

Our waterways are beautiful
BUT
Be aware of the risks when out
on the water this summer



CENTRAL COAST AND HUNTER REGION

10 YEAR ANALYSIS OF BOATING AND
WATERCRAFT DROWNING DEATHS

Over the past 10 years, 149 people drowned in NSW
when participating in boating and watercraft activities.
19.5% occurred in the Central Coast and Hunter region.

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Respect the River

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IN FOCUS: BOATING & WATERCRAFT DROWNING DEATHS IN AUSTRALIA

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BOATING AND WATERCRAFT DROWNING DEATHS IN AUSTRALIA BETWEEN 2005/06 – 2015/2015

Boating and watercraft accounted for 16.5% of all drowning deaths during this period (10 financial years), 91.8% were of males.

New South Wales had the highest number of boating and watercraft related deaths (31.4 %). Over a quarter of drowning incidents occurred in major cities (28.1%) and outer regional areas (27.4%), 63.5% of people were not considered visitors to the location where they drowned. Over half occurred in the summer and spring (52.0%), with drowning deaths most frequently occurring in October (10.5%) and March (10.3%).

Over one third (35.9%) occurred in the afternoon hours (between 12:01pm to 6pm). Only 8.1% had been wearing a lifejacket. Of those recorded as not wearing a lifejacket, 14% has lifejackets on board the boat.

Alcohol was present in 26.2% of cases, of which 59% were equal to or over the 0.05g/mL blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit. Drugs were present in 30.6% of cases, of which 31.3% were recorded as illegal substances.

149

BOATING AND WATERCRAFT RELATED DROWNING DEATHS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Males accounted for 89.3% and females 10.7%. The top three age groups were of people aged 35-44 years (20.0%), 25-34 years (17%) and 45-54 years (16.0%).

The most common location for boating and watercraft drowning deaths were at inland waterways (41.6%), followed by ocean and harbor locations (40.3%). Most occurred in inner regional locations (39.6%) and major cities (36.9%). Over half (55.7%) were in summer and spring and 50% took place in the afternoon. Fishing and falls into the water were the top activities prior to drowning (28% each). Drowning deaths occurred most frequently when using small powered boats under 5 meters (15.4%) and surfboards (10.7%). Most (66.4%) were not visitors to the location where they drowned.

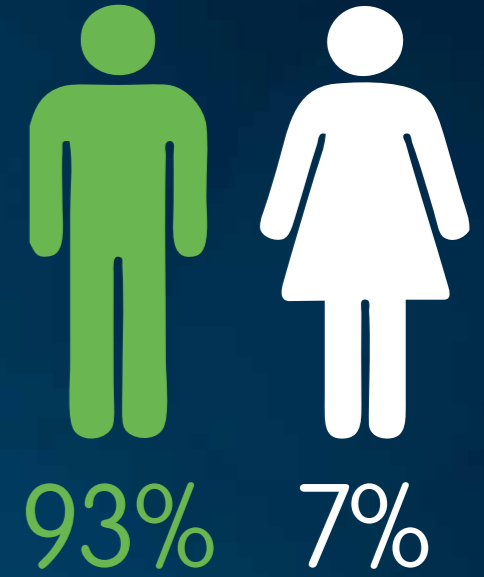
Only 4.7% of cases recorded wearing a lifejacket. In one case, the person was wearing an inflatable lifejacket that did not inflate. Note that in 14.1% of boating and watercraft cases a lifejacket was not required for the activity, for example surfing and body boarding. Alcohol was present in 29.5% of NSW boating and drowning deaths, of those, 65% were equal or over 0.05g/mL BAC. Drugs were recorded in 32.6% of cases, 23.0% of which were recorded as illegal substances.



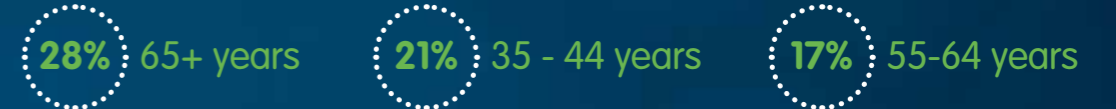
CENTRAL COAST AND HUNTER REGION BOATING AND WATERCRAFT DROWNING DEATHS 2005 - 2015

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PEOPLE DROWNED IN THE CENTRAL COAST AND HUNTER REGION WHEN USING BOATS OR WATERCRAFT BETWEEN 1 JULY 2005 AND 30 JUNE 2015



TOP 3 AGE GROUPS



TOP 2 ACTIVITIES



TOP 3 LOCATIONS



WHEN



HIGH RISK BEHAVIOR



IN FOCUS: CENTRAL COAST AND HUNTER REGION

Who

Males accounted for 93.0% of boating and watercraft drowning deaths. The highest number of fatalities occurred in people aged over 65 years (28.0%), 35-44 years (21.0%).

Two thirds (66.0%) occurred among men aged between 35-75 years.

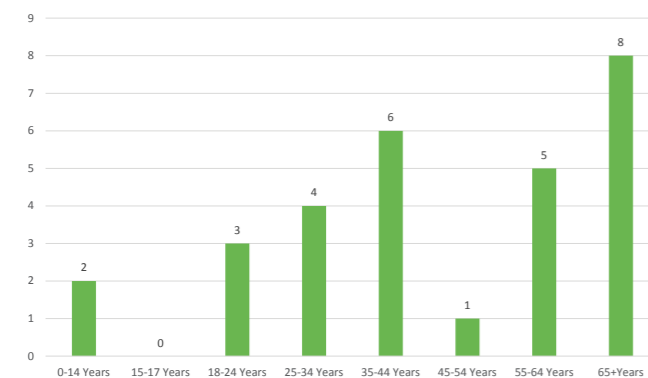


Figure 1: Boating and watercraft drowning deaths by age

Activity

Most boating and watercraft related occurred when using small boats under 5 meters (20.6%), yachts (10.3%) and surfboards (10.3%).

The top activities prior to drowning were fishing (31.0%), whilst moving (24.1%), and hopping on/off a vessel (13.8%).

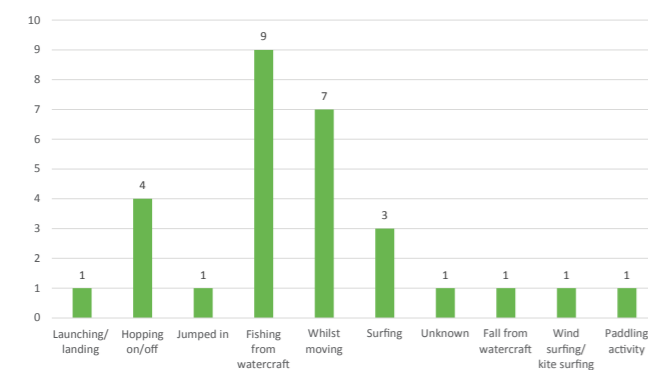


Figure 2: Boating and watercraft drowning deaths by activity

Time and location

41.3% occurred on Saturday and Sunday in the afternoon. Surprisingly, the highest number of boating and watercraft drowning deaths in this region occurred in the winter (34.5%), and in autumn (27.6%).

Nearly three quarters (72.4%) were not visitors to the location where they drowned.

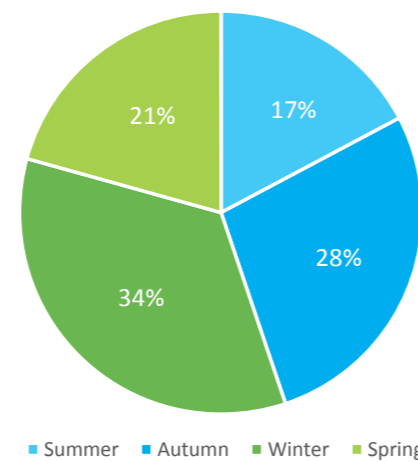


Figure 3: Boating and watercraft drowning deaths by season

High Risk Behaviour

Alcohol was present in 27.0%, of which 62.5% were above the legal limit for operating a vessel. Drugs were found in 28.0% of cases, with one quarter (25.0%) having consumed illegal drugs.

Over 50% of people were not wearing lifejackets at the time of the incident. In two cases, lifejackets were found on-board the board. One person was wearing an inflatable lifejacket that did not inflate.

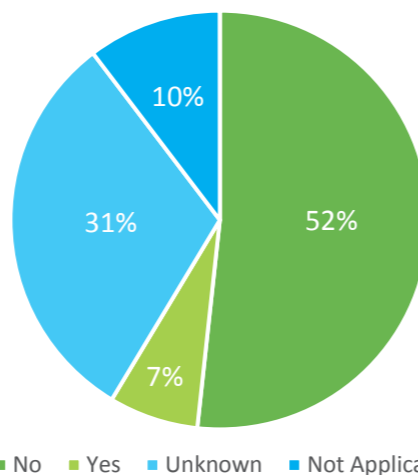


Figure 4: Boating and watercraft drowning deaths by lifejacket status

KEY ISSUE: LIFEJACKETS

Lifejackets - An Informed Choice

1. Choose the most appropriate lifejacket for your height and weight, ability and water-based activity.
2. There are two common styles of lifejackets – positive buoyancy (“foam”) and inflatable.
3. Foam lifejackets are relatively easy to care for, and require no mandatory servicing.
4. Inflatable lifejackets are less bulky and allow greater ease of movement, but require extra care, and must be serviced according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
5. Take time to know the difference and choose what is best for you and your activity.

Lifejacket care and service

The law in NSW requires that you service your inflatable lifejacket once a year or in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. You can do this yourself (if permitted by the manufacturer) or you can get it professionally done, just follow the manufacturer’s instructions. If your lifejacket shows signs of corrosion, wear, damage or leaks, don’t try to repair it yourself - take it to a professional service agent or dispose of it appropriately. It’s not worth the risk.

No matter what kind of lifejacket you have – always thoroughly dry the lifejacket and store it in a dry, well ventilated place away from direct sunlight.

By selecting the right lifejacket and regularly caring and servicing it - this could save your life; and it could save your family or friend’s lives too.

Remember, a life jacket never ruined a day on the water.

Visit lifeajacketwearit.com.au or facebook.com/nswmaritime for more information.

CASE STUDY: OLD4NEW LIFEJACKET CAMPAIGN

The Old4New lifejacket program is all about making more boaters aware of the range of modern lifejackets.

Not only are they slim-fitting but there’s also a style to suit all different types of water activity. Now in its third season running, the program is helping to promote wearing a lifejacket when you’re out on the water, especially when in smaller craft. Advice and guidance on lifejacket care and servicing is provided through the Old4New program and skippers are strongly encouraged to service their lifejacket once a year or in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. An inflatable lifejacket will only work if it’s kept in working order. In the last decade alone, 8 out of 10 people who drowned in NSW while boating were not wearing a lifejacket. The Old4New program is just part of a wider campaign to get people into the right habit of putting on a lifejacket each time they go boating.

For more about Lifejacket Law, the Old4New program or to download the latest Guide to selection, care and service visit maritimemanagement.transport.nsw.gov.au or facebook.com/nswmaritime



RESPECT THE RIVER

Royal Life Saving's Respect the River campaign has been designed to educate the public about the hidden dangers of inland waterways, particularly highlighting safety along the Murray River. It encourages people to respect rivers by following some simple safety tips:



WEAR A LIFEJACKET:

Ensure lifejackets are worn by all people on board, including competent swimmers. They need to be properly fitted to be effective, including children's lifejackets



AVOID ALCOHOL AROUND WATER:

Alcohol impairs judgment and increases risk-taking behavior, affects coordination and reaction time, making it difficult to get out of trouble



BE PREPARED:

It is important to check the weather report before and during watercraft activity and keep a lookout for bad weather while out on the water



NEVER GO ALONE:

Always go with a friend and inform others not on board of your destination and when you intend to return, particularly in remote locations



LEARN HOW TO SAVE A LIFE:

Learn lifesaving skills, as well as first aid/resuscitation so you are able to respond in an emergency

For more information visit
royallifesaving.com.au/respecttheriver



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Saving lives in Australian Rivers

CASE STUDY: REAL LIFE STORY

A 55 year old man went fishing for the day alone in his small aluminum dingy. The weather throughout the day became progressively worse and the boat became unstable in the wind. The man was witnessed to fall overboard without a lifejacket. A nearby boat tried to help but did not get to the man in time. Royal Life Saving Society encourage people to wear a lifejacket and carry safety equipment, check the marine weather and tell someone where you are going and when you plan to be back.

These stories are tragic reminder to stay safe and look out for others when in, on and around water



ABOUT ROYAL LIFE SAVING

Royal Life Saving is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable, evidence based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships, quality programs, products and services; underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

Royal Life Saving is a public benevolent institution (PBI) dedicated to reducing drowning and turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers.

We achieve this through:

- Advocacy
- Education
- Training
- Health Promotion
- Aquatic Risk Management
- Community Development
- Research
- Sport, Leadership and Participation
- International Networks

We are guided by the values of: Safety, Quality, Integrity and the Humanitarian tradition and have been serving the Australian community for over 120 years.

METHODS

Information for this report has been collected from the Australian National Coronial Information System (NCIS), State and Territory Coronial Offices and media reports. Royal Life Saving uses a media monitoring service (electronic and print media) throughout the year to identify all drowning cases reported in the media.

This information is then corroborated with data from the NCIS, police and Royal Life Saving State and Territory Member Organisations before being included in this report. Analysis has been conducted for all cases of unintentional fatal drowning in inland waterways related to boating and watercraft.

The data was collated into the Royal Life Saving National Fatal Drowning Database. All deaths resulting from drowning or immersion-related incidents have been included. Exclusions from this data include: suicide, homicide, deaths from natural causes, shark or crocodile attack and hypothermia.

All care is taken to ensure that the information is as accurate as possible. Please note that the figures from more recent financial years may change depending upon the outcomes of ongoing coronial investigations. Data correct as of 01 September 2016. As of this date, 90% of boating and watercraft related cases analysed in this study were closed (i.e. no longer under coronial investigation).

The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2016-20 has identified key priority areas where a reduction in drowning is required, highlighting both boating and watercraft (Goal 9) and inland waterways (Goal 5) as areas of importance¹.

References

- 1 Australian Water Safety Council. Australian Water Safety Strategy 2016-2020, 2015.





ROYAL LIFE SAVING NSW CONTACT DETAILS:

To ensure we stay in tune with the needs of the diverse communities that make up our aquatic facilities, Royal Life Saving maintains a network of offices throughout NSW.

For more information contact:

Sydney	T: 02 9634 3700 E: nsw@royalnsw.com.au
Hunter	T: 02 4929 5600 E: hunter@royalnsw.com.au
Illawarra	T: 02 4225 0108 E: illawarra@royalnsw.com.au
Northern	T: 02 6651 6266 E: northern@royalnsw.com.au
Riverina	T: 02 6921 7422 E: riverina@royalnsw.com.au
Western	T: 02 6369 0679 E: western@royalnsw.com.au

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