

2004
*Arizona
Boating
Safety
Report*



ARIZONA GAME AND
FISH DEPARTMENT

Special thanks to the following agencies for their cooperation in providing accident and enforcement data for this report:

| | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Apache County Sheriff's Office | Gila County Sheriff's Office | Nevada Department of Wildlife |
| Arizona Game and Fish Department | Imperial County Sheriff's Office | Tempe Police Department |
| Arizona State Parks | Lake Havasu City Police Department | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Bullhead City Police Department | La Paz County Sheriff's Office | Yavapai-Prescott Tribal Police |
| Coconino County Sheriff's Office | Maricopa County Sheriff's Office | Yuma County Sheriff's Office |
| Colorado River Indian Tribes Police Department | Mohave County Sheriff's Office | |
| Ft. Mohave Tribal Police Department | National Park Service | |

The 2004 Arizona Boating Safety Report is provided by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The data and statistics were researched, compiled and written by Connie Giesie and Kevin Bergersen. The information was edited by Linda J. Nofer and graphic design was provided by Carolyn Seay-Greeney.

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2004 Arizona Boating Safety Report



Arizona Game and Fish Department *Boating Enforcement and Education*

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Arizona Game and Fish Department

Watercraft Enforcement and Education

2004 Arizona Boating Safety Report

Administrative Authority

The Arizona Game and Fish Department and Commission have been involved in boating safety and law enforcement since passage of the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971. The commission and department

derive their authority from state law contained within the Arizona Revised Statutes Title 5.

ARS 5-311 outlines the powers and duties of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission in regard to boating in Arizona. The commission may:



An Arizona Game and Fish Department law enforcement officer patrols Willow Beach along the Colorado River.

- Make rules and regulations required to carry out in the most effective manner all the provisions of this chapter.
- Modify the equipment requirements in conformity with the provisions of the federal navigation laws or with the navigation regulations promulgated by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Prescribe additional equipment requirements not in conflict with federal navigation laws or regulations.
- Provide for a uniform waterway marking system and establish, operate and maintain aids to navigation and regulatory markers of the state.
- Make regulations for the registration and operation of watercraft.
- Prescribe regulations for the issuance of permits for motorboat races, regattas or other watercraft events.
- Administer law enforcement and boating safety programs on the state level, and accept federal grants for the purpose of boating safety and related enforcement.



Lake Havasu City Police Department officers patrol the congested waters of Bridgewater Channel during the 2004 Memorial Day holiday.

By statute, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission's boating safety and registration mandates are extremely broad. The department is responsible for providing a safe watercraft recreation environment, so that Arizona's lakes will be used, enjoyed and appreciated by present and future generations.

Watercraft Law Enforcement

Although the Arizona Game and Fish Department administers and provides boating law enforcement efforts on a state level, primary law enforcement authority resides with local agencies; state, county, municipal, park, reservation or land management agencies within whose jurisdiction a body of water lies are responsible for watercraft law enforcement.

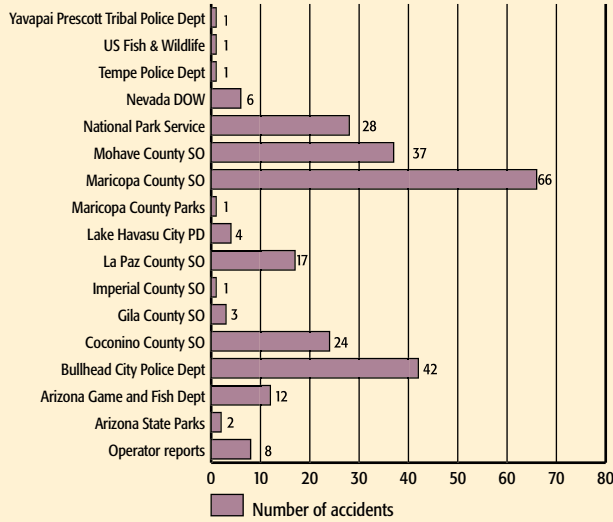
The Arizona Game and Fish Department is the administrative agency for watercraft-related accidents in Arizona. Initial reports and investigations are completed by the jurisdictional agency and submitted to the department. These reports are then compiled, tabulated and forwarded to the U.S. Coast Guard for use in national statistics.



Coconino County Sheriff's deputies patrol the Navajo Canyon channel in the summer of 2004.

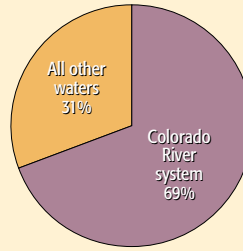
Agencies Reporting Accidents

254 total accidents



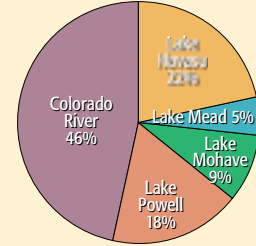
Colorado River System Compared to All Other Arizona Waters

254 total accidents



Number of accidents

Colorado River System Accidents reported in Arizona



National Park Service officers investigate a boat accident on Lake Powell in July of 2004. The investigation revealed that the operator was impaired.

In 2004, 16 different law enforcement agencies, along with boat operators, reported 254 watercraft-related accidents to the department. This number does not include 25 boat accident reports that did not meet minimum state or U.S. Coast Guard reporting guidelines. Information taken from these accident reports assists Arizona law enforcement agencies in identifying safety needs, developing new

regulations, designing new enforcement techniques, identifying manufacturer problems and directing programs at particular areas of concern.

Law enforcement agencies investigating boating accidents and operators involved in accidents are required by law to report such accidents to the Arizona Game and Fish Department. If the accident involves an

injury or fatality, a written report must be submitted within 48 hours. All other accidents must be reported within five days.

According to 2004 statistics, a significant number of boating accidents continue to occur along the Colorado River basin, which includes Lake Powell, Lake Mead, Lake Mohave, Lake Havasu and stretches of the Colorado River. A number of

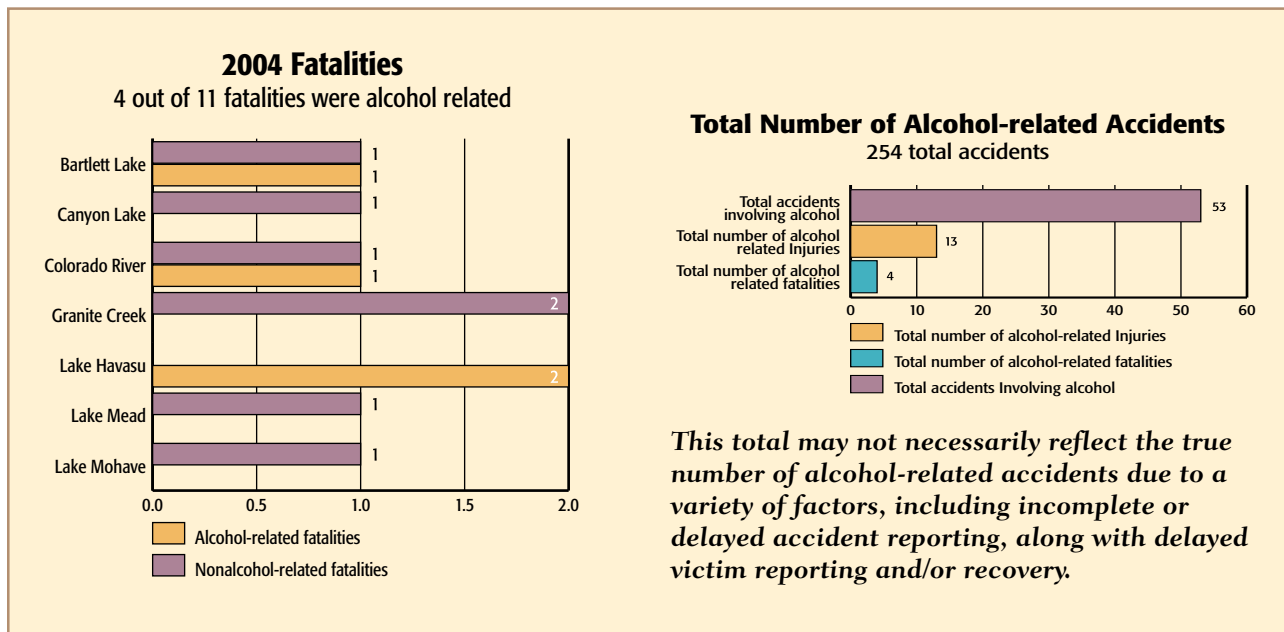
these accidents were related to the use of drugs and alcohol. In 2004, 11 people died on Arizona waterways and four of the deaths (36 percent) were alcohol-related.

In an effort to reduce those numbers, federal, state, county and local law enforcement agencies have teamed up to conduct operating under the influence (OUI) patrol efforts. These special projects include on-the-water OUI checkpoints and high-density law enforcement saturation (wolf pack) patrols involving law enforcement agencies from Arizona, Nevada and California. Statewide, watercraft law enforcement officers were very successful in detecting and arresting impaired boat operators. In 2004, Arizona watercraft officers arrested 438 individu-



The lone operator-occupant of this Lake Havasu boat was thrown overboard during rough conditions in June 2004.

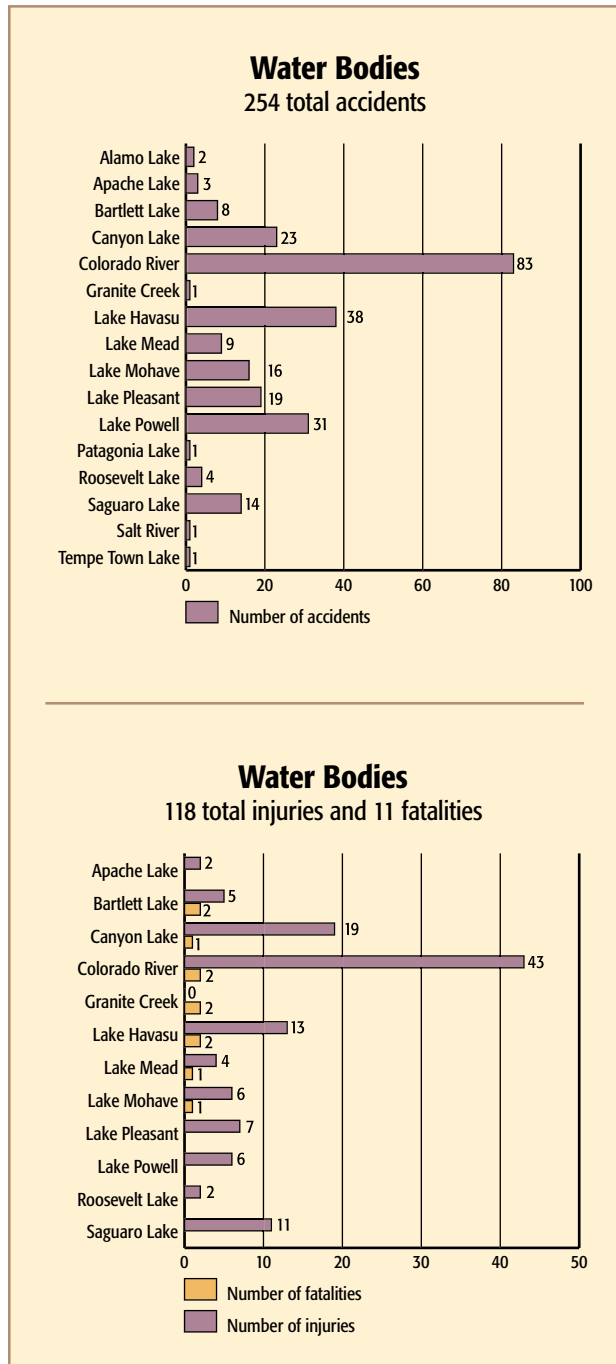
als for operating under the influence, 41 of those arrests occurred during multi-agency OUI special projects. Last year, 10 multi-agency OUI special project patrols were conducted, during which 995 watercraft with 3009 persons onboard were checked and 298 citations were issued. The boating public



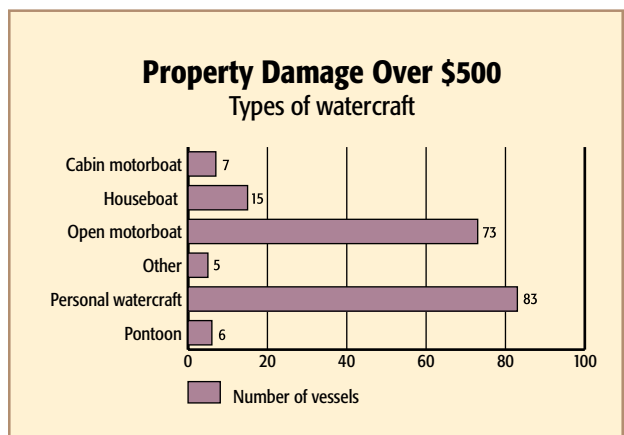
has continued to support OUI patrol efforts. Similar patrol activities are expected during the 2005 watercraft season.

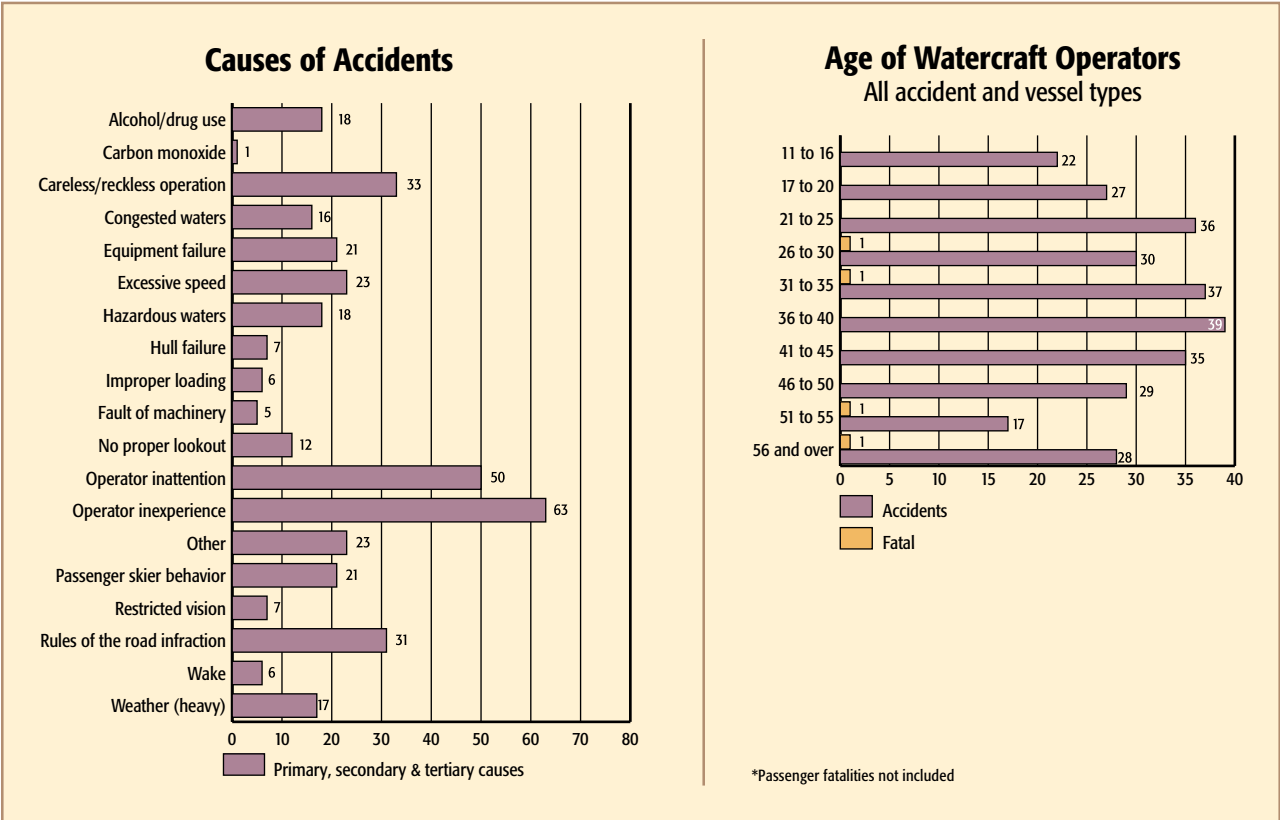
Many boat operators appear to be heeding the message of sober boating on the state's waterways. Watercraft law enforcement officers statewide have reported a marked increase in

the percentage of designated sober operators encountered during routine contacts. Drinking while boating continues to be a critical problem and high priority target enforcement objective for officers, but the fact that many boat operators have taken the safe and sober boating message to heart is highly encouraging.



Houseboats silhouetted at Apache Lake, Ariz.





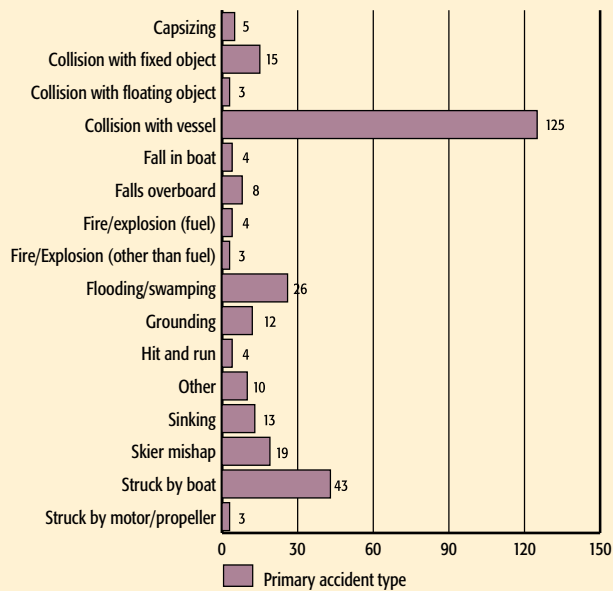
Watercraft Accidents

There were 254 watercraft-related accidents reported to the Arizona Game and Fish Department in 2004, a decrease of 35 from 2003. The accidents involved 397 boats, which is a decrease of 37 from the prior year. However, officers saw a substantial increase in the number of fatal accidents last year. Eleven people died in 10 separate accidents, as compared to seven deaths from six accidents in 2003. A few of these fatal accidents were unusual or uncommon in nature. One of the fatalities was attributed

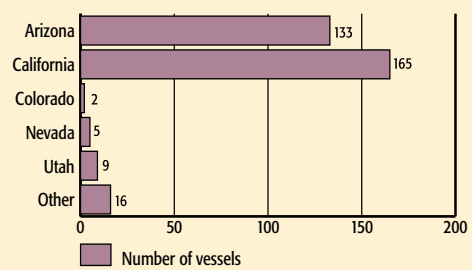
The popularity of Blankenship Bend is reflected in this aerial photo taken at midday in May 2004. Boaters continue to flock in large numbers to this unique sandbar located several miles upstream from Lake Havasu along the Colorado River.



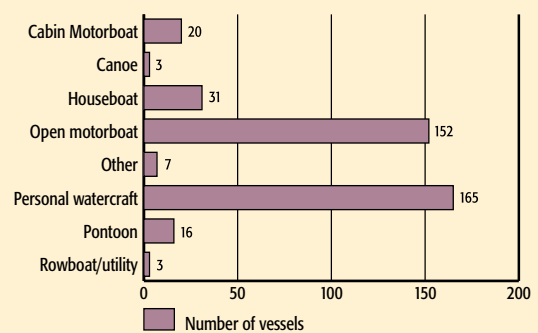
Primary Accident Types 254 total accidents



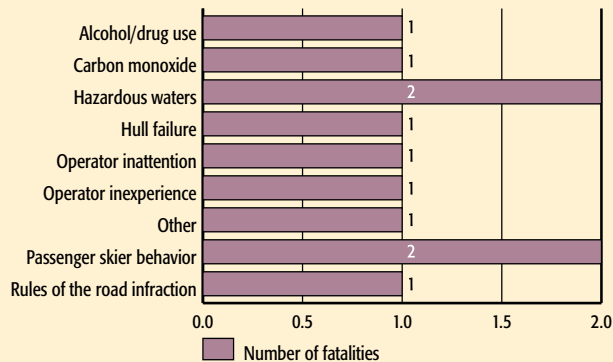
Residence of Operators All accidents



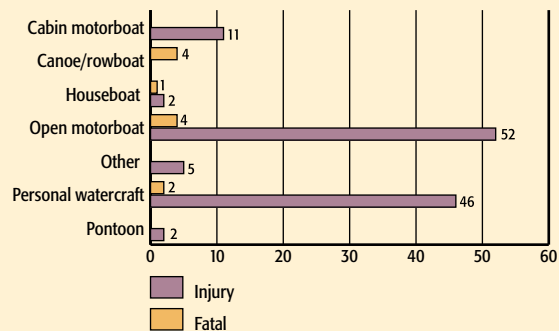
Types of Watercraft in Accidents 397 total vessels



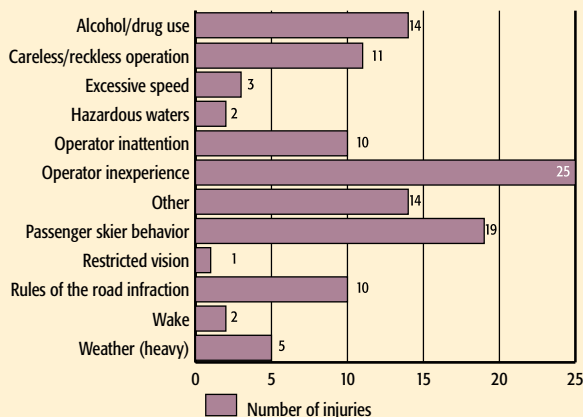
Primary Causes of Fatal Accidents



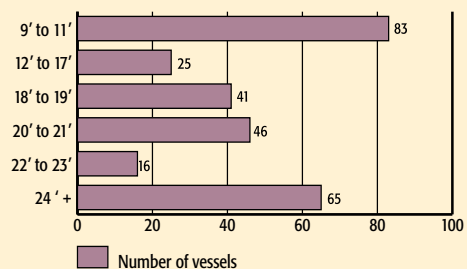
Types of Watercraft in Accidents 118 total injuries and 11 fatalities



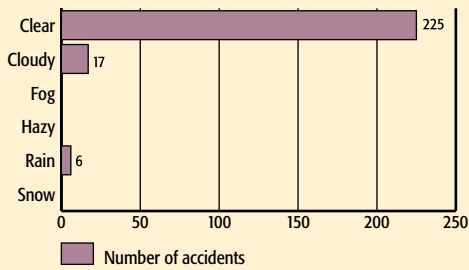
Primary Causes of Injury Accidents



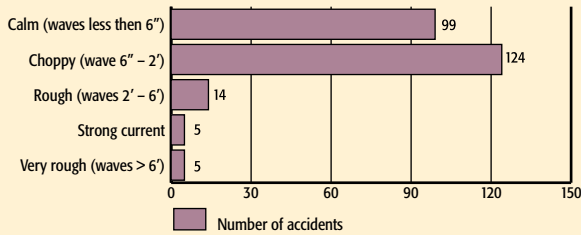
Length of Watercraft All incidents



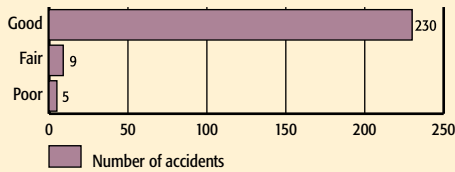
Weather Conditions All accidents



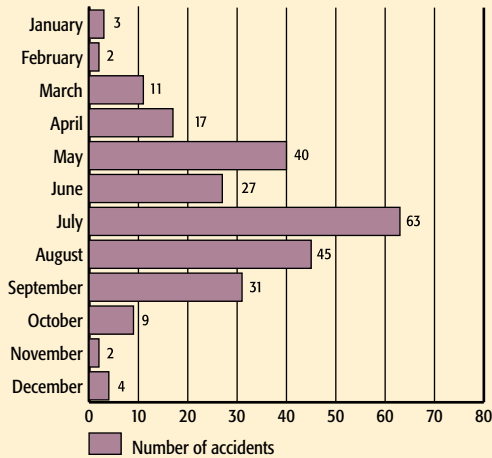
Water Conditions All accidents



Visibility Conditions All accidents



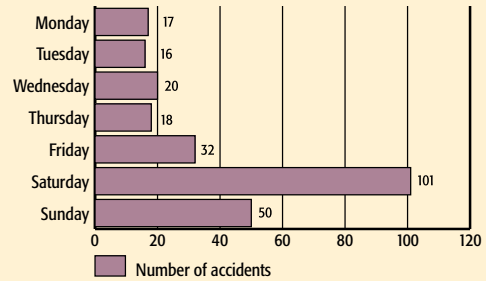
Accidents by Month 254 total accidents



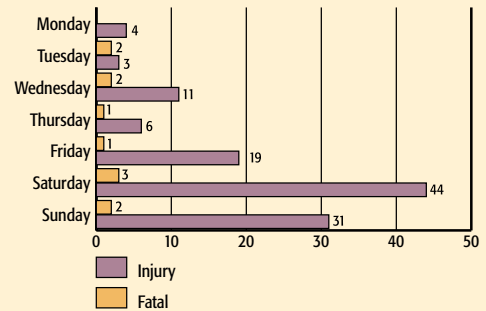
to carbon monoxide poisoning resulting from “teak surfing.” Two fatalities occurred during a canoe accident in a flood-swollen wash. A fourth death resulted from a heart attack triggered by capsizing and subsequent cold water immersion at Lee’s Ferry.

More encouraging was the decline in the total number of injury boating accidents. In 2004, 118 boaters were injured, representing a reduction of 28 from 2003, when 140 were injured while boating

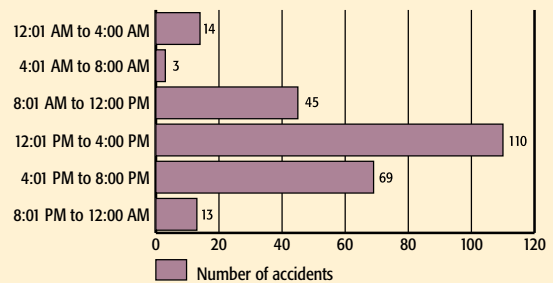
Accidents by Day of Week 254 total accidents



Accidents by Day of Week 118 total injuries and 11 fatalities



Accidents by Time of Day 254 total accidents



on Arizona waterways. However, \$954,343 worth of property and vessel damage was reported to the department last year: This is one of the highest numbers on record.

Boating continues to be an increasingly popular form of recreation in Arizona. The number of registered watercraft in Arizona has grown from 105,000 in 1986 to 147,294 in 2004. According to the 2003 Watercraft Gas Tax Survey, 3,229,153 total boat use days were reported for Arizona. Arizona boaters made up 44 percent of those days, while California boaters made up 49 percent. Nevada boaters made up most of the remaining 7 percent. The main focus of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's watercraft safety program is the safety of all recreational boaters in Arizona.

In analyzing watercraft accident information, there are five main areas of interest: type and cause of the accident, operator information, boats and equipment involved, environmental conditions at the time of the accident, and time and location of the accident. The two leading causes of accidents for the 11th year in a row in Arizona are operator inexperience and operator inattention. Forty percent of operators involved in Arizona boating accidents were residents of the state and 49 percent were from California. The types of watercraft most often involved in accidents were personal watercraft smaller than 12

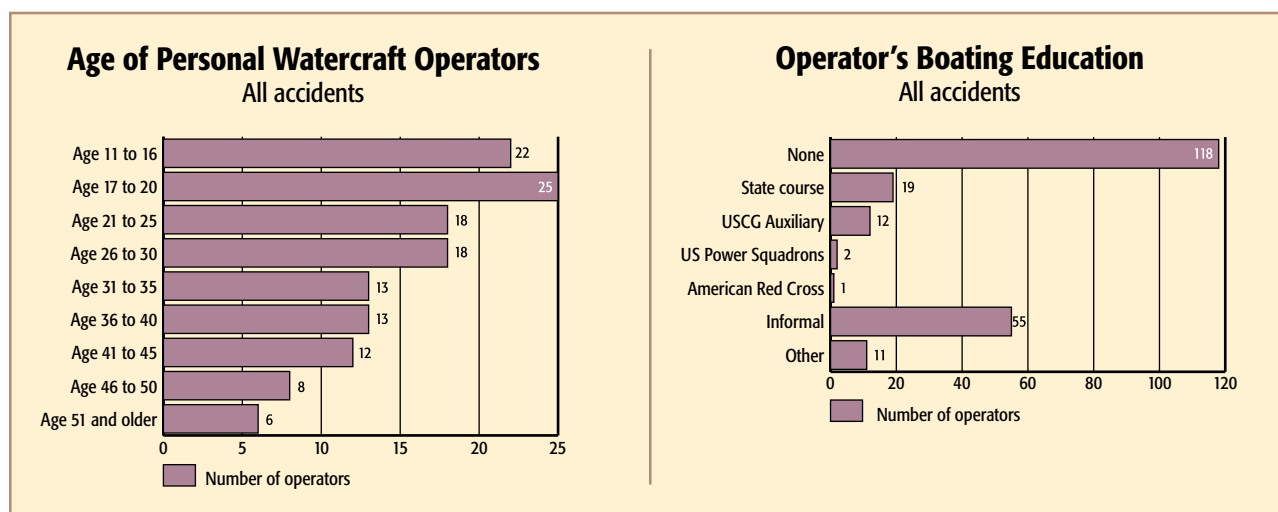


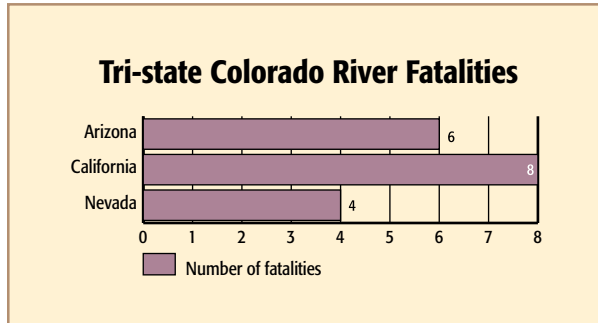
The operator who provided this breath sample was arrested for extreme OUI. In Arizona, boat operators cannot be impaired to the slightest degree, and the legal alcohol concentration limit for persons in control of a motorized watercraft is .08.

feet in length and open motorboats 24 feet or more in length.

Environmental conditions were not a factor in the vast majority of 2004 accidents. The average accident occurred during the day when weather conditions were usually clear, with calm or choppy waters, and good visibility.

The most dangerous month for recreational boating in 2004 was July, with August second, and





May third. The months of May, July, and September traditionally have high numbers of boating accidents because these months reflect peak boater day use along with the summer's busiest boating holidays: Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. In 2004, 43 percent of all accidents occurred between noon and 4 p.m. and Saturday was the day of the week that had the most accidents and injuries.

Watercraft Regulations

The Arizona Legislature has changed state law in regard to the penalties for OUI. Boat operators convicted of OUI face increased sanctions and fines ranging from \$955 for a first time offense to \$2155 for second-time extreme OUI convictions.

Watercraft Education

Education is considered one of the most effective ways to reduce the number of boating accidents. According to 2004 statistics, more than half of the operators involved in recreational boating accidents had not received formal education in boating safety. This was a slight decrease from the 2003 data. The Arizona Game and Fish Department provides an eight-hour boating education course developed for recreational boaters. Many insurance companies offer discounts to those who successfully complete the course as a way to encourage boater education. Currently the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Information and Education Division coordinates

the courses, and 87 volunteer boating education instructors from across the state provide classroom instruction. In 2004, the department offered 143 boating education classes in Arizona and 1,959 recreational boaters completed them. This was a 288 percent student increase from 2003, which had 680 students attending 57 classes.

The Arizona sections of both the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadron also conduct boating education training. U.S. Coast Guard boating safety classes vary from an eight-hour basic safety course to 80 hours of instruction. The U.S. Power Squadron offers a six-chapter boating course as well as a shorter, more



The Lost Eden Waterfall dwarfs a 26-foot National Park Service patrol boat in July 2004. This side channel on Lake Powell only flows after heavy rains.

intense, three-chapter course.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department continues to work with judges around the state to include its boating safety education program as part of sentencing for violators of boating rules and regulations. Judges are encouraged to use the program in lieu of, or in addition to, a fine, to help increase the boat operator's knowledge of boating safety information and regulations. So far, judges and boating violators have indicated the program has been successful in increasing awareness of boating safety issues.



A father and his children take a ride on a personal watercraft at Saguaro Lake in 2003.

Boating Accident Statistics

An area of priority interest to both recreational boaters and law enforcement agencies is the increasing number of personal watercraft (PWC) using Arizona waterways. In 1990, there were only 8,168 PWC registered in Arizona, compared to 28,307 in 2004. Currently, PWCs comprise more than 19 percent of all Arizona watercraft registrations. However, PWC operators receive a disproportionate amount of injuries compared to other watercraft types. For example, more than 28 percent of all accidents in-

volving PWCs result in bodily injuries, and these injuries account for 40 percent of *all* boating injuries. Furthermore, two of the 11 fatalities in 2004 (roughly 18 percent) involved PWCs. These statistics are higher than any other type of watercraft. Many of these accidents can be attributed to the fact that numerous first time operators are renting or have just recently purchased a PWC. A PWC is operated differently than a traditional boat and averages more time on the water than traditional watercraft.

The increased use of the Colorado River system from Lake Powell to Yuma is another area of concern to the Arizona Game and Fish Department and other law enforcement agencies. Sixty-nine percent of all Arizona watercraft accidents occurred along the Colorado River. An increase in law enforcement activity, particularly OUI enforcement, and a focus on boating education have been shown to help reduce the number of boating accidents along the river.

This information was compiled from boating accident reports submitted to the Arizona Game and Fish Department by watercraft enforcement agencies and persons involved in watercraft accidents throughout Arizona. For more information on boating safety education, call (602) 789-3235.



Arizona Game and Fish Department officers remove an alleged impaired boater from his watercraft and conduct an OUI investigation on Roosevelt Lake in July 2004.

Arizona's 2005 Boating Law

Enforcement Officer of the Year

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators developed the Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award in 2000 to recognize and honor outstanding service to recreational boating. This award symbolizes the highest level of achievement among boating law enforcement officers in the United States. Each state selects its own officer of the year. The state recipients are eligible for one of three regional awards and the regional recipients compete for the Butch Potts National Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award.

Officer Tim Baumgarten is a 23-year veteran with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and is currently assigned to the Kingman region as the Law Enforcement Program Manager. Tim is recog-



Arizona Game and Fish Department officer Tim Baumgarten

nized throughout Arizona and the western states as one of the top experts and leading authorities in watercraft law enforcement, boat theft investigations, operating under the influence enforcement, and watercraft accident investigations.

Tim has personally accounted for more than 100 OUI arrests so far in his career, and has assisted fellow officers with hundreds more. Tim was involved in the first OUI checkpoint in Arizona in 1993, and since then has participated and/or supervised in approximately 70 on-the-water sobriety checkpoints, more than any Arizona watercraft officer. Last year alone, Tim supervised eight Colorado River OUI checkpoints that resulted in 342 citations and 31 OUI arrests.

Tim is a lead instructor at Arizona Game and Fish Department's annual Watercraft Enforcement Tactics Survival School and has been instructing nationally since 2004 as a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators boating under the influence instructor. He taught OUI enforcement at the 2003 International Boating and Water Safety Summit in Las Vegas, Nev. and gave a presentation at the Annual Alcohol Summit put on by the

Previous Arizona Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year recipients

- 2004 Jerry Burns, La Paz County Sheriff's Office
- 2003 Deanna Pflieger, Arizona Game and Fish Department
- 2002 No nominations received
- 2001 Gerald Duvall, Bullhead City Police Department
- 2000 Steve Andrews, Arizona Game and Fish Department



Boat with Class

For information on boating education classes visit azgfd.gov or call the Arizona Game and Fish Department at (602) 789-3235.