Boating Fatalities – Life Jacket Use



2024 Boating Fatalities – Type of Incident



2024 Boating Fatalities – Cause of Incident



2024 Boating Fatalities Summaries

On March 10, 2024, at Arrowhead Lake in Stafford, Virginia, a 50-year-old male and a 49-year-old female were kayaking together in a tandem kayak when heavy winds caused their kayak to capsize. Both fell into the water, but neither was wearing a life jacket. The male was able to swim to shore, but the female, who could not swim, tragically drowned.

On April 18, 2024, at Buggs Island Lake in Mecklenburg County, a 71-year-old male was fishing with a friend when he accidentally dropped his fishing rod into the water. While attempting to retrieve it, he fell overboard. The water temperature was 66 degrees, and he remained in the water for a period of time as his friend tried to help him reach shore. Once near shore and able to stand, he paused and then suddenly fell backward into the water, becoming unresponsive. Emergency responders attempted resuscitation but were unsuccessful, and he was pronounced deceased at 12:26 PM. The deceased had a history of cardiac problems and a pacemaker.

On April 26, 2024, on the Rappahannock River in Caroline County, a customized fishing boat carrying three individuals began taking on water near the bow while underway. The boat was overloaded, and wind-driven waves contributed to the flooding. As the boat began sinking, the operator, a 38-year-old male, instructed everyone to enter the water. One individual was rescued from the water, another made it to shore, but the operator tragically drowned. No one on board was wearing a life jacket. The boat was later recovered with no apparent damage, and all equipment remained operational.

On May 19, 2024, two males, ages 32 and 31, were kayaking on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River in Rockingham County. Later that day, a citizen driving on Brocks Gap Road noticed an overturned kayak trapped in the hydraulic current created by the low-water bridge at Battle Bluff Lane and reported a possible boating accident.

Family members later confirmed that the two men had been kayaking earlier that day. Security footage showed them paddling past the area at 3:55 PM, neither wearing life jackets or helmets. At 5:50 PM, emergency personnel found the body of the 32-year-old male caught against a tree downstream, and he was pronounced deceased at 6:00 PM. A second body, belonging to the 31-year-old male, was located by a drone 200 yards downstream at 6:20 PM. Both kayaks were eventually recovered, one the following morning due to darkness.

On June 2, 2024, at approximately 4:00 PM, a 49-year-old male was operating a borrowed personal watercraft (PWC) on the James River in Henrico County, near an area known as the Gravel Pits. While out on the water, he pulled alongside a friend's boat, removed his life jacket, and jumped into the water to swim. As he swam, the PWC and the boat drifted farther away, and he began struggling to stay afloat. A friend jumped in to assist but was repeatedly pulled underwater by the panicked victim. Unable to safely pull him back, the friend had to push away to avoid drowning himself.

Another individual on a PWC helped the friend return to his vessel. Shortly after, the victim went underwater and did not resurface. His body was recovered the next morning, June 3, 2024, at approximately 8:30 AM, near where he was last seen.

On June 16, 2024, three males (ages 30, 22, and 20) were fishing on Banister Lake in Halifax County when their boat operator took a sharp turn. This caused the stern of the boat to drop below the waterline, allowing water to enter the vessel. As the boat began to sink, the three individuals attempted to move toward the front, but the bow rose, throwing them into the water. None of the individuals were wearing life jackets, and all struggled to stay afloat. Unfortunately, they drowned before rescue efforts could reach them.

On July 2, 2024, at approximately 10:10 PM, a Seadoo Switch carrying three children and four adults flipped over while traveling at a low speed (5–8 mph) on Lake Anna, Louisa County. A 9-year-old female child, who was wearing a life jacket, became trapped underneath the overturned vessel for approximately 10 minutes. CPR was administered for 30 minutes before emergency personnel arrived. She was transported to Chippenham Hospital in Richmond, where she tragically passed away on July 4, 2024.

On August 4, 2024, a 59-year-old male was fishing from a 17-foot Key West vessel in Chesapeake Bay, off Stingray Point in Middlesex County. While tending his fishing poles at the stern, he fell overboard and drowned. The boat's operator, a 62-year-old female, witnessed the incident. She attempted to maneuver the boat alongside him and threw a life jacket, but he was unable to grab it due to being tangled in fishing lines and the rough waves. Rescue personnel arrived, but by that time, the victim had gone underwater and did not resurface.

On September 9, 2024, an 81-year-old male was found floating face down near the boat ramp at West Neck Creek in Virginia Beach. His boat was idling untethered in the ramp slip. The circumstances leading to the incident remain unknown, but the victim was not wearing a life jacket at the time of recovery.

On September 16, 2024, a 45-year-old male kayaker was found floating face down near the Buffalo Creek, day use area, on Buggs Island Lake. His kayak and paddle were recovered separately from his body. The cause of the incident is unknown, but the victim was not wearing a life jacket at the time.

On October 13, 2024, a capsized vessel was discovered on Buggs Island Lake in Mecklenburg County, VA. A 77-year-old male was found floating near the shoreline, deceased. The cause of the incident is unknown, but the victim was not wearing a life jacket at the time.

On November 23, 2024, a 20-year-old female and a 22-year-old male went kayaking on the James River in Rockbridge County near Locher Landing at dusk. Neither were wearing a life jacket. The female operator, an inexperienced kayaker, was reported to be under the influence of marijuana. Both kayakers drifted into heavy currents and struggled to return upriver. The female capsized and submerged, while the male also capsized while trying to assist her. He managed to re-enter his kayak and call 911 but was unable to exit the water. First responders rescued the male, who was treated for exposure, but a search continued into the next day for the female. Her body was later recovered by divers.

On November 23, 2024, a 62-year-old male took a 14-foot aluminum bass boat out into Chesapeake Bay near Gwynn's Island to test a newly installed 3.5 hp outboard engine. The boat had no safety equipment on board, and the victim could not swim. His phone was last pinged two miles offshore at 5:15 PM, but he never returned. On November 28, 2024, the boat was found ashore without its engine, but the victim was not located. He is presumed deceased.

On November 30, 2024, a 32-year-old male was kayaking on a private pond in Mecklenburg County. He was not wearing a life jacket and could not swim. After falling into the water, he was unable to make it back to shore and drowned.

2024 – Incident Summaries from Selected Boating Injuries

On March 15, 2024, three males (ages 39, 35, and 35) were on a 21-foot Cobia boat traveling on the James River in Chesterfield County when they collided with the 162-navigation marker at approximately 7:40 PM. The impact caused severe injuries:

- The 39-year-old operator was thrown through the cabin wall and knocked unconscious.
- A 35-year-old passenger was thrown into a captain's chair, breaking the pedestal seat.
- Another 35-year-old male was thrown around the back of the boat.

The boat took on water, but all three individuals put on life jackets and managed to reach shore near the 161-navigation marker. A nearby fishing boat assisted and called 911. Emergency responders transported the victims to safety.

On April 13, 2024, three males (ages 40, 33, and 41) were in a 12-foot open motorboat traveling in Willoughby Bay, City of Norfolk when the boat took on water while turning. A wave came over the bow and gunwale, causing all three occupants to be thrown into the water. None of the individuals were wearing life jackets at the time of the incident.

On June 8, 2024, at approximately 10:50 PM, a 24-foot Landau pontoon boat operated by a 30-year-old male was traveling in Peak Creek on Claytor Lake, Pulaski County, when it collided with a free-floating work barge that had broken loose from a dock. The operator and three passengers (a 4-year-old male and two females, both age 33) sustained injuries from the impact. There were seven occupants total on board. All children were wearing USCG-approved life jackets. A throwable Type IV flotation device was immediately accessible. Wearable life jackets were readily accessible for the remaining adults but not worn.

On July 5, 2024, a 19-foot cabin motorboat on Lake Anna, Spotsylvania County, caught fire due to gasoline vapor ignition inside the engine compartment. Humidity caused gas vapors to accumulate, and the 24-year-old male operator failed to ventilate the compartment before starting the engine, leading to the explosion. Six people were injured - four males: Ages 24, 28, 9, & 1 and two females: Ages 27 & 28.

On August 11, 2024, a 24-foot open motorboat was tied off under the James River Bridge near the main channel. When the boat was untied and the 17-year-old male operator attempted to start the engine, an explosion occurred. Flames erupted from the center console and stern area, forcing all six occupants into the water. Three occupants suffered burns and required hospital treatment, three others had minor injuries, treated with first aid.