

2025

Boating Accident Statistical Report

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Law Enforcement

FWC.com/Boating



2025 Boating Officer of the Year

Officer Specialist Eamon McCormack exemplifies leadership, expertise, and an unwavering commitment to boating safety and marine resource protection. A graduate of FWC Academy Class 38 and a 20-year retired U.S. Coast Guard veteran, he patrols the greater Tampa Bay area and serves as a NASBLA Lead Instructor in vessel operations. Leveraging his extensive maritime experience, he mentors officers and partner agencies, strengthens the SWR Field Training Officer Program, and enhances boating enforcement efforts through training and collaboration.

Officer McCormack has demonstrated exceptional investigative skill across complex cases. He assisted Tampa Police Department with a hit-and-run vessel collision that resulted in a BUI arrest with a breath sample over 0.10 BAC, earning commendation from TPD leadership. He led a plainclothes investigation into felony commercial crab trap robbing, resulting in felony charges, and proactively addressed illegal PWC livery operations in Upper Tampa Bay, reducing reckless boating complaints and increasing compliance. He also led seven derelict vessel investigations this year, including a case that resulted in Hillsborough County's first-ever guilty verdict following a DV trial.

In a critical search and rescue operation, Officer McCormack assumed the role of SAR Mission Coordinator after an unmanned vessel was located in Tampa Bay. Utilizing his Coast Guard experience, GPS data analysis, and coordinated search planning with USCG and FWC assets, he directed a multi-agency effort that ultimately led to the recovery of the missing boater, bringing closure to the family.

Beyond enforcement, Officer McCormack is a trusted boating law expert for local and federal partners, routinely providing training, investigative assistance, and policy guidance. He fosters strong relationships with law enforcement agencies and the State Attorney's Office to ensure effective prosecution of vessel-related cases. His leadership, mentorship, and dedication to public service—both on and off the water—make him exceptionally deserving of this recognition.



Officer Specialist Eamon McCormack

Introduction

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), driven by science-based leadership, is committed to creating a sustainable and healthy future for Florida's fish, wildlife, water and habitat resources. The FWC serves Floridians and visitors alike in a variety of ways, most of which revolve around the mission of managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people. The Division of Law Enforcement (DLE) makes up half the agency and is the most visible presence in the public eye acting on the goal of providing healthy resources for safe, satisfied customers.

Division of Law Enforcement

Roles and Mission

The FWC is the only state agency in Florida tasked with managing the state's fish and wildlife resources. As a primary responsibility, the FWC's Division of Law Enforcement focuses on enforcing regulations aimed at protecting and conserving these resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of Florida residents and visitors, all the while blending in its unique and specialized public safety role. The Division's mission is clear: "Protecting Florida's natural resources and people through proactive and responsive law enforcement services."

Responsibilities

The FWC Division of Law Enforcement provides protection to people enjoying Florida's natural resources and enforces resource protection and boating safety laws. Officers patrol where other law enforcement agencies do not routinely patrol such as rural, wilderness, inshore and offshore areas. FWC officers have authority to enforce all state laws and are cross deputized to enforce federal fisheries and wildlife laws.

While carrying out their broad responsibilities, FWC officers seek opportunities to educate and introduce Floridians and visitors to the wonders of Florida's fish, wildlife, and natural resources, as well as safe boat operation and safety equipment requirements.

The Division also provides general law enforcement services as part of Florida's statewide emergency response network. Because of their unique jurisdiction and specialized training and equipment, FWC is charged with protecting the state's waterways and critical infrastructure during times of heightened security threat levels. As seasoned first responders, FWC officers are trained to move fast and efficiently.

Moving forward, FWC will continue to pursue and apply advances in technology to improve response to conservation and general law enforcement incidents. When duty calls, FWC will always be among the first to respond, providing aid as needed. Until then, FWC will continue to lead the way in natural resource protection, proactive boating safety law enforcement and education.

Uniquely prepared

On the water, in the woods and in the air, FWC law enforcement officers are uniquely situated, equipped, and trained to identify and respond to illegal activity and promote public safety, particularly in maritime and wilderness areas.

Core Missions

The FWC protects Florida's people and natural resources. The Division of Law Enforcement is an integral part of the agency and is vital in fulfilling the agency's responsibilities. These core missions reflect the unique capabilities, training and equipment personnel use to achieve those responsibilities.

Boating and Waterways:

Enforces boating rules and regulations, conducts boating safety campaigns and education, provides access to public waters, manages waterways and maintains accurate signage, performs boating accident investigations, addresses derelict vessels and investigates vessel theft and title fraud violations.

Resource Protection and

Access: Educates the public, enforces state and federal fisheries and wildlife laws, protects threatened and endangered species and habitats, safeguards cultural and natural resources, manages captive and nonnative wildlife, investigates fish and wildlife crimes and participates in youth projects to develop the next generation that cares about conservation.

Public Safety: Provides a safe experience for people recreating outdoors, coordinate interagency activities, maintain specialized response units, perform disaster response, search and rescues, intelligence and security and critical incident investigations.

Florida Boating Accident Statistical Report

Intervention Equals Prevention on the Water

FWC officers help to ensure Floridians and visitors are safe when they are on the water. The FWC accomplishes this through proactive law enforcement by initiating boating safety, fisheries, and hunting inspections and identifying and minimizing potential navigation or environmental hazards in the waterways.

FWC's Boating and Waterways Section supports officers by coordinating statewide boating safety efforts. These include education campaigns, waterway marker compliance and maintenance checks, permitting and marking speed-regulated areas, coordinating initiatives aimed at enforcing at risk vessel laws, removing derelict vessels and improving public boating access.

With more than a million registered vessels, Florida is the "Boating Capital of the World." However, high vessel numbers and a mild climate cause Florida to lead the nation in the number of boating fatalities each year. The vast size of Florida's inland, coastal and offshore patrol areas, combined with a significant population of avid and diverse boaters, presents a challenge for the FWC and local and federal maritime enforcement partners.

Boating Education Is Critical

The 2025 Boating Accidents Statistical Report indicates there were 694 reportable boating accidents and 51 boating-related fatalities in the calendar year. This total includes three missing persons who at the end of 2025 has not been located or accounted for and circumstances suggest that death or serious injury has occurred. Many of the deaths were due to victims falling overboard and drowning. Many fatalities may have been prevented if the victims had worn life jackets. FWC continues efforts to reduce the number of boating-related fatalities through education about the importance of wearing life jackets while boating.

Florida's current boating safety education law applies only to boaters born on or after January 1, 1988, operating a motorized vessel of 10 horsepower or greater. The face-to-face contacts by FWC officers and our partner agencies are a critical part of our outreach efforts and education to the boating public. These statistics show us the boat operator most likely to be involved in a boating accident is a middle-age or older male who has boating experience yet never learned the most important safety considerations by having taken a boating safety course. When officers observe boating violations or perform resource enforcement activities, they conduct boating safety inspections aimed at both identifying and preventing violations or accidents. FWC officers strive to make boating safer through education and enforcement with the goal of saving lives.

Safe Boating Is a Choice

Florida is a leader in promoting boating accident prevention. The FWC, in association with the National Safe Boating Council, Bombardier Recreational Products Inc., West Marine, and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has launched a statewide boating safety campaign as part of a national initiative. The "Wear It Florida" campaign encourages boaters to wear life jackets anytime they are on the water and educates boaters about the ease and convenience of inflatable life jackets. The campaign is designed to reach the public through media events, exhibits, personal contacts, social media, radio, and televised public service announcements.

Division of Law Enforcement Values

Integrity

We value candor, honesty and the highest standards of ethical behavior and are committed to upholding our positions of public trust.

Professionalism

We value the skillful performance which demonstrates a clear sense of commitment and direction in an environment that encourages teamwork and innovation.

Dedication

We value the motivation and dedication with which our members serve the visitors and residents of Florida.

Adaptability

We value our unique capability to adapt and respond appropriately to diverse circumstances in all environments.

Florida Boating Accident Statistical Report

About This Report

The 2025 Boating Accident Statistical Report is compiled by the Boating and Waterways Section of the FWC's Division of Law Enforcement. Most of the data contained in this report is gathered from boating accident investigation reports submitted by FWC officers and marine law enforcement partners.

At the end of each calendar year, boating accident data is compiled and assembled into Florida's annual report. The FWC's Boating and Waterways Section analyzes this information and uses it to formulate proactive plans aimed at reducing the number of boating accidents and their related injuries, fatalities, and property damage. This information is also reported to the USCG's Boating Safety Division in Washington, D.C., to be included in the national database consisting of data from all U.S. states and territories.

The statistics reflect reportable boating accidents that occurred in Florida. Boating accidents must meet at least one of five criteria to be classified as reportable:

- A person dies.
- A person disappears under circumstances that indicate possible death or injury.
- A person receives an injury requiring medical treatment beyond immediate first aid.
- There is at least \$2,000 aggregate property damage to the vessel(s) or other property.
- There is a total loss of a vessel.

The number of registered vessels in Florida decreased slightly in 2025. With 1,027,742 registered vessels, Florida leads the nation in registered vessels. Additionally, it is estimated that up to one million non-registered vessels actively use Florida's waters, and this segment of the boating population appears to still be growing. Florida waterways show signs of congestion as each year brings more residents and visitors together to use abundant water resources and enjoy Florida's boating lifestyle.



FWC Officers educate boaters about the importance of wearing a life jacket.

Florida Boating Accident Statistical Report

2025 Summary

Boating Accident Review

- Florida leads the nation with a total number of 1,027,742 registered vessels in 2025.
- There were 694 reportable boating accidents in 2025.

Reportable Boating Accident

- Collision with fixed object was the leading type of accident with a total of 243 (35%).
- Towed watersport activities were involved in 8 accidents, resulting in 12 injuries.
- Paddle/Human powered craft (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, paddleboards) were involved in 17 accidents resulting in 6 fatalities. (7 kayaks/canoes)
- May was the month with the highest number of accidents (97).
- Monroe County reported the highest number of accidents and injuries (72 total accidents with 1 fatality and 56 injuries).

Reportable Boating Fatalities

- 43 fatal accidents resulting in 51 fatalities.
- 23% of the fatal accidents resulted from boaters falling overboard (10 accidents). Collision with fixed object follows closely behind with 19% (8 accidents) of boating fatalities.
- The leading cause of death in fatal boating accidents was drowning with 27 fatalities (53%).
- March and September were the months with the highest number of fatalities (7 in each month).
- Alcohol or drug-use is reported to have played a role in 14% of fatal boating accidents.
- 73% (37) of the victims of fatal boating accidents were males.
- 62% (31) of 50 operators involved in fatal accidents were age 35 or older.
- 74% (37) of all vessels involved in fatal accidents in 2025 were 21 feet in length or less.

Reportable Boating Injuries

- There were 291 accidents that resulted in 437 injured persons. The rate of injury was 47 injuries per 100,000 registered vessels.

Reportable Personal Watercraft Accidents

- Personal watercraft (PWC) accounted for 17% of all registered vessels in Florida.
- PWC were involved in 23% (161) of reportable boating accidents.
- 45% (72) of PWC accidents involved a collision with another vessel.
- 36% of PWC accidents occurred in Monroe (20), Miami-Dade (20) and Pinellas (18) counties.
- 12 fatalities resulted from the 161 PWC accidents.
- 131 people were injured in PWC accidents.

Boating Education Statistics

- FWC issued 78,804 Boating Safety Education ID Cards in 2025.
- 64% of the cards were issued to persons born on or after January 1, 1988.
- Of the 78,804 cards issued, 59,330 were to males, 18,904 were to females. An additional 37 cards did not list gender. 12,211 cards were issued to out of state residents.
- 67% of operators involved in fatal accidents had no formal boater education.

NOTE: Most boating accident statistics for 2025 were compiled on April 6, 2026. Some minor discrepancies may be noted in some totals and percentages due to variances of when a boating accident report was entered into the database versus when the statistics for this report were calculated. In 2025, there were three persons unaccounted for. There has not been any updated information as to their status as of the date of this report compilation. The three missing persons have been included in the fatality data.