DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Preliminary 2019 Minnesota Boating Accident and Drowning Summary

Prepared by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Boat and Water Safety as of 12/31/19

Summary of Accidents – as of 12/31 each year

Accident Category and Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Boating Fatalities	10	14	12	18	18	14	12	15	16	12
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	92	64	92	79	71	36	65	72	61	71
Non-Boating Drownings	35	40	31	40	35	29	30	40	50	34

There is usually a delay in the reporting of non-fatal accidents.

Summary of Accidents for the Entire Year – January - December

Accident Category and Year	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Boating Fatalities	14	12	18	18	14	12	15	16	12	15
Non-Fatal Boating Accidents	64	92	79	71	36	65	72	61	71	70
Non-Boating Drownings	40	31	40	35	29	30	40	50	34	28

2019 Statewide Summary – as of 12/31/19

Boating Fatalities

1. 5/12 – Becker Co. – Island Lake – A 61-year-old Sauk Rapids man drowned after apparently falling overboard from his 18-foot motorboat. About 11:15 a.m., witnesses saw a person in the water trying to grab the circling boat. When rescuers reached him, he was unresponsive. CPR was started, and was continued by emergency personnel when they arrived. He was transported by air to a Fargo hospital, where he later died. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

2. *5/21 – Cass Co. – Lake Louise – A 78-year-old Illinois City, IL man drowned after apparently falling overboard from his 20-foot motorboat. Officers received a report at 3:25 p.m. and responded to find the man's body floating in the water, near the boat. There was also a fishing pole in the water. He was pronounced deceased at the scene. (Life jacket worn – no)*

3. 5/29 – Chippewa Co. – Lac qui Parle Lake – A 60-year-old Maynard man drowned after somehow falling overboard from his 16-foot motorboat. Authorities received a report of an unoccupied boat on the lake at about 3:40 p.m. Deputies found the boat drifting, anchored it and they headed to the place where the empty boat was first seen. As they got close, they saw another boat whose occupants were flagging them down. They had found the boat owner's body floating in the water. He was pronounced deceased at the scene. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

4. 6/7 – Mahnomen Co. – Little Vanose Lake – A 19-year-old Thief River Falls man drowned after falling overboard from his 10-foot personal watercraft (PWC). He was riding alone on the lake and was last seen about 8:00 p.m. At some point, individuals on land no longer saw him riding and went to go look

for him. After searching the lake, they found his PWC pushed up to shore, unoccupied and running. Authorities arrived and searched the lake until about 2:30 a.m. on 6/8. The search was continued at 5:30 a.m. and his body was found at about 2:14 p.m. on the bottom of the lake. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

5. 6/15 – Anoka Co. – Lake George – A 53-year-old Oak Grove man drowned, after leaving an unanchored 16-foot motorboat to swim, at about noon. He was a passenger in the boat and wanted to cool off so he removed his life jacket and jumped in the water. The boat began drifting with the wind and he couldn't keep up. The man began to struggle but the operator couldn't get the engine started to get back to him. The operator then jumped in to swim a tube to the man but was unable to reach the man before starting to struggle himself. He used the tube to get back to the boat. The man went below the surface. His body was located and recovered just before noon the following day. *(Life jacket worn – on board boat – yes; to swim - no)*

6. 7/10 – Winona Co. – A 74-year-old Winona man drowned after falling overboard from the 8-foot pontoon boat he was a passenger in. The two occupants were fishing when the passenger reached down to grab a bobber, and then fell into the water. He then went unresponsive. The operator got him to a log and started CPR. First responders arrived and continued CPR. He was transported to the hospital where he was later pronounced deceased. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

7. 7/12 – Winona Co. – Mississippi River – A 63-year-old Winona man drowned after the 14-foot motorboat he was operating capsized about 7:24 p.m. He and a passenger had been fishing above the spillway. The operator maneuvered the boat too close to the spillway and was pulled parallel to the spillway. The boat did not have enough power to pull them away. The boat capsized putting both men in the water. Both men and the boat went over the spillway. The passenger was able to grab onto a life jacket and hang onto the capsized boat and was rescued by another boat. The operator had gone under the water. A search was started and his body was located the following day at about 8:00 p.m. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

8. 7/15 – Crow Wing Co. – Little Pelican Lake – A 73-year-old Pequot Lakes man drowned after apparently falling overboard from his 24-foot pontoon boat. He was fishing alone and had last been seen on the boat about 35 minutes prior to the boat being found empty, with the trolling motor running, at about 9:30 p.m. Authorities were called and a search was started. The man's body was found about three hours later. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

9. 7/25 – Wabasha Co. – Lake Pepin – A 69-year-old Shoreview man drowned after falling overboard from his 30-foot auxiliary sailboat about 4:50 p.m. He was attempting to drop the sail when he fell in. He couldn't swim and the operator threw two float cushions but the wind blew them away. He went under. Authorities started a search. The man's body was found by a boater at about 11:45 a.m. on 7/27 near Pepin, WI. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

10. 9/2 – Scott Co. – Minnesota River – A 62-year-old Watertown man apparently drowned after somehow falling overboard from his 17-foot motorboat. He had left to go fishing about 8:30 a.m. At 10:50 a.m., authorities received a report of an empty boat with the motor running. A search was started and the man's body was found on 9/5 about 500 feet from where the boat was located. *(Life jacket worn – no)*

*4/19 – Pine Co. – Cross Lake – A MN DNR conservation officer (CO) from Pine City drowned after being thrown overboard while searching for a possible body in the water at about 8:25 p.m. He and a Pine County sheriff's deputy had just left the boat launch in the CO's jet boat and were heading to the area when they were thrown from the boat as it made a sharp left turn. They started swimming to shore. Other deputies on shore found a boat and headed out to help the officers in the water. They reached the deputy and got him from the water but the CO had gone under before they got to him. A search was started and his body was recovered about 1:35 a.m. the following day. *(Life jacket worn – no) This was not a recreational boating fatality and therefore will not be counted by the U.S. Coast Guard as a recreational boating fatality.*

*9/30 – St. Louis Co. – Lake Superior – A 68-year-old Sturgeon Bay, WI man drowned when the 21-foot cabin motorboat he was operating capsized. He and two other employees were checking a pipe while working for

the salvage company that owns the boat. The back end of the boat became submerged, after rocking on a large wave, causing the motor to die. The boat then rotated parallel with the waves and capsized. All three men were wearing life jackets and made it out of the boat. Two of them made it to shore and called 911. The body of the operator was located on the shore about 40 minutes later. Resuscitation was attempted, to no avail. *(Life jacket worn – yes, but not zipped) This was not a recreational boating fatality and therefore will not be counted by the U.S. Coast Guard as a recreational boating fatality.*

*11/14 – Washington Co. – Mississippi River – A 44-year-old Jacksonville, AL man fell overboard from the towboat where he was a crew member. The towboat was heading downriver and the man was working on the starboard side. Another crew member said it appeared that something let go and the man fell overboard. He then got pushed under the towboat. The crew launched a skiff and retrieved him from the water. CPR was started and emergency services was contacted. He was pronounced deceased at the hospital. *(Life jacket worn – yes) This was not a recreational boating fatality and therefore will not be counted by the U.S. Coast Guard as a recreational boating fatality.*

Non-Fatal Boating Accidents

Type of Accident	Number
Capsizing	8
Collision with a fixed or floating object	6
Collision with another watercraft	26
Collision with an underwater object	1
Collision with swimmer or person in water	2
Fall in boat	3
Falls overboard	6
Fire/Explosion	8
Grounding, Hitting Bottom	5
Struck by Propeller	0
Sinking / Flooding / Swamping	4
Water-skiing, wake boarding or tubing mishap	16
Other	7
Total reportable non-fatal boating accidents as of 12/31/19	92

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.
2. There is usually a delay in the reporting of non-fatal boating accidents.

Non-Boating Drownings

1. 1/16 – St. Louis Co. – YMCA hot tub – a 32-year-old Duluth man drowned while in the hot tub. He had gotten into the tub at 7:53 a.m. He was plugging his nose and submerging himself. A lifeguard noticed him fully submerged and pulled him from the water at 8:01 a.m. CPR was started by the lifeguard and two other bystanders. Paramedics took over the resuscitation effort when they arrived but it was unsuccessful.

2. 3/9 – Washington Co. – residential hot tub – A 55-year-old Minneapolis woman drowned in a residential hot tub. She was with friends in the hot tub the previous evening (3/8/19). They all got out of the hot tub to go in the house and go to bed. The following morning, the woman was found in the hot tub, deceased.

3. 3/20 – Washington Co. – Mississippi River – The body of an 84-year-old St. Paul man was found floating between two boat slips by the marina owner. It is unknown where, when or how he entered the river.

4. 3/21 – Blue Earth Co. – private drainage ditch – A 92-year-old Amboy man drowned while apparently chipping ice in a culvert. It is believed that when the ice was chipped away, water started rushing through the culvert and washed the man into the drainage ditch. His body was recovered approximately two miles downstream on 3/26.

5. 4/28 – St. Louis Co. – hotel hot tub – A 57-year-old Merrifield woman was found floating by her husband in their hotel room hot tub. They had gone to bed about 9:45 p.m. The husband woke up, about an hour and a half later, with all the lights in the room turned on and his wife floating in the hot tub.

6. 5/20 – Cass Co. – Leech Lake – A 69-year-old Mora woman drowned while apparently playing with her dog near the lake. She had been on the cabin's lakeside deck with her dog when her husband went to clean fish. When he came back he couldn't find her and started searching the area. He found her face-down in the water at the water's edge. There was also a throwable dog toy in the water. He got her out of the water, called 911, and started CPR. Deputies arrived and assisted with CPR until the ambulance arrived. She was pronounced dead on scene.

7. 5/24 – Washington Co. – St. Croix River – The body of an 80-year-old Stillwater man was recovered after being found floating at a marina near Stillwater. He was found in an unoccupied boat slip next to the dock. It is unknown when, where or how he entered the river.

8. 5/25 – Ramsey Co. – Pickerel Lake – The body of a 53-year-old St. Paul man was found by people in a canoe on the lake. They saw something floating, saw it was a body and called 911. It is unknown how or when he came to be in the river.

9. 5/26 – Dakota Co. – Mississippi River – A 24-year-old man drowned after somehow entering the river. The sheriff's office received a report, from a boater, of a body floating down the river. It is unknown how, where, or when the man entered the river.

10. 5/30 – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – A 28-year-old Edina man drowned after jumping from a railroad bridge into the center of the river at 9:20 p.m. He was with a friend, who had jumped first. The friend was climbing back up the trestle when he heard the victim splash into the water. When he got to the top, he saw the victim heading downstream, about 30 yards from the bridge. He called 911 about 9:30 p.m. when he realized the victim had not come out of the water. His body was recovered on 6/4/19.

11. 6/1 – Anoka Co. – Coon Lake – A 17-year-old Blaine boy drowned while swimming with friends at the beach area. While swimming back toward the beach he started to struggle, called for help and went under the water. The friends started to search for him. He was located in about 7 feet of water. He was loaded on a personal watercraft and brought to shore, where CPR was started. He was transported by helicopter to a medical center, where he was later pronounced dead.

12. 6/8 – Washington Co. – townhouse community pool – A 21-year-old Woodbury woman drowned in the community pool at her townhouse sometime around 9:00 p.m. After failing to respond to text messages, a friend went looking for her about 10:15 p.m. and found her floating in the pool and not breathing. The friend got her out of the pool and called authorities. Woodbury Fire medics arrived and started treating her. They transported her to the hospital, where she later died.

13. 6/15 – Becker Co. – Detroit Lake – A 31-year-old Frazee man drowned while trying to save his young son. The boy had fallen from a bridge into the water. The man jumped in and was able to save his son, but slipped under the water. He was located by authorities about 45 minutes later and brought to shore. Life saving measures were started and he was transported to the hospital where he died.

14. 6/27 – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – The body of a 59-year-old Minneapolis man was found floating in the river near Boom Island. It is unknown how, when or where the man actually entered the river.

15. 6/29 – Hennepin Co. – Bush Lake – An 18-year-old man from Mexico was reported missing at 3:30 p.m. while swimming with friends in the swim area. He was last seen swimming from the beach to the swim platform. A search of the water was started. He was located at about 8:55 p.m. in 9 feet of water.

16. 7/2 – St. Louis Co. – Little Grand Lake – A 14-year-old Superior, WI boy was swimming to a floating dock that was about 75 yards off shore. He went underwater and was submerged for several minutes. He was unresponsive when he was recovered from the bottom of the lake and CPR was started. He was transported to the hospital and was in critical condition. He died at the hospital the following night.

17. 7/6 – Wright Co. – Crow River – A 64-year-old Maplewood man drowned while tubing on the river. He was with two friends when he struck a tree branch and was knocked into the water. He was floating face down in the middle of the river. A search was started and his body was found in a group of trees and branches in the river about 3 hours later.

18. 7/6 – Hennepin Co. – residential pool – A 79-year-old Brooklyn Center man was swimming in the pool during a social gathering. It was noticed that he had sunk to the bottom of the pool in the deep end. He was pulled from the pool by a neighbor and CPR was started. Rescue personnel arrived and he was transported to the hospital, where he later died.

19. 7/11 – Washington Co. – residential pool – A 2-year-old St. Paul boy was found at the bottom of an above-ground pool. He had been going back and forth between watching a movie and playing in the yard. When he had been outside a little longer than usual, the homeowner went outside and found him at the bottom of the pool. She pulled him out and attempted CPR until police arrived.

20. 7/12 – Hennepin Co. – Mississippi River – A 56-year-old Minneapolis man drowned after a medical incident while at the Boom Island boat launch. He had been on the dock when a man cleaning his kayaks heard a splash. The kayaker threw a life jacket to the man in the water, but he did not respond to it. He kayaked to the man and pulled him to the boat launch. CPR was started and was continued when first responders arrived. The man was transported to the hospital where he later died.

21. 7/18 – Olmsted Co. – Bear Creek – A 46-year-old Rochester man drowned while trying to get his dog from the water. The dog had gone in the creek and over the wing dam and was struggling to get out of the water. The man went in at the top of the wing dam structure, slipped and started to struggle as the current took him over the structure and downstream. He was reported missing when he didn't return home. His body was located and recovered on 7/21.

22. 7/23 – Hennepin Co. – residential pool – An 83-year-old Bloomington woman was found in the shallow end at the bottom of her pool. A family member had contacted her by phone the previous day, but they had not heard from her since. Another family member stopped by to check on her and found her in the pool. It is unknown when or how the woman entered the pool.

23. 7/26 – Stearns Co. – Knaus Lake – A 50-year-old Cold Spring man drowned after swimming to catch an inflatable swim raft that had floated away. When he was about 30 yards from shore, he turned around without reaching the raft and started swimming for shore. While he was swimming, the wake from a passing boat struck him. He appeared to struggle and started to do a back stroke. Another wake from a second watercraft struck him and he went under. Witnesses started a search for him and first responders arrived and continued the search. He had been under water for about 20 minutes when he was found in 6 feet of water. He was airlifted to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased.

24. 7/27 – Blue Earth Co. – Blue Earth River – A 10-year-old Madelia boy drowned while swimming with family in the river. He and three other children were swept away in the fast current. The other children were rescued by bystanders but he had gone underwater and was not seen after that. A search was started and his body was located on 7/29, almost 1.5 miles downstream.

25. 8/2 – Hennepin Co. – Cedar Island Lake – A 26-year-old Blue Earth man drowned about 12:11 a.m. while attempting to swim across the lake. He was trying to evade police. His body was located and recovered from the water at 5:06 a.m.

26. 8/7 – Dakota Co. – Mississippi River – A 60-year-old Maryville, TN man drowned after falling overboard, about 10:34 p.m., from the docked vessel that he was a passenger on. He surfaced once near the dock and went under again. He was located about 11:45 p.m. CPR was started and he was taken to the hospital, where he later died.

27. 8/29 – St. Louis Co. – residential bathtub – A 35-year-old Chisholm woman drowned in her bathtub after suffering a medical incident. She was found with her face partially in the water by her husband. He pulled her out, called 911 and started CPR, to no avail.

28. 9/1 – St. Louis Co. – Duluth Harbor – A 21-year-old Duluth man was reported missing on 9/1 after a night out with friends. He had left alone and was seen heading toward downtown. His body was recovered from a boat slip in Canal Park on 9/6. It is unknown how he came to be in the water.

29. 9/15 – Redwood Co. – Redwood River – A 16-year-old Redwood Falls teen was swimming with friends in calm water near the riverbank. The river was above flood stage. He got too far from shore and was swept away in the strong current. A search was started and his body was located on 9/21.

30. Unk. – Freeborn Co. – channel between Fountain and Albert Lea Lakes – The body of a 21-year-old Albert Lea man was found floating in the channel on 9/16/19. He had been reported missing in early July, and had last been seen on June 29. It is unknown how or why he came to be in the water.

31. 9/25 – Hennepin Co. – golf course pond – An almost 3-year-old boy from the United Kingdom was pulled from a pond on a golf course. He had been reported missing from the house he was staying at and a search was started. A golfer saw shoes in the pond and the boy was pulled from the water. Resuscitation was started and he was transported to the hospital where he was breathing on his own. He died at the hospital on 10/20.

32. 10/17 – Ramsey Co. – residential tub – A 69-year-old Maplewood woman was found unresponsive in her bathtub by her husband. He had last seen her about 11:00 p.m., when she was cutting her hair. When he went to check on her later, he found her unresponsive in the tub with her face in the water. He called 911 and CPR was started, to no avail.

33. 11/23 – Carlton Co. – St. Louis River – A 34-year-old Scanlon man drowned after breaking through thin ice on the river at about 1:25 a.m. Law enforcement officers in the area heard calls for help and saw the man in the river approximately 100 feet from shore. There was solid ice along the shore, but it became thinner toward the center of the river, where there was open water. Rescue efforts were underway when the man slipped under water. His body was recovered about 7:00 a.m. after being located by an underwater remotely operated vehicle.

34. Unk. – Hennepin Co. – Bde Maka Ska – A 29-year-old Minneapolis man was found floating in the channel between Bde Maka Ska and Lake of the Isles by passersby on 11/26/19. It is unknown how or when he came to be in the water. His last contact with friends and family was in late October.

35. 12/25 – Hennepin Co. – apartment pool – A 27-year-old Hopkins man drowned while swimming in an apartment pool. He was swimming alone at about 4:30 p.m. and attempted to swim to the deep end of the pool. He began to struggle and went under water. He was found and pulled from the pool at about 7:30 p.m. Resuscitation was started, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.