

Major Changes to the Publication

As a result of changes in 33 CFR 174.19 that took effect 1 January 2017, a new term “paddlecraft” was introduced and defined as “a vessel powered only by its occupants, using a single or double bladed paddle as a lever without the aid of a fulcrum provided by oarlocks, thole pins, crutches, or similar arrangements”. As such, the definition limits the use of the term “paddlecraft” to non-motorized vessels. Consequently, any canoe or kayak with a motor has been classified as an “open motorboat” for accident reporting and registration purposes. Though the term “paddlecraft” exists in regulation, for the purposes of this publication, the subcategories of canoe, kayak, and standup paddleboard have been retained; these represent non-motorized vessels, and data can be combined to represent paddlecraft.

Table 10 has been amended to provide a breakdown of the victim’s role (operator, occupant, other/unknown). Examples of “other” include tuber, wakeboarder, water skier, kneeboarder, bystander, and swimmer.

Table 4a has been added to provide detail related to Figure 2. Figures 9a and 9b have been added to provide a graphical depiction of information in Tables 26 and 27. Figures 12 and 16 have been color-coded.

The glossary has been updated to reflect new definitions in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

Table 37 has been rearranged due to a change in data collection. On 1 January 2017, changes in regulation (33 CFR 174.19) necessitated revision to the Coast Guard’s data collection on registration, which took place in early 2017. Due to delays in transitioning to a new form, the Coast Guard accepted registration data on the previous registration collection form used and the proposed form. Since the forms did not cover the same information, the publication table was amended.

Four of the statistics in the Executive Summary were changed to remove the records where values were unknown. To find information on the number of “unknown” cases excluded, please reference Tables 35 (on page 66), 22 (on page 46), 5 (on page 20), and 7 (on page 25).

Accident Reporting as Required by Federal Law

Under federal regulations (33 CFR Part 173; Subpart C – Casualty and Accident Reporting) the operator of any numbered vessel that was not required to be inspected or a vessel that was operated for recreational purposes is required to file a BAR when, as a result of an occurrence that involves the vessel or its equipment:

1. A person dies; or
2. A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury; or
3. A person is injured and requires medical treatment beyond first aid; or
4. Damage to vessels and other property totals \$2,000 or more; or
5. There is a complete loss of any vessel.

If the above conditions are met, the federal regulations state that the operator or owner must report their accident to a state reporting authority, abbreviated in this publication as “state.” The reporting authority can be either the state where the accident occurred, the state in which the vessel was numbered, or, if the vessel does not have a number, the state where the vessel was principally used. The owner must submit the report if the operator is deceased or unable to make the report.

The regulations also state the acceptable length of time in which the accident report must be submitted to the reporting authority. Boat operators or owners must submit:

1. Accident reports within 48 hours of an occurrence if:
 - a. A person dies within 24 hours of the occurrence; or
 - b. A person requires medical treatment beyond first aid; or
 - c. A person disappears from the vessel.
2. Accident reports within 10 days of an occurrence if there is damage to the vessel/property only.

The minimum reporting requirements are set by Federal regulation, but states are allowed to have more stringent requirements. For example, some states have a lower threshold for reporting damage to

vessels and other property.

Federal Regulations (33 CFR 174.121) require accident report data to be forwarded to Coast Guard Headquarters within 30 days of receipt by a state or its agent.

The statistics in this publication cover boating accidents reported on waters of joint federal and state jurisdiction and exclusive state jurisdiction. Most states use BAR forms that are similar to the Coast Guard form. A copy of the Coast Guard BAR form used for this report is on pages 73-78.

Casualty and Accident Reporting Guidelines

Casualty and accident reporting applies to each “vessel” used by its operator for recreational purposes or vessels that are required to be numbered and are not subject to inspection.

This publication reflects watercraft that have been deemed a “vessel.” Terms used to describe the various types of watercraft are: airboat, auxiliary sailboat, cabin motorboat, canoe, houseboat, inflatable boat, kayak, open motorboat, personal watercraft, pontoon, raft, rowboat, sailboat, and standup paddleboard. Reports received involving watercraft that have not been determined to be “vessels” to date, such as single unmodified innertubes, have not been included in the statistics in the main body of this report.

“Reportable” Boating Accidents

A vessel is considered to be involved in a “boating accident” whenever a death, missing person, personal injury, property damage, or total vessel loss results from the vessel's operation, construction, seaworthiness, equipment, or machinery.

The following are examples of accident types that are used in this report:

- Grounding, capsizing, sinking, or flooding/swamping.
- Falls in or overboard a vessel.
- Persons ejected from a vessel.
- Fire or explosions that occur while underway and while anchored, moored or docked if the fire resulted from the vessel or vessel equipment.
- Water-skiing or other mishap involving a towable device.
- Collision with another vessel or object.
- Striking a submerged object.
- A person struck by a vessel, propeller, propulsion unit, or steering machinery.
- Carbon monoxide exposure.
- Electrocution due to stray current related to a vessel.
- Casualties while swimming from a vessel that is not anchored, moored or docked.
- Casualties where natural causes served as a contributing factor in the death of an individual but the determined cause of death was drowning.
- Casualties from natural phenomena such as interaction with marine life (i.e. carp causes casualty to person) and interaction with nature (i.e. mountain side falls onto vessel causing casualties).
- Casualties where a person falls off an anchored vessel.
- Casualties that result when a person departs an anchored, disabled vessel to make repairs, such as unfouling an anchor or cleaning out the intake of a jet-propelled vessel.

“Non-Reportable” Boating Accidents

Not every occurrence involving a vessel is considered within the scope of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program. The following occurrences involving a vessel may be required to be reported to the state, but for statistical purposes are excluded from this report and are considered “non-reportable” boating accidents:

- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of self-inflicted wounds, alcohol poisoning, gunshot wounds, or the ingestion of drugs, controlled substances or poison.
- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of assault by another person or persons while aboard a vessel.
- A person dies or is injured from natural causes while aboard a vessel where the vessel did not

- contribute to the casualty.
- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of jumping, diving, or swimming for pleasure from an anchored, moored or docked vessel.
 - A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of swimming to retrieve an object or a vessel that is adrift from its mooring or dock, having departed from a place of inherent safety, such as the shore or pier.
 - Property damage occurs or a person dies, is injured, or is missing while preparing a vessel for launching or retrieving and the vessel is not on the water and capable / ready for its intended use.
 - Property damage occurs or a person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of a fire on shore or a pier that spreads to a vessel or vessels.
 - Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel or a person dies, is injured, or is missing from such a vessel as a result of storms, or unusual tidal or sea conditions; or when a vessel gets underway in those conditions in an attempt to rescue persons or vessels.
 - Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel due to lack of maintenance on the vessel or the structure to which it was moored.
 - Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel due to theft or vandalism.
 - Property damage occurs to, a person dies or is injured on, or a person is missing from a non-propelled residential platform or other watercraft used primarily as a residence that is not underway.
 - Casualties that result from falls from or on docked vessels or vessels that are moored to a permanent structure.
 - Casualties that result from a person climbing aboard an anchored vessel from the water or swimming near an anchored vessel (unless the casualty was related to carbon monoxide exposure or stray electric current).
 - Fire or explosions on anchored, docked or moored boats where the cause of the fire was not attributed to the vessel or vessel equipment.
 - Casualty or damage that results when the vehicle used for trailering the vessel fails.
 - Casualties or damage that occur during accidents that only involve watercraft that have not been deemed a vessel.
 - Casualties or damage that occur when the only vessel(s) involved are being used solely for governmental, commercial or criminal activity.
 - Casualties or damage that occur when the only vessel(s) involved are not required to be numbered and are being used exclusively for racing (exclusion in 33 CFR 173.13(a)).
 - Casualties or damage that occur when the only vessel(s) involved are foreign vessels and thus not subject to U.S. federal reporting requirements.

A list of “non-reportable” scenarios and their associated casualty counts can be found in Table 3.