



**LIFESAVING SOCIETY**

*The Lifeguarding Experts*

***FEWER BOATING DEATHS OVERALL***

Boating deaths in Canada have decreased each year for five years. During 2000 (the most recent year for which new data is available), there were 147 boating fatalities—a new low. During the past five years (1996-2000), 888 people died in boating incidents—down by 17% from the previous five years (1991-1995). However boating still accounted for one-third of the 472 total Canadian water-related deaths in 2000.

***NOT WEARING PFDs A BIG ISSUE***

While boating deaths overall are down, **not wearing a PFD** (personal flotation device) or lifejacket is still a big contributor to the drowning problem. During 1996-2000, the same number of boaters not wearing PFDs still drowned as in the previous five years—643 victims. Most boating victims were not wearing a PFD (85% of those for whom PFD information was available). And one-third of victims did not even have a PFD in their boat (31% of deaths for which PFD information was available). Stronger measures appear needed to motivate more Canadians to wear a PFD.

***PROGRESS ON ALCOHOL, BUT STILL A KEY RISK FACTOR***

On a positive note, there have been fewer drownings in the past five years involving **drinking and boating**—a high risk behaviour targeted in the LIFESAVING SOCIETY's Water Smart® drowning prevention campaign. Although alcohol was still involved in 38% of boating fatalities, there were 21% fewer boating deaths involving alcohol during 1996-2000 than during the previous five years.

***NEED FOR BOATER TRAINING EVIDENT***

Only one-third of boat owners had taken a **safe boating course**<sup>1</sup>, prior to the 1999 introduction of boat operator competency regulations. Of those who did, most (68%) found it very useful<sup>1</sup>.

Many boating fatalities could be prevented if boaters learned to operate their craft more safely: most victims fell overboard (25%) or their boat capsized (37%); many boating victims were on the water alone (25%); many encountered rough water (27%); although fewer in number, incidents involving overloaded craft (9%) and standing up in the craft (9%) show concerning upswings in 1996-2000 (+22% & +24% respectively vs. the previous five years).

***WHAT ACTIVITIES FOR BOATING VICTIMS?***

Most fatal boating incidents occur during recreational activities (78%). Boating victims were most often pleasure powerboating (33% of boating deaths), sport fishing (27%) and canoeing (13%). However there were fewer fatalities for each of these three activities during 1996-2000 compared to the previous five years. On the other hand, boating deaths while hunting and sailing increased by 40% and 78% respectively during the past five years, although their absolute numbers of fatalities remain much lower than for powerboating or fishing.

***WHERE DO BOATING MISHAPS HAPPEN?***

Half of Canadian boating deaths occur on lakes (53%). Oceans (23%) and rivers/streams (22%) account for the balance. By region, one-quarter (28%) of Canadian boating fatalities occurred in Ontario over the past five years; 21% in British Columbia; 18% in Quebec; 17% in Atlantic Canada; 13% in the Prairie provinces; and 3% in the northern territories.

***WHO'S MOST AT RISK?***

There are about 10 million boaters in Canada (43% of Canadians 16+ years of age)<sup>1</sup>. One-quarter of Canadian boaters are owners of Canada's 2.6 million boats<sup>2</sup>.

Almost all boating victims are male (91%). Half (48%) of all boating victims are 35 to 64 years of age. One-third (33%) of boating victims are 18 to 34 years of age.

***PERSONAL WATERCRAFT MORE DEADLY THAN OTHER BOATS***

Powerboats are the most prevalent pleasure craft, and account for more than half of all Canadian boating deaths. Small open powerboats under 5.5 metres (18 feet) in length are more often involved than larger powerboats. Canoes are the second most involved craft.

The absolute number of personal watercraft (PWC) fatalities is low. However the water-related death rate for PWCs, at 11 deaths per year per 100,000 boats, is higher than for powerboats at 6 deaths per year per 100,000 boats, and higher than unpowered craft (i.e. canoes, sailboats and rowboats) at 2 to 5 deaths per year per 100,000 boats. Risk-taking behaviour may be contributing to the higher death rate for PWCs. However it must be kept in mind that the statistics do not yet reflect the impact of changes to federal boat operator regulations, which require all PWC operators to be at least 16 years of age, and as of September 2002 to have their Pleasure Craft Operator's Card.

	'000's of Boats for Pleasure Use-1996 <sup>2</sup>	Avg. # of Recr. Boating W-R Deaths 1996-2000	W-R Death Rate - # of Deaths/yr /100,000 Boats
Powerboats	1,182	75	6
Personal Watercraft	52	6	11
Canoes & Kayaks	965	31	3
Sailboats	124	6	5
Rowboats	294	7	2
Total	2,617	139	5.3

Notes: 1. Source: Canadian Coast Guard, 1995, "Survey of the General Public on Issues Related to Boating."  
2. Source: Canadian Coast Guard, 1996, "Small Vessels Inventory in Canada." Includes estimated number of boats for pleasure use in private Canadian households and boats rented for pleasure/recreational use. Estimates are ± 12%.

## HOW TO BE A WATER SMART® BOATER ... AND AVOID BOATING RISK FACTORS

### 1) CHOOSE IT. USE IT! ALWAYS WEAR A LIFEJACKET!

- Don't just have it in the boat, pick one and **wear** it ...the vast majority of Canadian boating victims were not wearing a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) when they drowned. Lifejackets have come a long way. Inflatable jackets and a wider range of PFD colour and style options make it easier to find and wear the one that is right for you.

### 2) THINK ABOUT IT. BOAT SOBER!

- Alcohol intensifies the effect of fatigue, sun, wind and boat motion to adversely affect balance, judgment and reaction time. Be Water Smart® ...don't drink and drive your boat!

### 3) GET CARDED!

- The rules have changed. Federal regulations require everyone operating a boat with a motor to get the Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC) by 2009. Anyone operating a powerboat under 4 metres, including personal watercraft (PWC), must have the PCOC now.
- Anyone born after April 1, 1983 (20 years of age or younger) must have a PCOC now to operate any powerboat.
- So get trained on boating safety. Take a course or study at home and take the PCOC test. Contact your local office of the LIFESAVING SOCIETY to obtain further information on the Boat Operator Accredited Training™ course (B.O.A.T.). It will help make sure you know the boating "rules of the road," how to respond in a boating emergency, and how to operate pleasure craft safely.

### 4) 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 PFDs? First aid kit, tools and spare parts? Safety equipment all working? Have enough fuel? Told someone where you are going and when to expect you back?

### 5) WEAR THE RIGHT GEAR!

- Your PFD of course, good sunglasses, sunscreen and appropriate clothing.
- Paddles, whistles and flares are the right gear too.

### 6) DRIVE YOUR POWERBOAT OR PWC RESPONSIBLY!

- Look before you act, stay low, drive at moderate speeds, be aware of changing weather conditions, and drive with extreme caution and proper lights after dark.
- Children under 16 years of age are not permitted to operate a PWC. Children under 12 years must be accompanied by an adult to operate a boat with a motor of 10 HP or more. Children 12 to 15 years must be accompanied by an adult to operate a boat with a motor of 40+ HP.

## SUMMARY FACTS & FIGURES

Canadian Boating Water-Related Deaths:  
1996 - 2000 Five-Year Totals

	# (#% of Total)	% Change vs previous 5 yrs
Total	888	-17%
<b>WHO</b>		
<b>Age of Victim:</b>		
< 18 yrs	64 (7)	-18%
18 - 34	296 (33)	-24%
35 - 64	427 (48)	-9%
65 +	92 (10)	±0%
<b>Sex of Victim:</b>		
Male	804 (91)	-20%
Female	82 (9)	+19%
<b>WHEN</b>		
<b>Month of Year:</b>		
May - June	294 (33)	-6%
July - August	254 (29)	-24%
September - October	189 (21)	-17%
November - April	128 (14)	-29%
<b>WHERE</b>		
<b>Aquatic Setting:</b>		
Lake/Pond	471 (53)	-16%
Ocean	205 (23)	-24%
River/Stream	198 (22)	-5%
<b>Province/Territory:</b>		
Nfld	54 (6) -22%	Manitoba 39 (4) -26%
N.S.	69 (8) -15%	Sask. 37 (4) -18%
P.E.I.	9 (1) -18%	Alberta 42 (5) -7%
N.B.	20 (2) -50%	B.C. 184 (21) -17%
Quebec	158 (18) -7%	N.W.T. 7 (1) -36%
Ontario	248 (28) -13%	Nunavut 11 (1) -59%
		Yukon 10 (1) ±0%
<b>ACTIVITIES MOST OFTEN INVOLVED</b>		
<b>Recreational (1 or 2 specific activities per incident)</b>		
Powerboating	289 (33)	-28%
Fishing	237 (27)	-22%
Canoeing	117 (13)	-21%
Partying	61 (7)	n/a
Hunting	59 (7)	+40%
Sailing	32 (4)	+78%
Total Recreational	697 (78)	-10%
Daily Living (usually boat travel)	66 (7)	-45%
Vocational (usually commercial fishing)	101 (11)	-33%
<b>TYPE OF CRAFT INVOLVED</b>		
Powerboat		
- small (5.5m and under)	281 (32)	-29%
- large (over 5.5m)	127 (14)	-25%
- size unknown	111 (12)	+12%
- personal watercraft	29 (3)	+53%
- Total Powerboats	548 (62)	-20%
Canoe	156 (18)	-20%
Sailboat	32 (4)	+45%
Rowboat	38 (4)	+15%
<b>WHY - CONTRIBUTING FACTORS</b>		
Fell or thrown overboard	222 (25)	-28%
Capsized	332 (37)	-12%
Swamped	119 (13)	-26%
<b>Absence of PFD:</b>		
PFD not worn (properly)	643 (72)	±0%
PFD not present	232 (26)	-9%
PFD worn (properly)	113 (13)	-7%
PFD information not available	132 (15)	-55%
Alcohol Involved	337 (38)	-21%
After Dark	156 (18)	-48%
Alone	219 (25)	-14%
With Others	665 (75)	-17%
Rough Water	241 (27)	-32%
Standing up in craft	88 (10)	+22%
Overloaded craft	83 (9)	+24%
Collisions	80 (9)	-22%
Abrupt turn	63 (7)	n/a

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More information is available in the Society's *National Drowning Report*. Contact the:

#### LIFESAVING SOCIETY

287 McArthur Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1L 6P3

Telephone: (613) 746-5694; Fax: (613) 746-9929; E-Mail: experts@lifesaving.ca; Web: www.lifesaving.ca

Or contact the Lifesaving Society office in your province/territory.

*The Lifesaving Society, Canada's lifeguarding expert, is a national, charitable organization working to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education and lifesaving competitions.*

