



# 2025 Recreational Boating Incident Summary



**CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.**

## Introduction

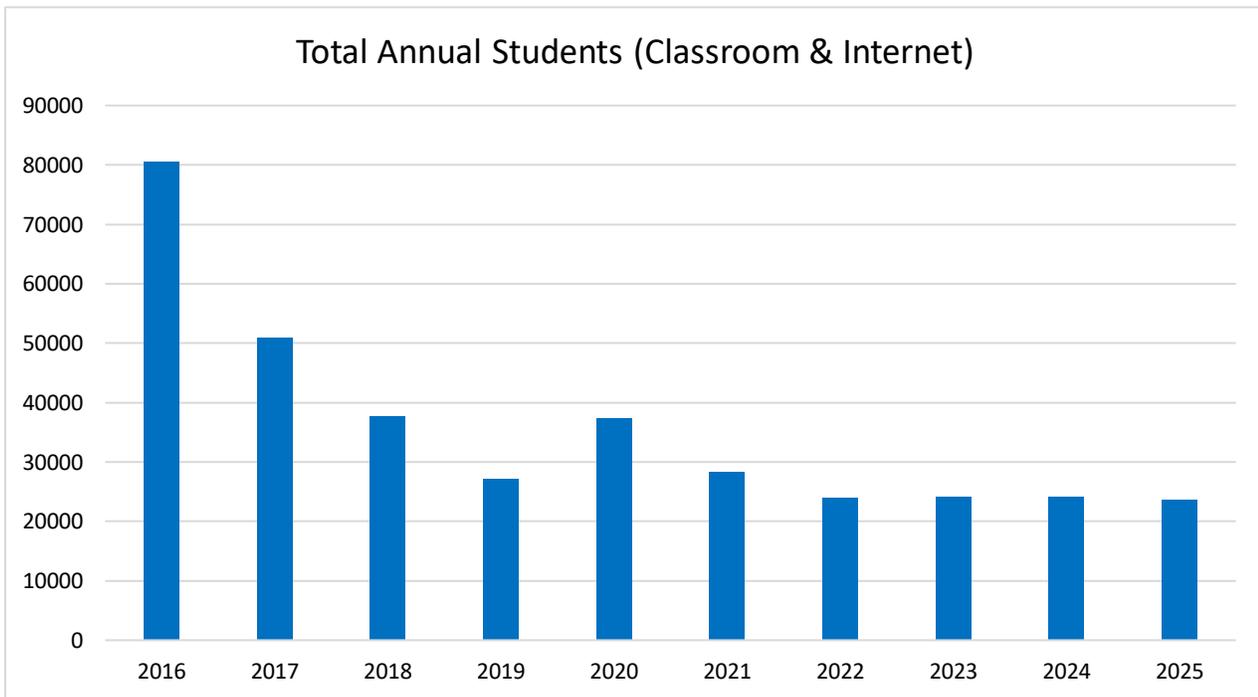
The 2025 Recreational Boating Incident Summary is compiled by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Boating Division. The data used in this report is retrieved by Reportable Boating Incident reports submitted by DWR Conservation Police, Virginia Marine Resources Commission Marine Police, and local law enforcement agencies. Data included in this report is for incidents which occurred during the 2025 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 508,000 Virginians has taken a boating safety education class.

## Boating Safety Students 2016 - 2025



## **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

## **2025 Virginia Boating Incident Summary \***

- **Number of Incidents = 75**
- **Number of Vessels Involved = 100**
- **Number of Injured Persons = 46**
- **Number of Fatalities = 10**
  - **Alcohol was a factor in 10% fatal incidents \*\***
  - **Paddlecraft (canoes, kayaks, etc.) were involved in 20% of fatal incidents**
  - **In 90% of fatal incidents, no life jacket was worn**
- **Property Damage = \$493,034**

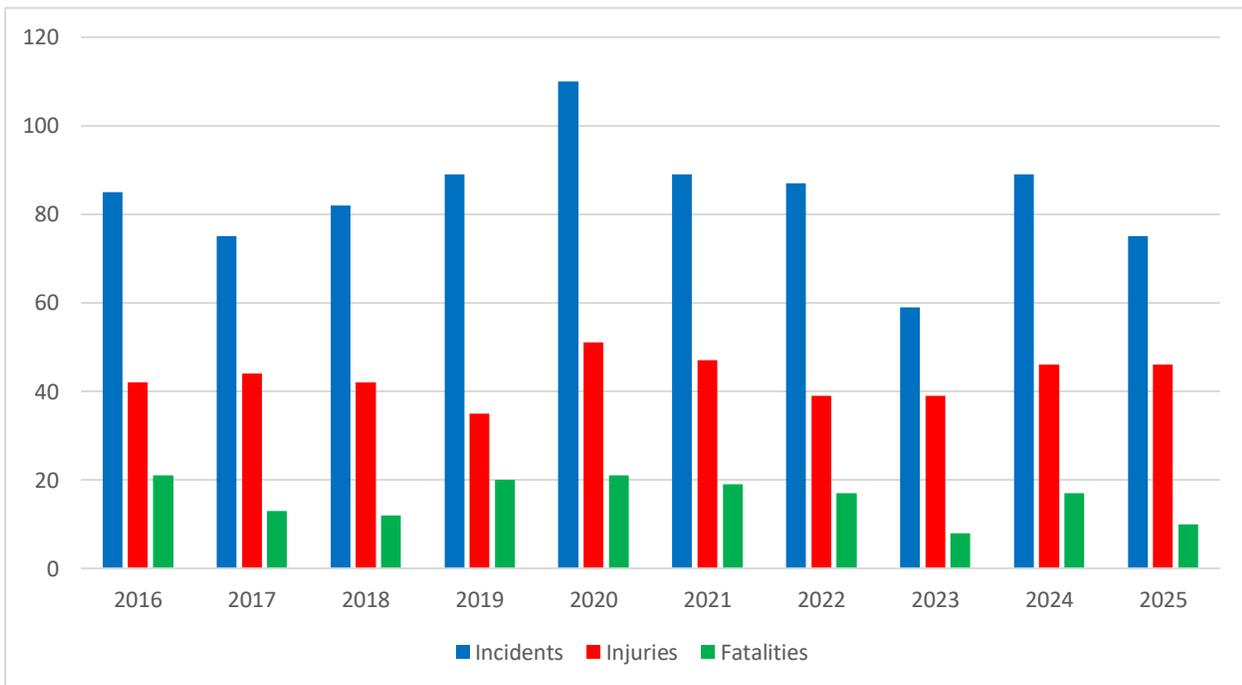
\*Reported to DWR

\*\*Primary, secondary, or tertiary

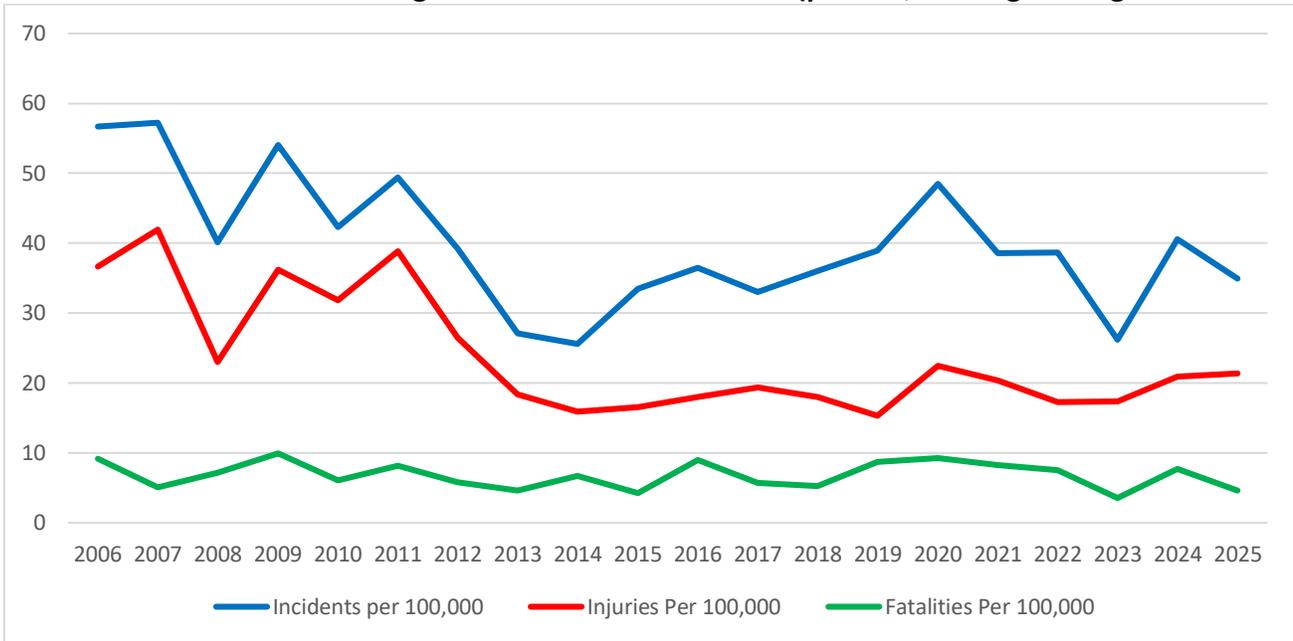
## 10 Year Boat Incident Summary

Year	Incidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Property Damage
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
2025	75	46	10	\$493,034

## 10 Year Boat Incident Statistics

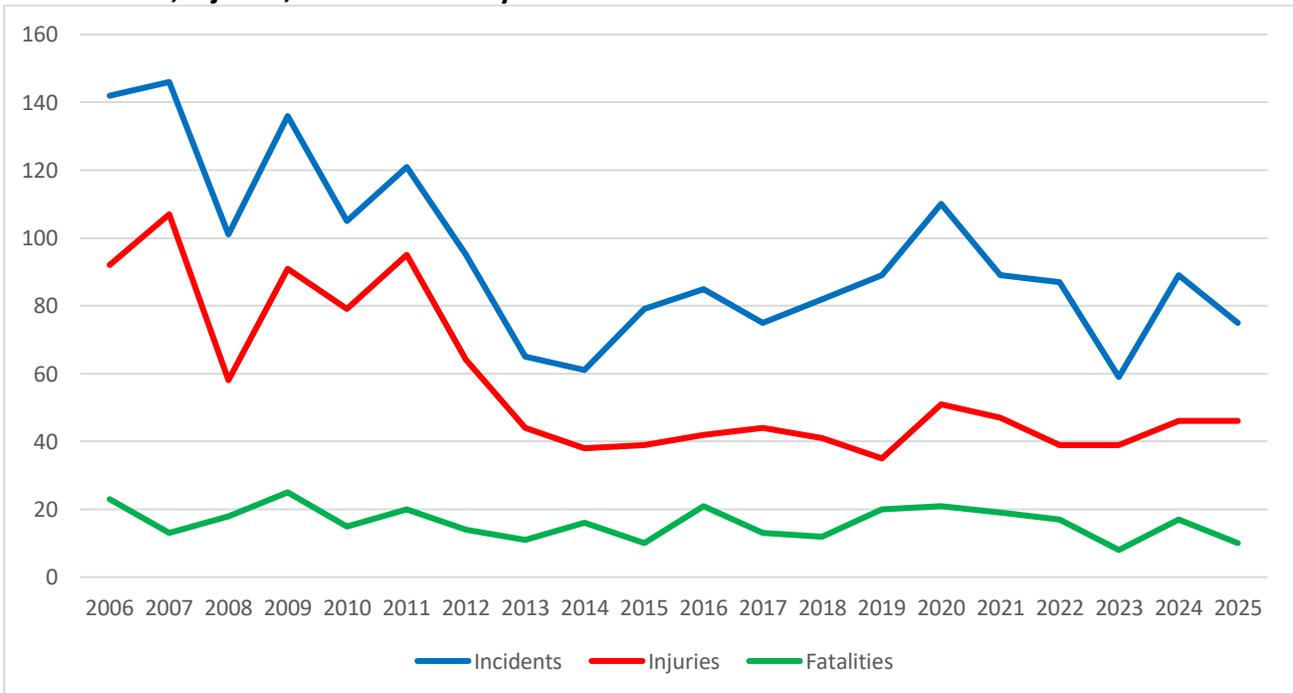


**Annual Recreational Boating Incident Rate\* 2006 – 2025 (per 100,000 Virginia Registered Boats)**

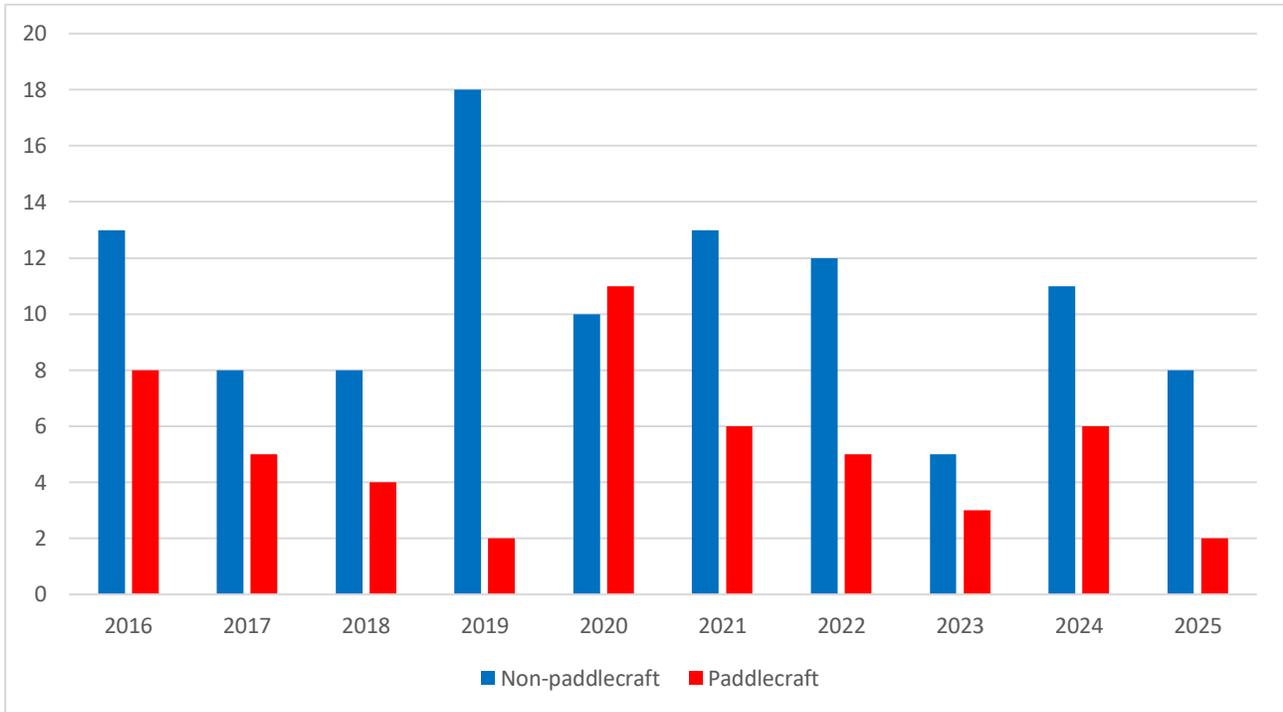


\*These rates include paddlecraft incidents/fatalities although paddlecraft are not registered in Virginia.  
 \*These rates include incidents/fatalities involving boats registered in another state that were involved in incidents on Virginia’s waters.

**Fatalities, Injuries, and Incidents by Year 2006 – 2025**

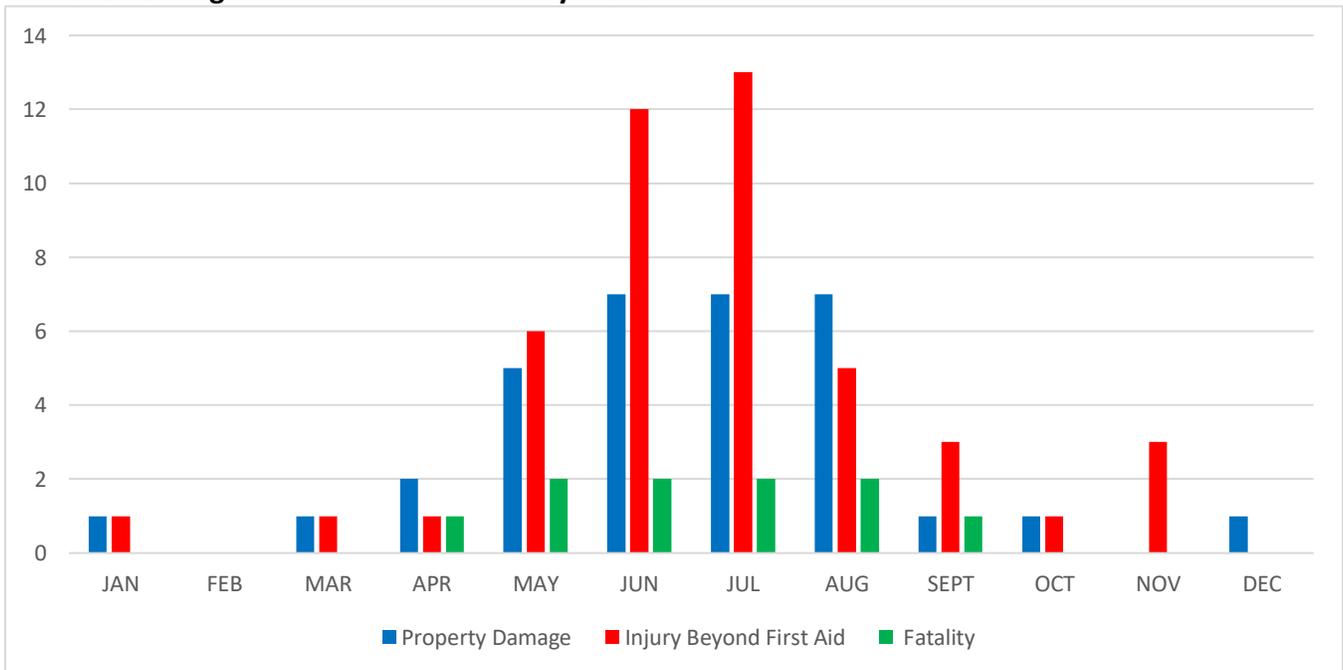


### Fatalities – Paddlecraft and Powered Vessels Last 10 Years

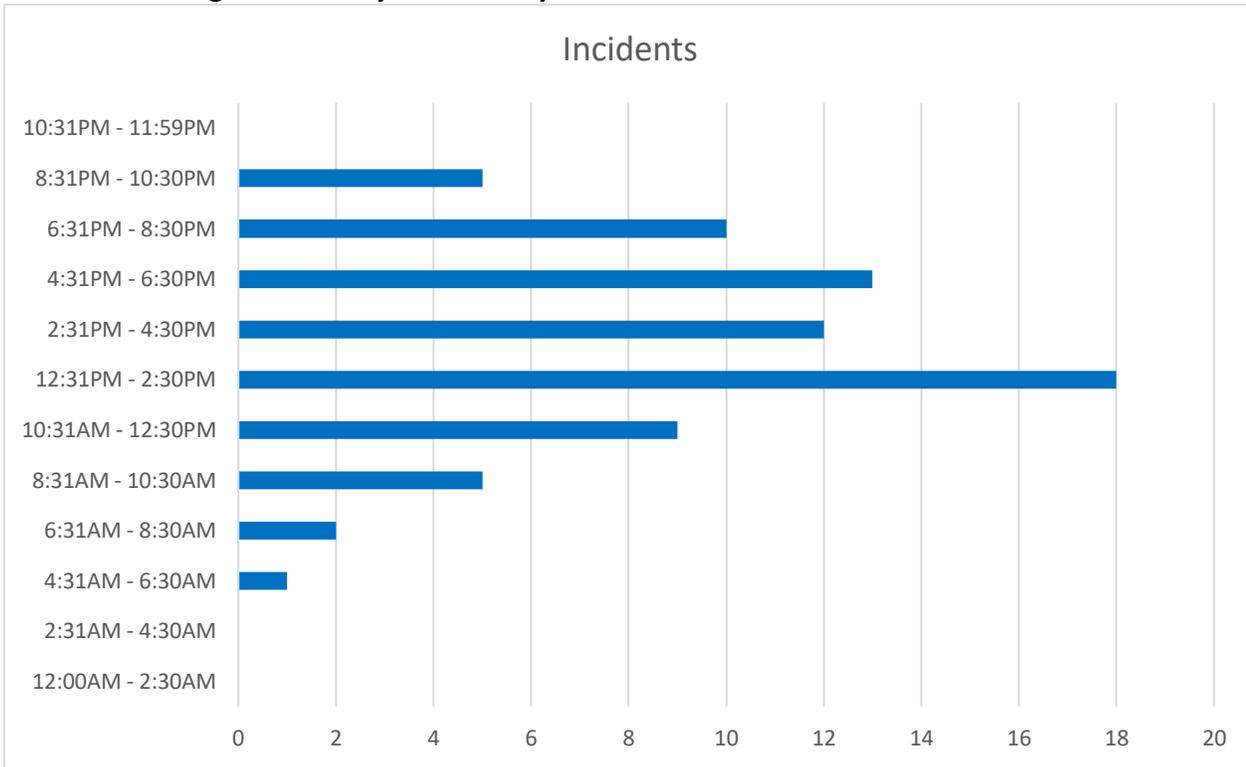


Non-paddlecraft includes motorized vessels, sailboats, & jon boats.  
 Paddlecraft includes canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, & catarafts.

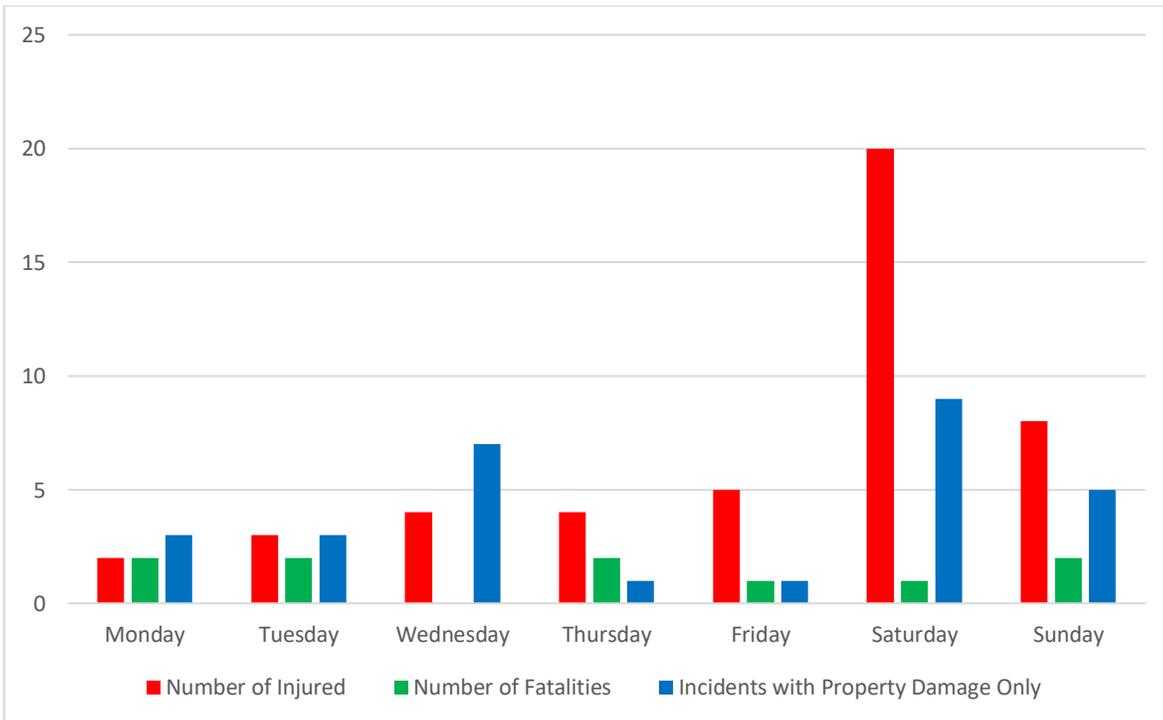
### 2025 Boating Incidents and Fatalities by Month



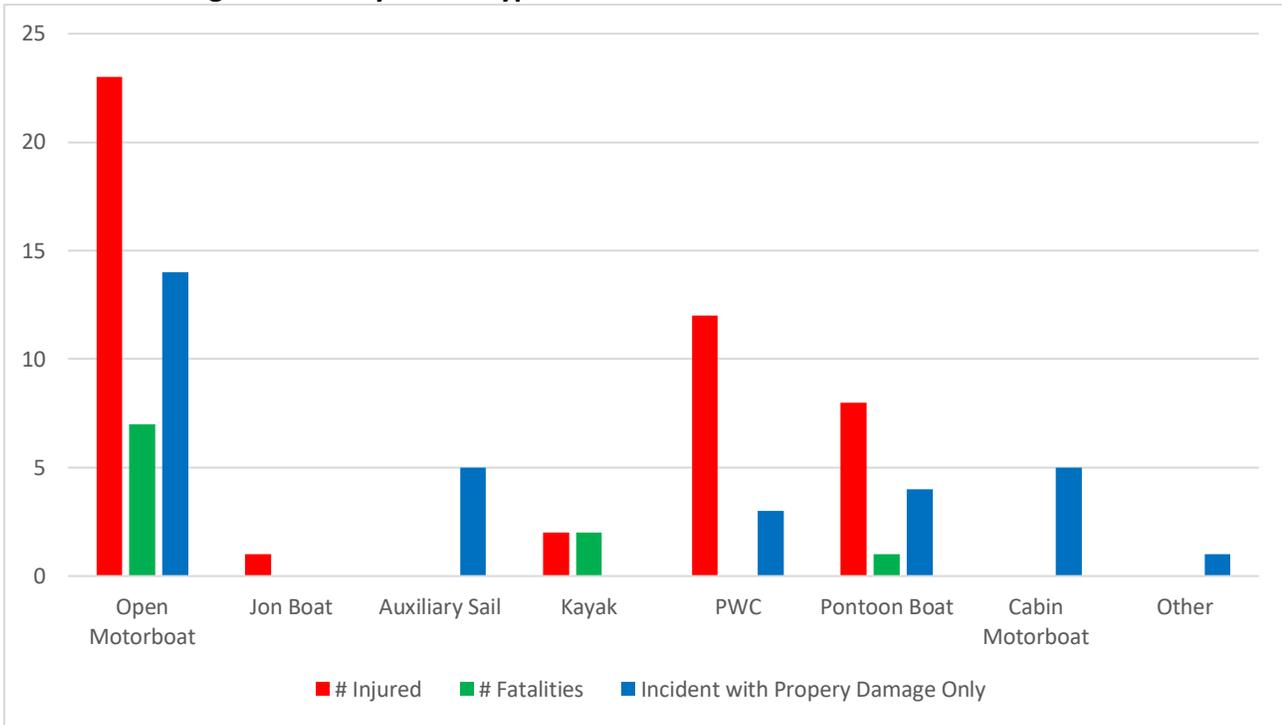
### 2025 Boating Incidents by Time of Day



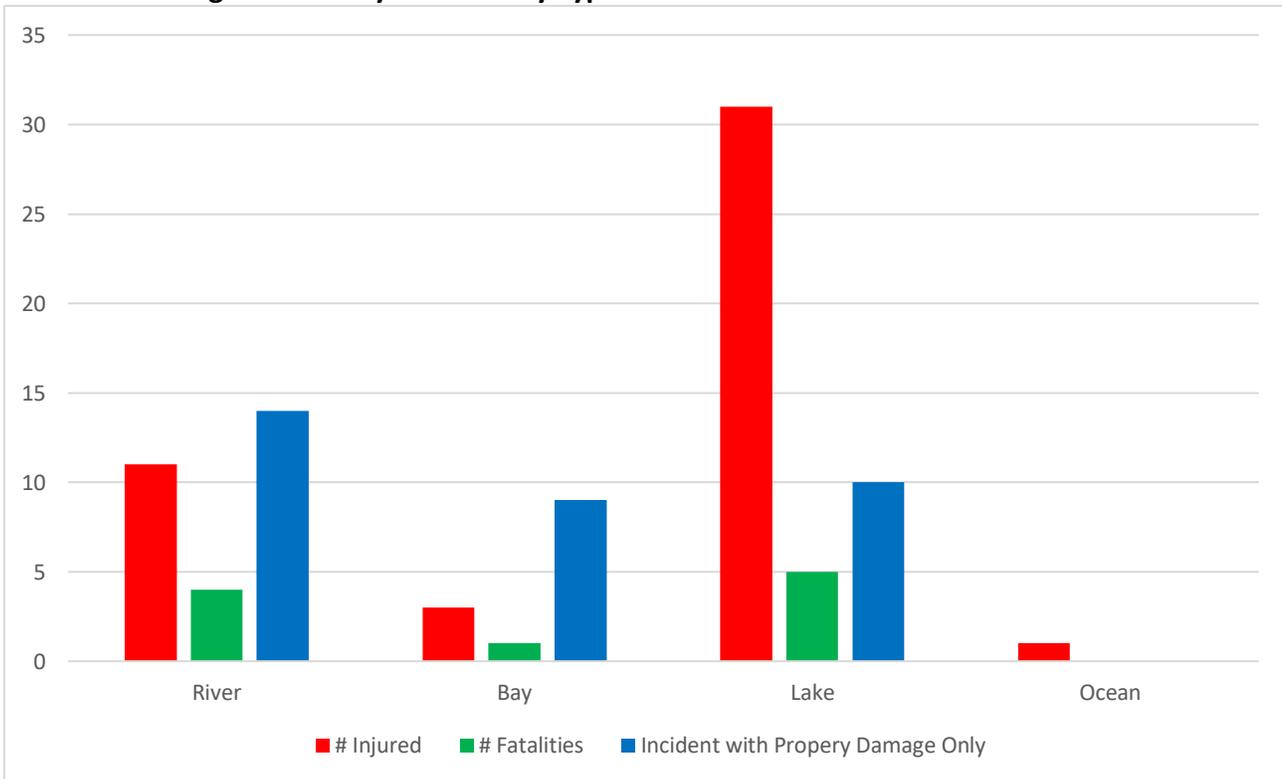
### 2025 Boating Incidents by Day of the Week



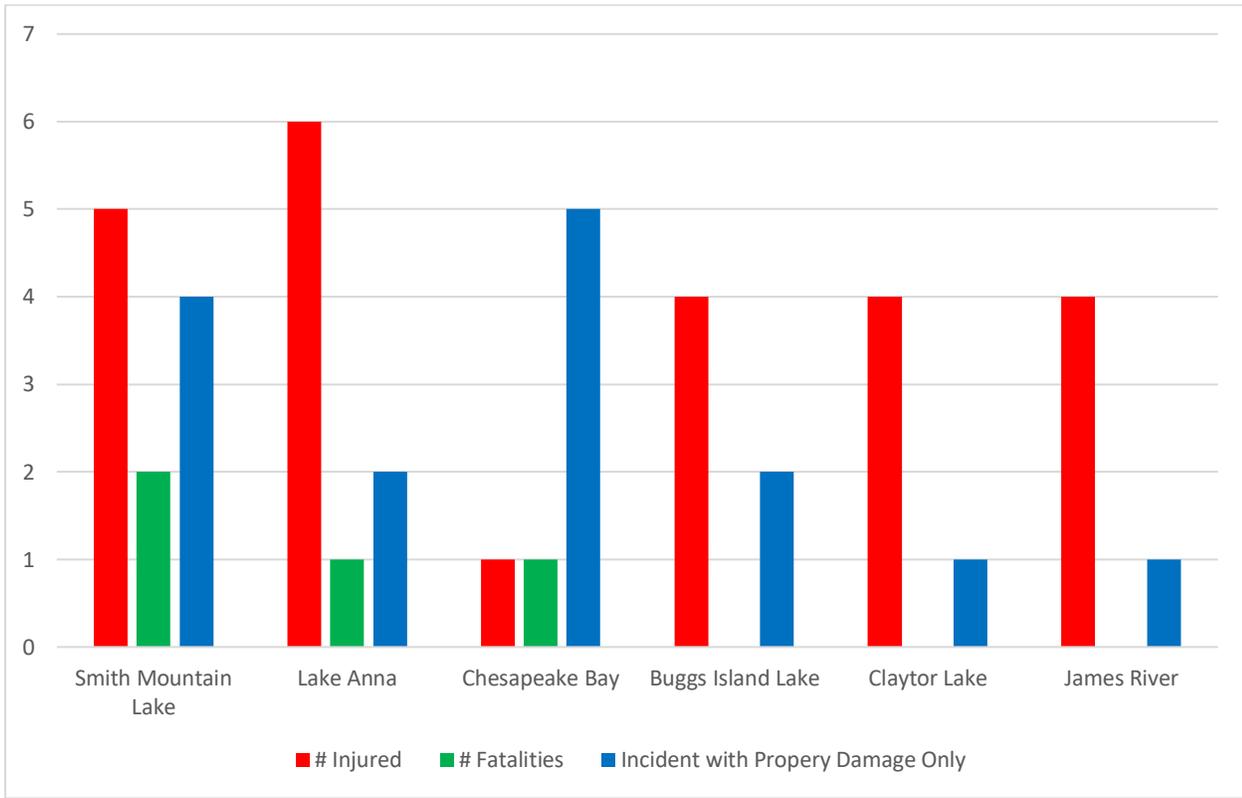
### 2025 Boating Incidents by Vessel Type



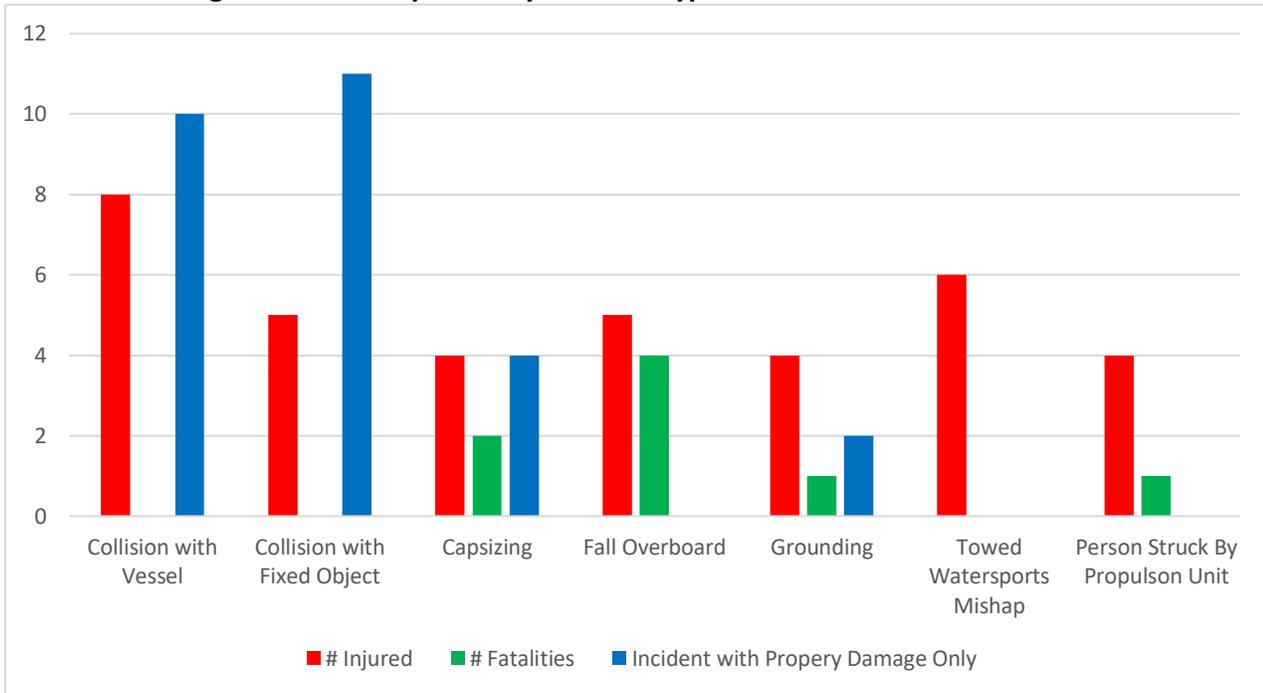
### 2025 Boating Incidents by Water Body Type



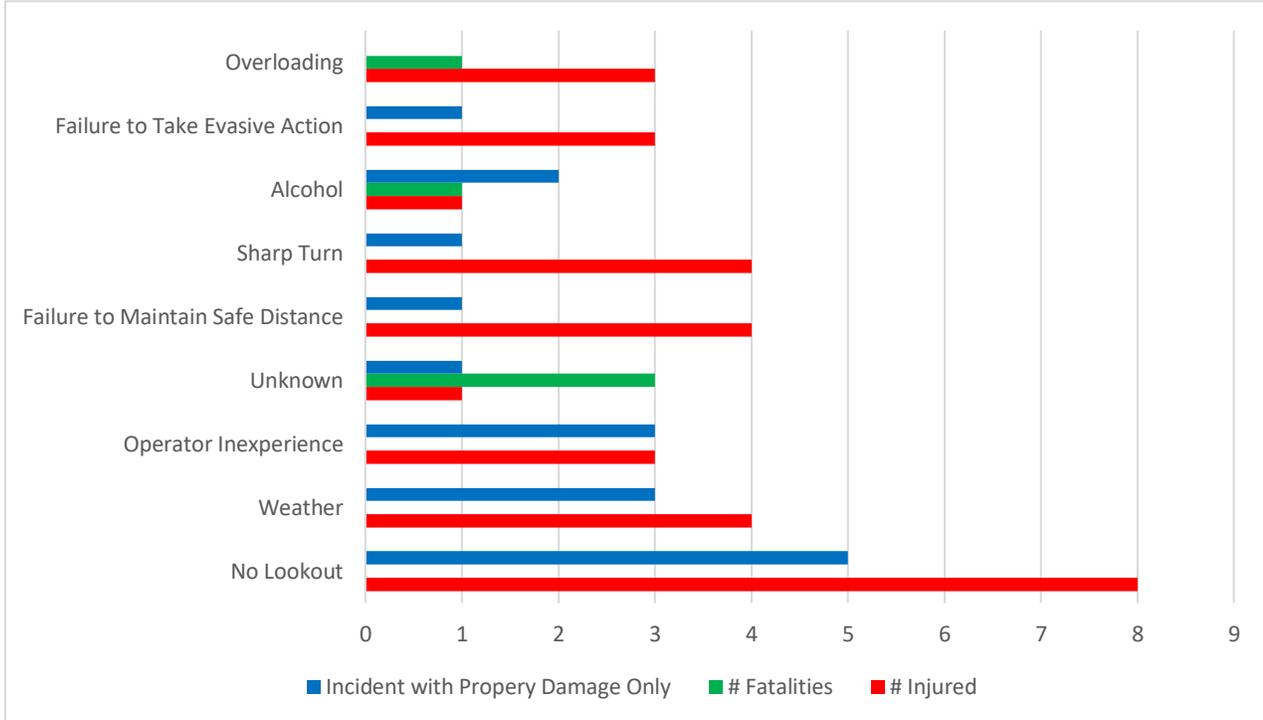
### 2025 Boating Incidents – Top 6 Locations



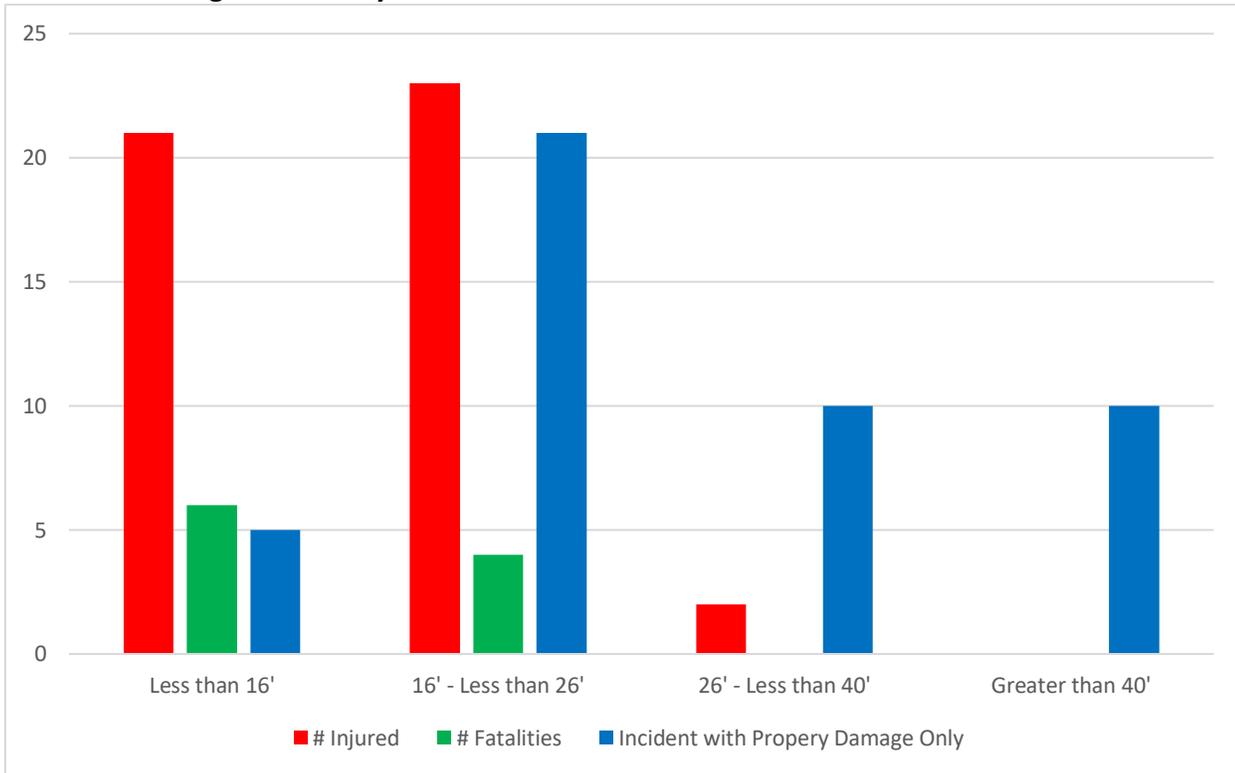
### 2025 Boating Incidents – Top Primary Incident Types



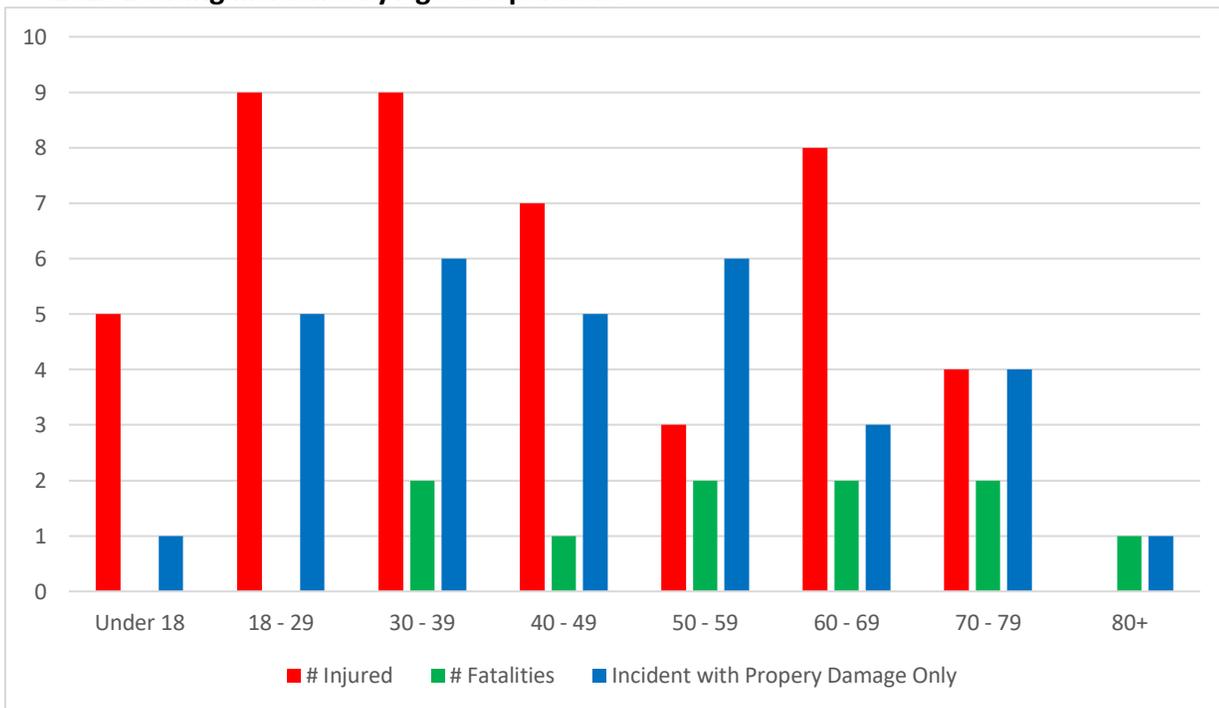
### 2025 Boating Incidents – Top Contributing Factors



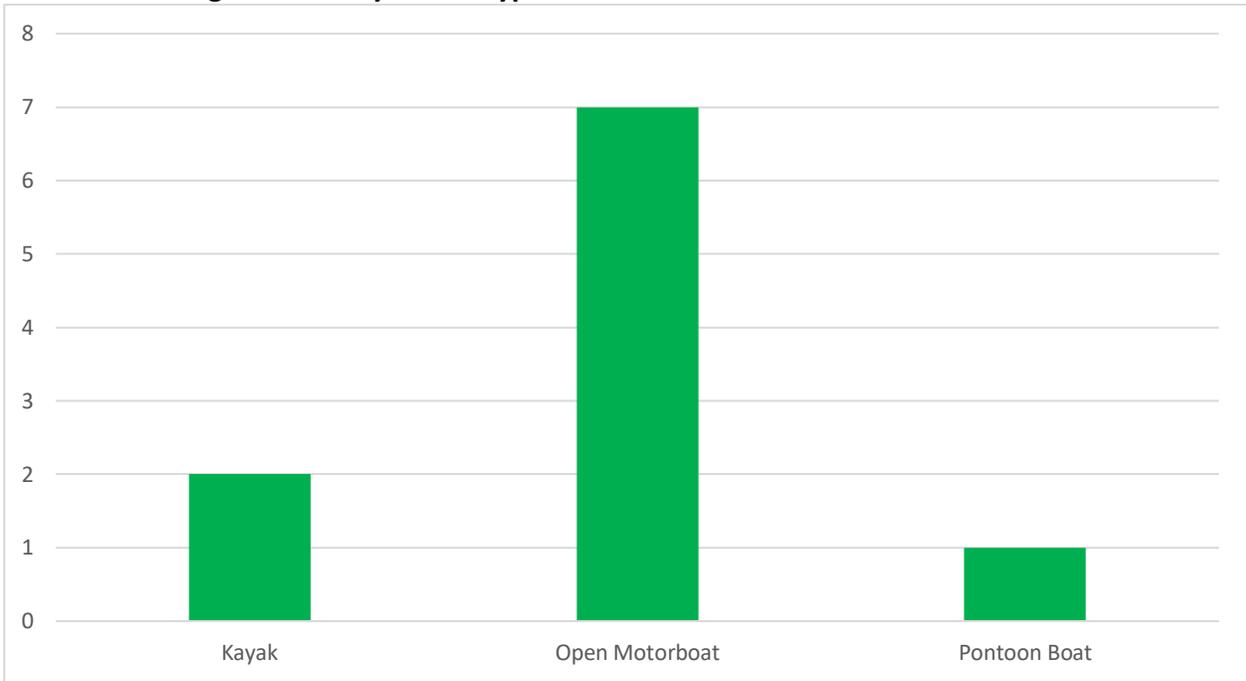
**2025 Boating Incidents by Vessel Size**



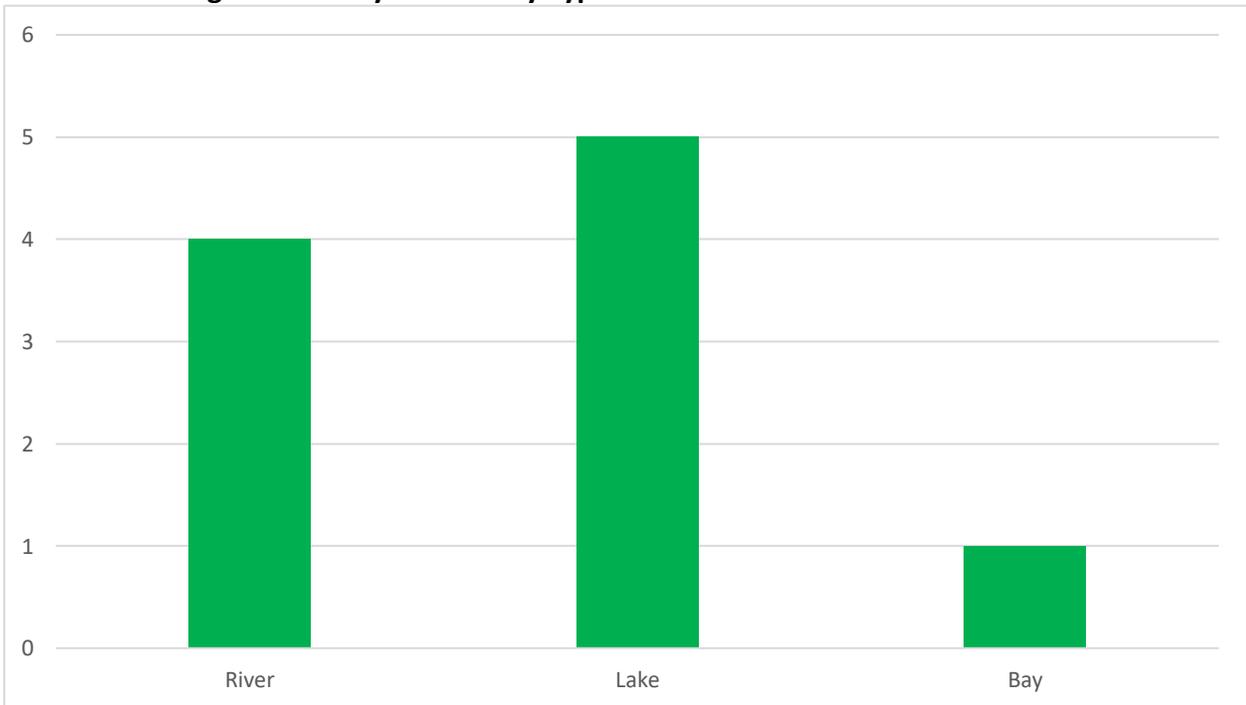
**2025 Boating Incidents by Age of Operators**



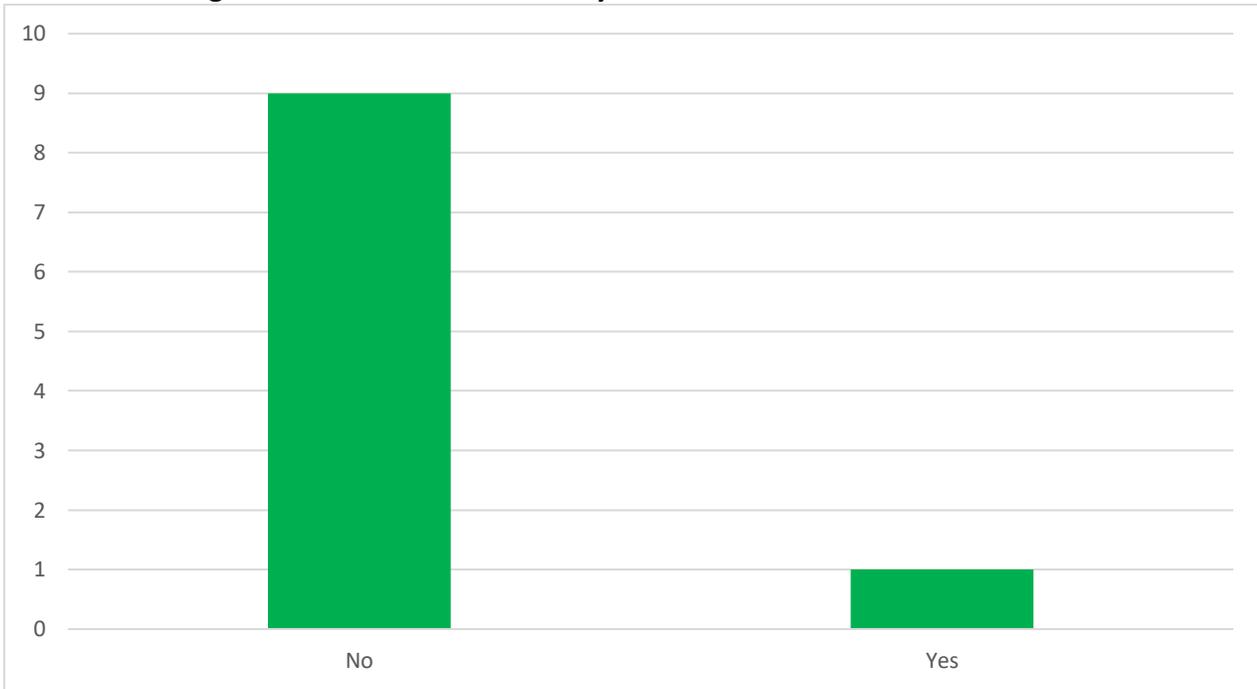
**2025 Boating Fatalities by Vessel Type**



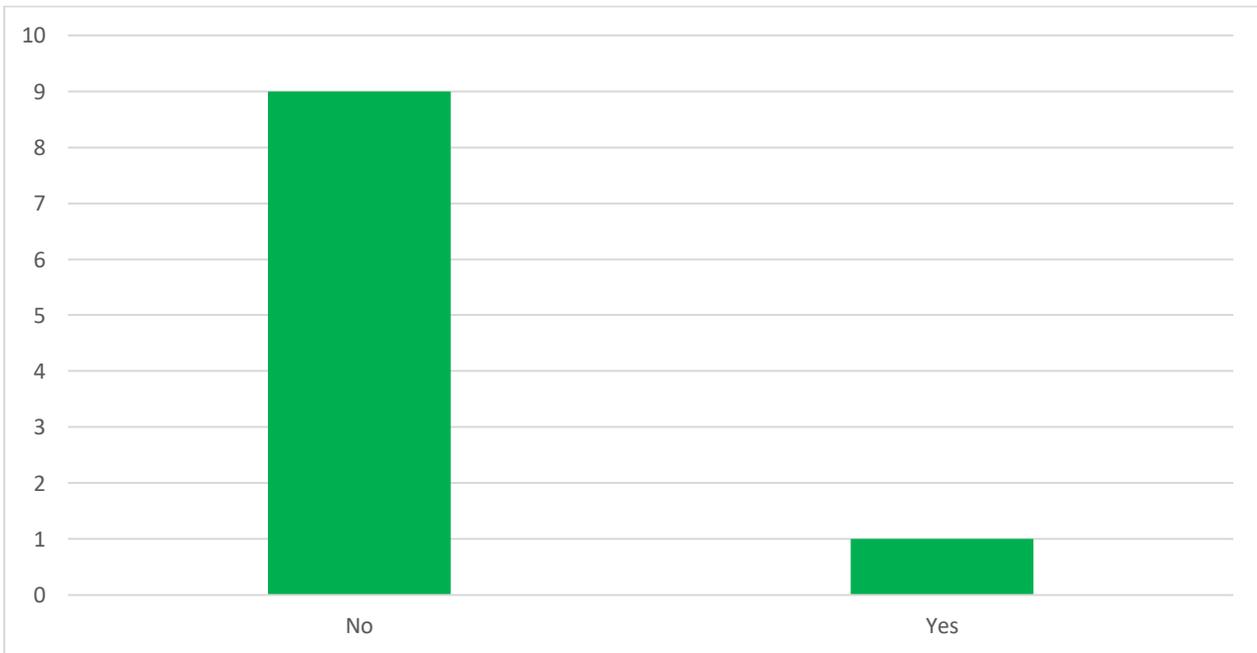
**2025 Boating Fatalities by Waterbody Type**



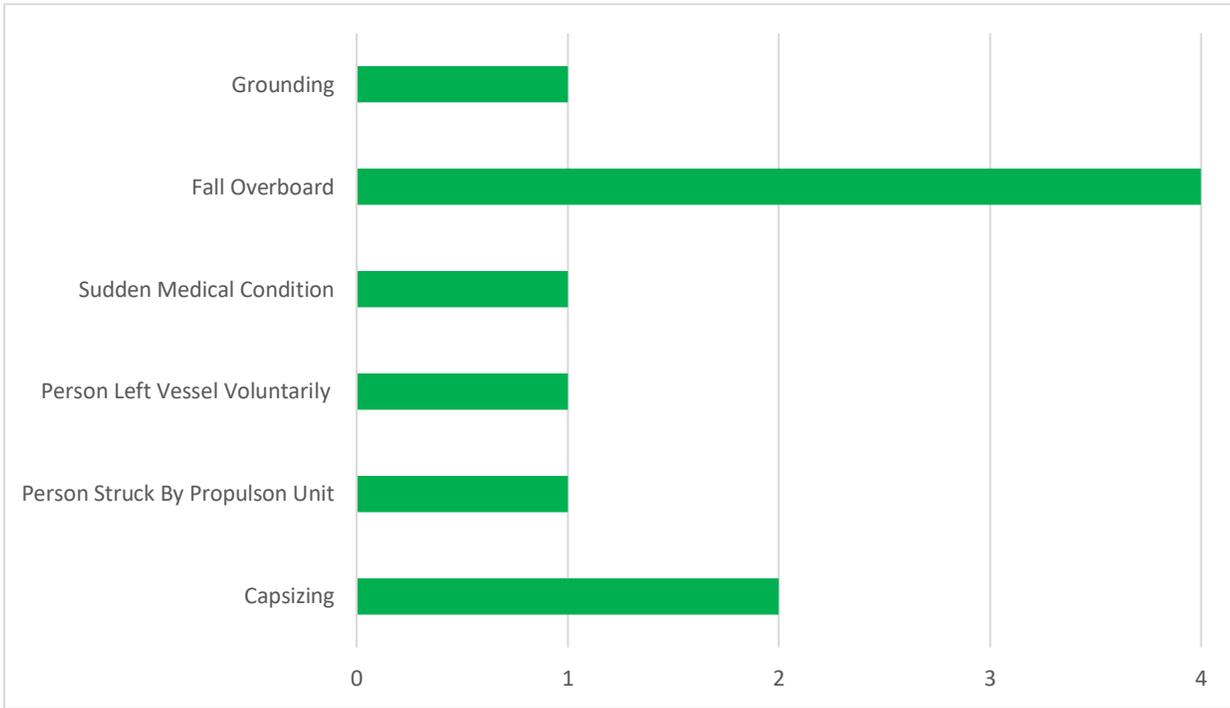
### 2025 Boating Fatalities – Alcohol a Primary Factor



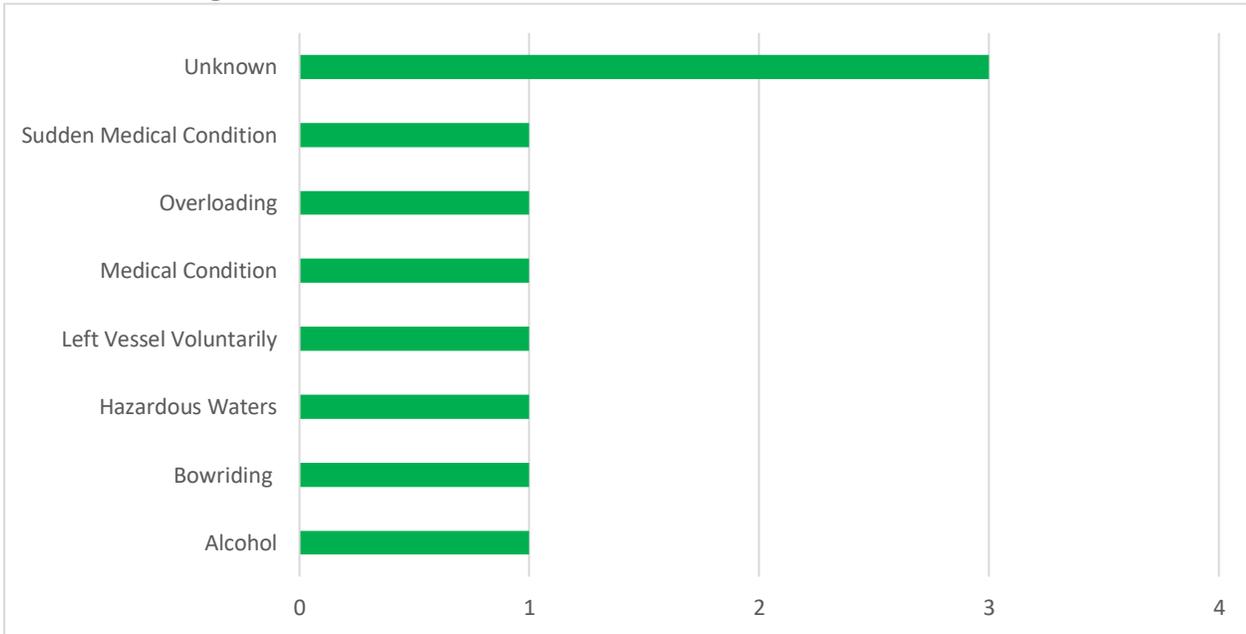
### 2025 Boating Fatalities – Life Jacket Use



### 2024 Boating Fatalities – Type of Incident



### 2024 Boating Fatalities – Cause of Incident



## **2025 Boating Fatalities Summaries**

On April 20, 2025 - A Female victim age 59 and her sister were both kayaking on the Shenandoah River near the Karo section of the river. Both individuals were in separate sit-on-top style kayaks, neither individual was wearing a life jacket at the time. In a section of the river containing rapids, the victim's kayak overturned causing the victim to fall out of the kayak and into the water. The victim's right leg became stuck in underwater debris, which prevented the victim from being able to resurface. The victim was later pulled from River by Fire/EMS personnel. Victim was pronounced deceased at the scene, also suffered lacerations and avulsions to the right thigh.

On May 1, 2025 - A 15-foot vessel with two occupants were traveling East on Lake Anna near Martin's Point toward Christopher Run Campground. The operator of vessel, a male age 72 lost control of the vessel causing both occupants to be thrown from the vessel. The vessel continued in a circular motion until running into the shoreline. The 74-year-old female occupant on the vessel was able to swim away from the vessel with only minor injuries consisting of bruising to both arms and legs. The operator of the vessel was struck by the vessel and suffered fatal injuries. Life jackets were present on the vessel but were not worn. An engine cut-off switch lanyard was present and installed, however it was not worn by the operator.

On May 13, 2025 - Two individuals were paddling a rowboat on Happy Hollow Lake while pulling a floating dock. The vessel took on water and overturned causing both individuals to fall into the water. One of the individuals swam to shore. The victim, a male aged 84 who was not wearing a lifejacket went under the water and drowned.

On June 10, 2025 - A group of five individuals were fishing in a cove aboard a rental boat on Smith Mountain Lake when the victim, a male aged 54 entered the water to swim. Witnesses reported that the victim appeared to be struggling while attempting to swim toward a nearby dock before going under and failing to resurface. A member of the group entered the water to assist but was unsuccessful in locating the victim. The Smith Mountain Lake Fire and Rescue Dive Team responded to the scene and deployed a diver for recovery efforts. The victim was located approximately 15 feet from the dock and was unresponsive upon recovery. The Medical Examiner determined cause of death was drowning. The victim tested positive for cocaine and marijuana and had a heart condition, all of which were likely contributing factors to the drowning. The victim was not wearing a life jacket.

On June 23, 2025 - The victim, a male age 71 was found lying behind the boat with his shirt wrapped around the propeller. Tangier fire department responded and unwrapped the shirt from the propeller and recovered the victim. When they were looking over the boat the victim was on, they realized the boat was in gear. The medic on Tangier declared the victim dead at the scene. There were no witnesses to the accident. It was determined that the deceased suffered blunt force trauma and drowned. The victim was not wearing a life jacket.

On July 4, 2025 - The victim, a male aged 64 was kayaking alongside of an island on the Jackson River in Alleghany County just downstream from the Indian Draft Boat Launch. The victim was utilizing a 9-foot-long sit on top styled kayak at the time. The victim reached for something in the water and fell in. The victim then

stood up while looking for the missing item. The witness looked away and when the witness turned back around the victim was missing. The victim's body was found approximately a .5 mile downstream at approximately 1420 hours by fire and EMS. It is unknown if the victim had been drinking at the time of the incident. The Medical Examiner did not find any trauma to the body and the lungs did not contain water. The finding is that the incident was medically related. The victim was not wearing a life jacket.

On July 26, 2025 - While underway and making way the victim, a male age 49 was riding on the bow of the vessel with his legs over the gunwale. The victim unexpectedly entered the water and the vessel passed over him. The operator, a female aged 42 stopped the vessel. The victim was attempting to swim back to the vessel and became distressed, calling for help. A passenger entered the water carrying a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) to assist. During this time the victim was overcome and lost consciousness. A second passenger entered the water to assist, and a Type IV PFD was passed to the passengers. The victim was brought back to the vessel, where he remained unconscious. He was brought aboard the vessel and another passenger contacted 911. Virginia Marine Police arrived on scene within 20-25 minutes. The victim's vessel was hip-towed to the nearest marina, while one Marine Police Officer performed CPR. A second Marine Police Officer met the boat crew at the marina and took over CPR. Once moored, the victim was transferred to EMS care. EMS transported the victim to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased.

On August 7, 2025 – A 34-year-old male individual launched from Williams Landing on the Pamunkey River around 0530 hours. The individual was by himself in a 1973 13-foot Boston Whaler, to spend the morning cat fishing on the river. Witness near the Rockahock Bar area of the river observed the vessel spinning in circles with no occupants on board around 0700 that morning. The victim of the vessel was recovered the following day August 8, 2025, at approximately 1600 hours, several hundred yards down river from where the vessel was observed unoccupied. No apparent injuries were observed upon recovery of body. The victim was wearing an automatic/manual life jacket at the time of the recovery; however, the life jacket was not inflated. Inspection of the life jacket, bobbin, and CO2 canister were conducted. The bobbin indicator was showing red upon inspection, and the bobbin itself showed an expired date. The CO2 canister showed a manufacture date of 2018 and expired by several years (3+). The canister top was punctured, and the function of the pull cord worked as it should. Alcoholic beverages (full and empty) and items consistent with the smell and description of marijuana were located on the vessel. Medical examiner and toxicology report listed the cause of death was accidental drowning with contributing factors of intoxication as ethanol, cocaine, and THC were present in the blood samples taken from the victim.

On August 10, 2025 – A 56-year-old male individual launched a vessel at Slagles Lake in Greensville County to fish. A citizen called into 911 for an unoccupied vessel full of water around 12 noon that same day. The vessel was located on the shoreline opposite the boat landing, completely full of water; vessel was a 16' Alumacraft Crappie Deluxe. A small debris field consisting of fishing gear and tackle was located several hundred yards away toward the main lake. Vessel had a large hole located near the bow eye. Damage appeared to be preexisting but may have been a contributing factor to the vessel taking on water. The male victim was located the following morning of August 11th in the main section of the lake in roughly 8-9 feet of water. No apparent or visible signs of trauma. The victim was not wearing a life jacket. The Medical Examiner's report officially listed the cause of death as drowning with the manner of the death as accidental. The report also shows that the victim had hypertension and cardiovascular disease. It is likely that the victim's vessel took on excessive water from the damage at the bow of the vessel causing the vessel to become unstable. The victim may have suffered from a medical emergency prior to falling off or after

falling off the vessel, which contributed to the victim drowning.

September 15, 2025 – A 61-year-old male was driving his boat on Smith Mountain Lake and had a fatal medical episode (cardiac arrest) that caused him to lose control of the vessel. The vessel continued at full throttle hitting the bank, rip rap, and ramping into a group of trees at the shoreline. The victim was not wearing a life jacket.

### **2025 – Incident Summaries from Selected Boating Injuries**

On June 1, 2025 – A vessel hit a large wake too hard injuring both occupants, 39-year-old male operator and his wife a 37-year-old female. The operator admitted he misread the size of the wake and hit it with too much speed. Both parties reported back pain and were transported by EMS. Neither person was wearing a life jacket.

On June 21, 2025 - The operator a 46-year-old male was travelling approximately 35-40 mph when the tube, tied down in the bow of the boat, came loose and flew back over the windshield. The rope on the tube caught the inside frame of the windshield, pulling it off the boat and sending it back striking the passengers. One passenger a 17-year-old male had several lacerations to his face and noticeable swelling around his right eye, another passenger a 20-year-old male was struck on top of the head receiving injuries on his scalp that required stitches. Both were wearing life jackets.

On July 26, 2025 – Two Personal Watercraft (PWC) collided on Buggs Island Lake. The PWCs collided head on. PWC #1 went over top of PWC #2 and exited off the left/port side causing damage to the bow of PWC #2 injuring all occupants of both vessels. The 39-year-old female on PWC #1 suffered a concussion. The 42-year-old female on PWC #2 received lacerations to the face and broken nasal bone. The 15-year-old female on PWC #2 suffered a concussion. All three victims were wearing life jackets.

On July 31, 2025 - The operator a 40-year-old male and the victim an 8-year-old female were traveling east into Cape Charles harbor when they saw a pod of dolphins. The victim, in the rear of the vessel, got excited and ran towards the bow. The operator throttled down and turned to the left, causing the victim to fall off the bow of the boat, go underneath the vessel between the pontoons, and get struck by the propeller on the upper right leg. The vessel was still in gear when the victim was struck by the propeller. The operator took the vessel out of gear when he heard the victim had fallen over but the victim was already to the rear of the vessel. The victim received a 6-inch laceration on the upper right leg caused by the propeller strike. The victim was wearing a life jacket.

On November 28, 2025 - A 10-foot open motorboat was attempting to cross Lake Drummond with a 24-year-old male operator and two passengers, 22-year-old and 31-year-old males, along with tree stands, guns and other hunting gear. At the halfway point the motor failed, and the vessel began to take on water due to the boat being overloaded. The victims were unable to bail out the water fast enough and the boat capsized causing all three people to enter the water. None of the victims were wearing a PFD and there was only one PFD on the vessel. The men were in the water for about an hour before they were picked up by Chesapeake Fire department and taken to Chesapeake Regional Hospital for treatment for cold water exposure. The vessel was later recovered from the lake and had no damage.