

**2005  
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  
Arizona Game and Fish Department  
Arizona State Parks  
Bullhead City Police Department  
Coconino County Sheriff's Office  
Colorado River Indian Tribes  
Police Department

Gila County Sheriff's Office  
Imperial County Sheriff's Office  
Lake Havasu City Police Department  
La Paz County Sheriff's Office  
Maricopa County Sheriff's Office  
Mohave County Sheriff's Office  
National Park Service

Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Tempe Police Department  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Yuma County Sheriff's Office

The 2005 Arizona Boating Safety Report is a technical report provided by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The data and statistics were researched, compiled and written by Connie Giesie and Kevin Bergersen.

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT - AZGFD.GOV**

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# ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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# ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

## *Watercraft Enforcement and Education*

### 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.

Specifically, ARS 5-311 outlines the powers and duties of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission in order to make the rules and regulations required to carry out, in the most effective manner, all the provisions of

boating safety for the state of Arizona. 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



*Heather Jaramillo, an Arizona Game and Fish officer, patrols Lake Mohave in western Arizona.*

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 accident reporting in the state of 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.

In 2005, 16 different law enforcement agencies, along with boat operators, reported 266 watercraft-related accidents to the Department. This number does not include 46 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 boating safety programs and law enforcement resources 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,



Arizona Game and Fish Department officers patrol the "Tonto Arm" of Roosevelt Lake, looking for impaired boat operators.



Boaters flock in large numbers to "Gasoline Alley" at Lake Mohave in 2005. Known for its party atmosphere, Gasoline Alley presents unique problems and challenges for law enforcement on Lake Mohave.

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

According to 2005 statistics, a significant number of boating accidents continue to occur along the Arizona border formed by the Colorado River. This stretch of the river includes Lake Powell, Lake Mead, Lake Mohave, Lake Havasu and several open stretches of the Colorado River. A number of these accidents were related to the use of drugs and alcohol. In 2005, five people died on Arizona waterways and two of the deaths (40 percent) were alcohol-related.

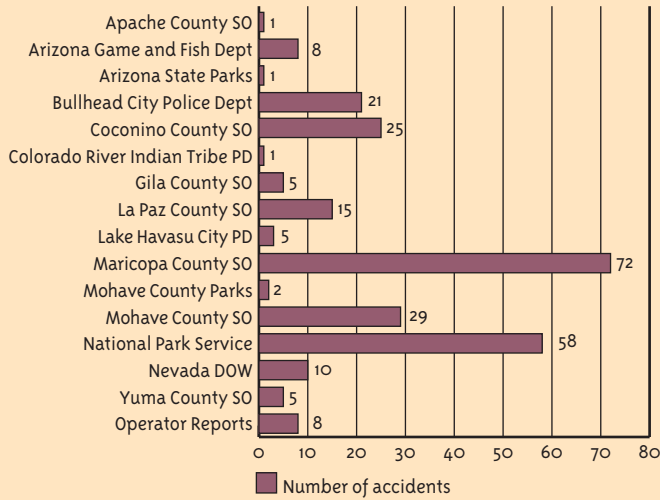
In an effort to reduce those numbers, federal, state, county and local law enforcement agencies have teamed up to conduct operating under the influence (OUI) patrol efforts. These special projects include on-the-water OUI checkpoints and high-density law enforcement saturation (wolf pack) patrols involving law enforcement agencies from Arizona, Nevada and California, as well as federal officers from the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Statewide, watercraft law enforcement officers were very successful in detecting



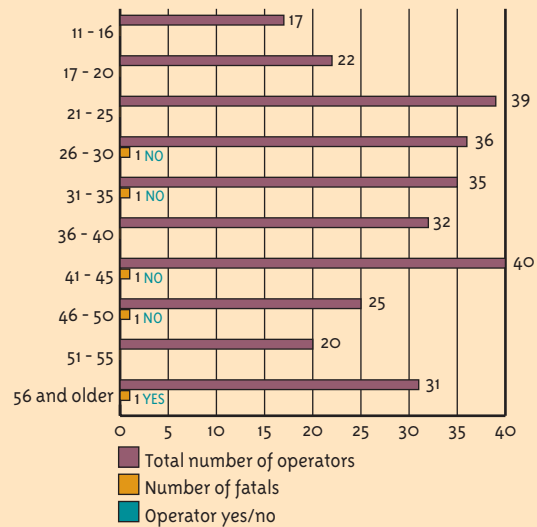
### Agencies Reporting Accidents

266 total accidents



### Age of Watercraft Operators

5 fatalities



The popularity of Bridgewater Channel and the London Bridge is reflected in this aerial photo taken over Lake Havasu at mid-day on Memorial Day 2005.

and arresting impaired boat operators. In 2005, Arizona watercraft officers arrested 375 individuals for operating under the influence; 53 of those arrests occurred during multi-agency OUI special projects. In addition, last year's 11 multi-agency OUI special projects resulted in 1,086 watercraft contacts with 3,774 persons onboard and 309 citations issued. The boating public has continued to support OUI patrol efforts. Approximately 16 inter-agency OUI patrol activities have been planned for the 2006 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.

## WATERCRAFT ACCIDENTS

In 2005, Arizona saw 266 boating accidents involving 390 boats, with 161 individuals reportedly injured. Boat accidents reported to the Department last year listed \$891,940 worth of property and vessel damage. Although there were seven fewer vessels involved in accidents than in the prior year, the total number of accidents actually increased by 12 and the number of injuries increased by 43. More encouraging was the significant decline in the number of fatal boat accidents. In 2005, the total number of fatalities dropped to five, as compared to 12 in 2004. The five fatalities consisted of one probable carbon monoxide fatality, two trauma fatalities and two "falls overboard"



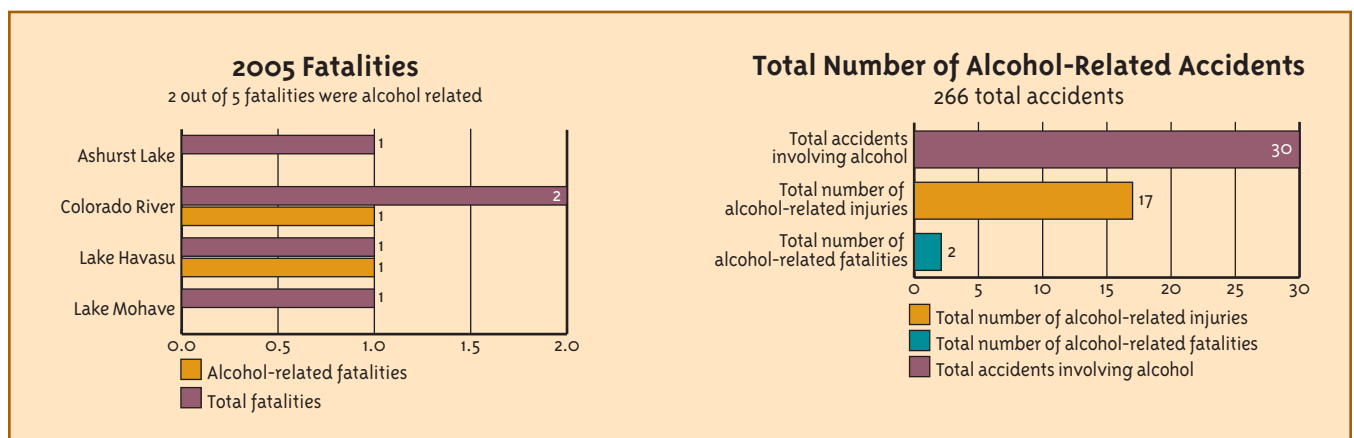
Glen Canyon National Recreation Area park rangers investigate a boat accident that left this large cabin cruiser high and dry on the rocky shores of Lake Powell. Their investigation later revealed that the operator was impaired.

fatalities. What is regrettable is that three of these fatalities may have been prevented with life jacket wear.

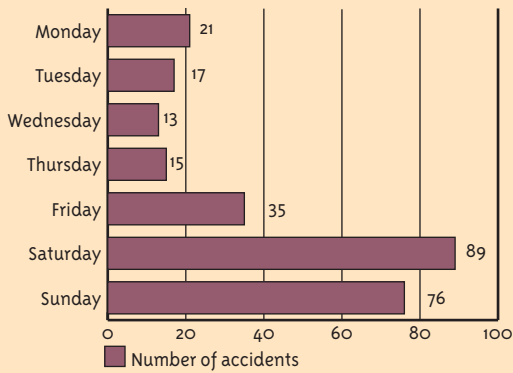
Boating continues to be an increasingly popular form of recreation in Arizona. The number of registered watercraft in Arizona has grown from 105,000 in 1986 to 148,343 in 2005. According to the 2003 Watercraft Gas Tax Survey, 3,229,153 total boat use days were reported for Arizona. Arizona boaters made up 44 percent of those days, while California boaters made up 49 percent. Nevada boaters

made up most of the remaining seven percent. The main focus of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's watercraft safety program is the safety of all recreational boaters in Arizona.

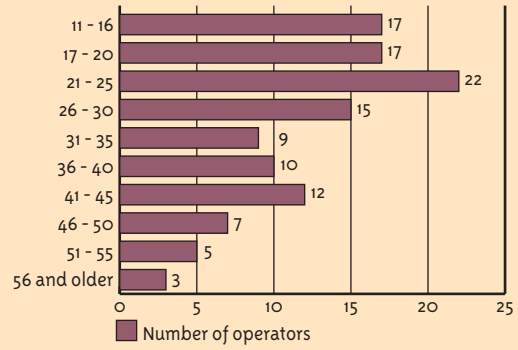
In analyzing watercraft accident information, there are five main areas of interest: type and cause of the accident, operator information, boats and equipment involved, environmental conditions at the time of the accident, and time and location of the accident. The leading cause of



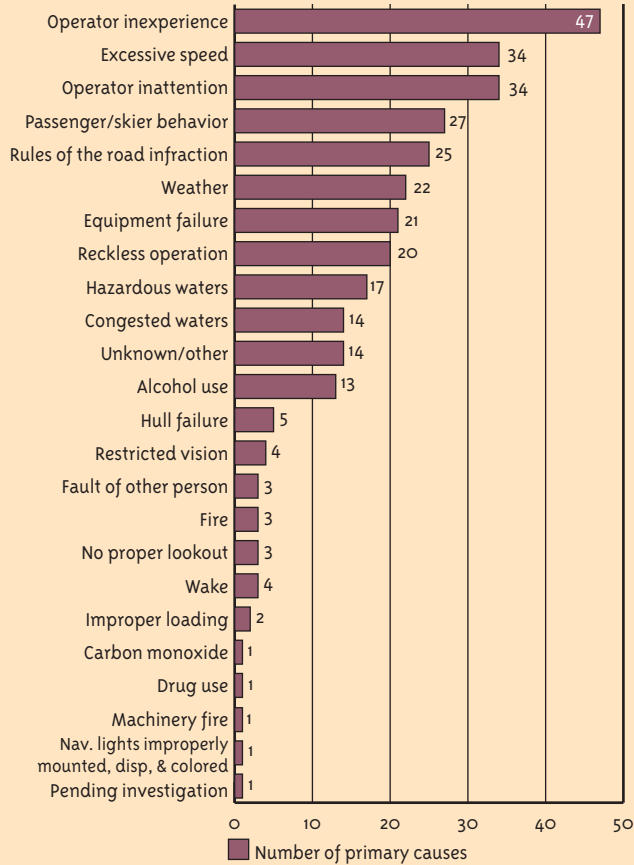
**Accidents by Day of Week**  
266 total accidents



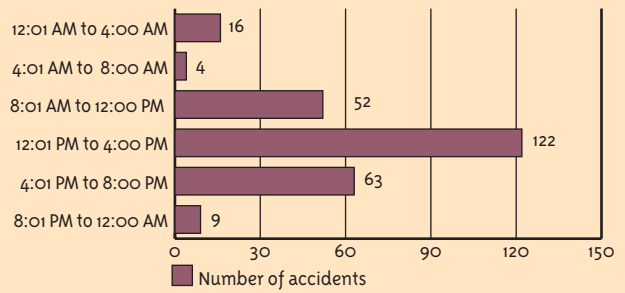
**PWC Accidents-Age of PWC Operator**



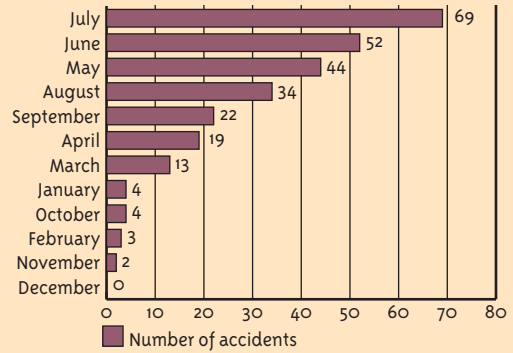
**2005 - Accident Cause**  
317 total accident causes



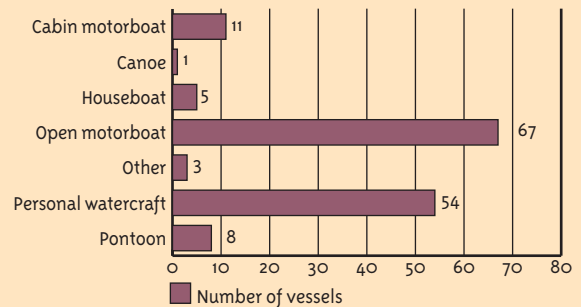
**Accidents by Time of Day**  
266 total accidents



**Accidents by Month**  
266 total accidents



**Property Damage Over \$500**  
Types of watercraft



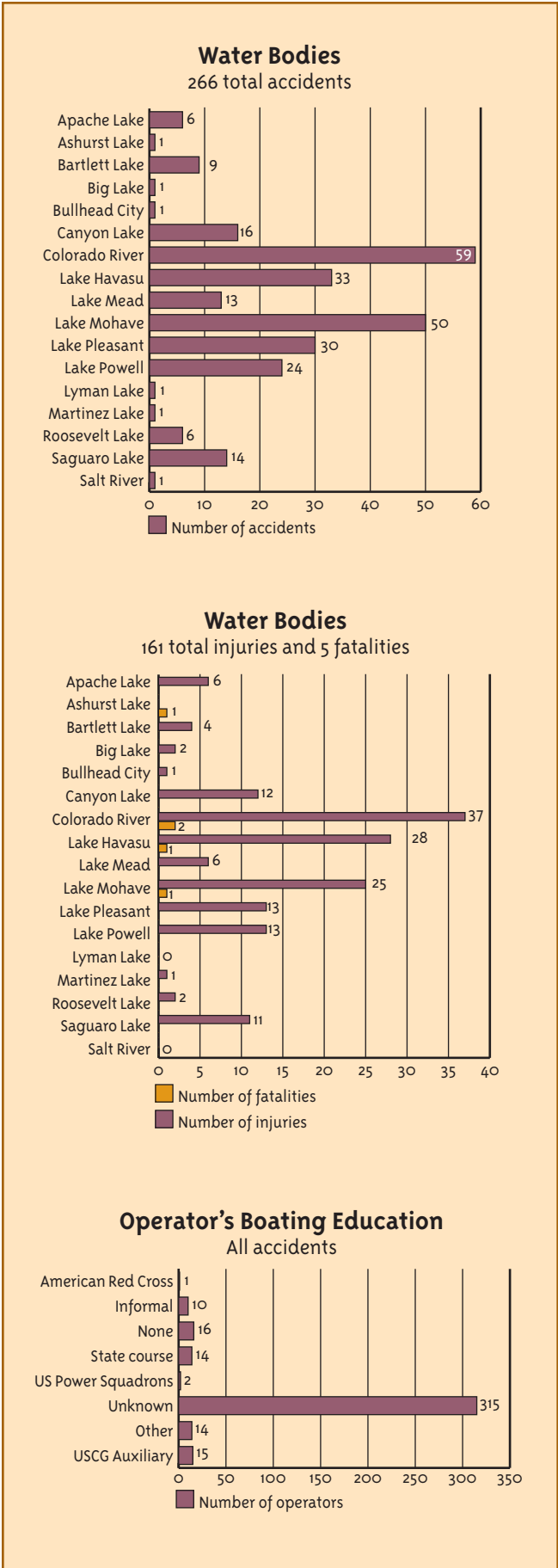


accidents for the 12th year in a row in Arizona was operator inexperience. Operator inattention and excessive speed were tied for the second-leading cause. Forty-eight percent of operators involved in Arizona boating accidents were residents of the state and 48 percent were from California. The types of watercraft most often involved in accidents were open motorboats 24 feet or more in length (43 percent) and personal watercraft smaller than 12 feet in length (36 percent).

Environmental conditions were not a factor in the vast majority of 2005 accidents. The average accident occurred during the day when weather conditions were usually clear, with good visibility and the waters calm or choppy. The most dangerous month for recreational boating in 2005 was July, with June second, and May third. May, July, August 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 2005, 46 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.



During the 2005 Tri-State Boating Safety Fair along the Colorado River at Rotary Park, officers provided voluntary vessel safety checks to boaters preparing to launch.



## WATERCRAFT EDUCATION

Education is considered one of the most effective ways to reduce the number of boating accidents. 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 120 volunteer boating education instructors from across the state provide classroom instruction. In 2005, the Department offered 144 boating education classes in Arizona, and 2,421 recreational boaters completed them. This was a 108 percent student increase from 2003, which had 1,162 students attending 73 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 intense, three-chapter course.



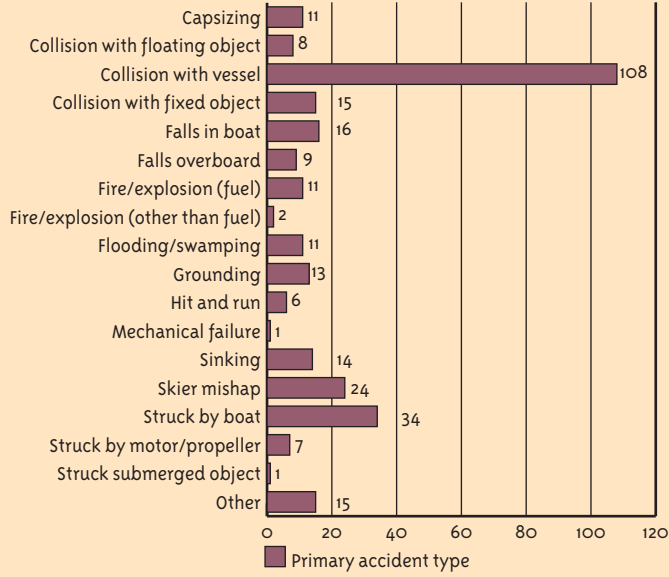
*The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office operates one of the few airboats in the state of Arizona. The shallow draft of airboats makes them an ideal platform for accessing the shallow and hard-to-reach areas of the Lower Salt River.*



*A United States Coast Guard (USCG) small boat crew from the Maritime Safety and Security Team/Pacific Tactical Law Enforcement Team (MSST/PACTACLET) conduct a watercraft law enforcement patrol on Lake Havasu in March 2005. The Colorado River is the only navigable waterway in Arizona where the USCG has operational jurisdiction.*

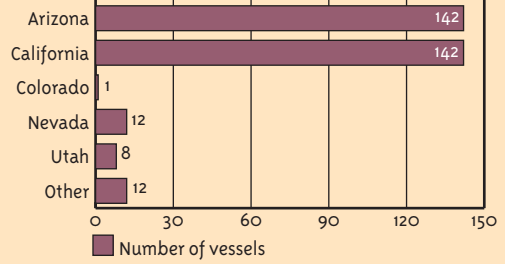
### Primary Accident Types

306 total accident types



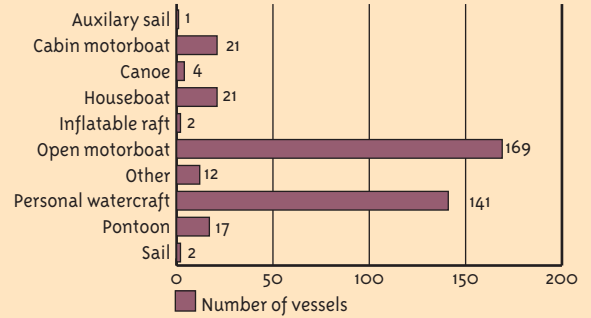
### Residence of Operators

All accidents

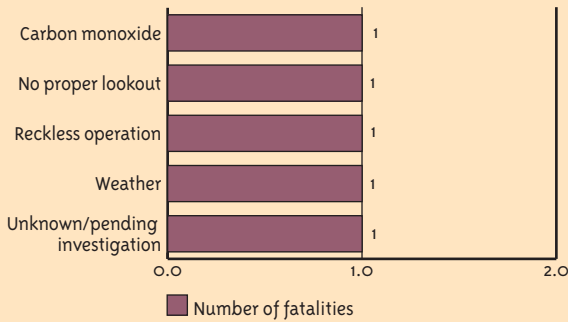


### Types of Watercraft in Accidents

390 total vessels

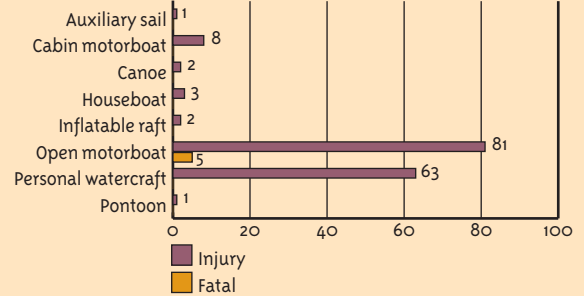


### Primary Causes of Fatal Accidents

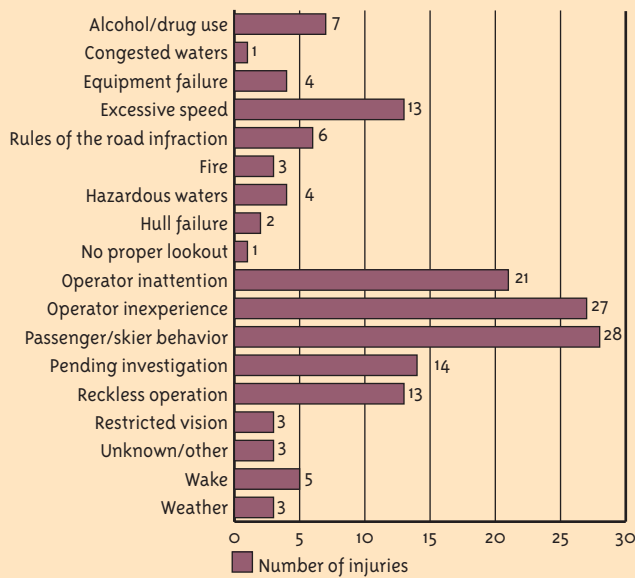


### Types of Watercraft in Accidents

161 total injuries and 5 fatalities

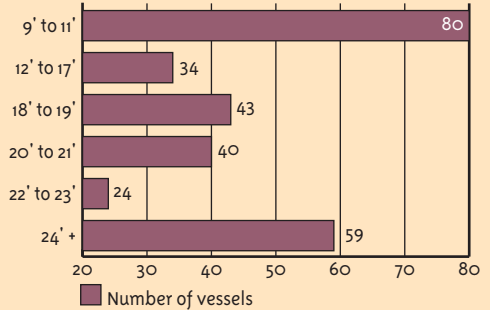


### Primary Causes of Injury Accidents



### Length of Watercraft

All incidents







*Non-motorized use of Arizona's wild and scenic rivers is a very popular activity. Paddlers navigate the remote confines of the Upper Salt River in 2003.*

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.

## 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 PWCs registered in Arizona, compared to more than 28,000 in 2005. While PWCs comprise about 20 percent of all Arizona watercraft registrations, they account for 36 percent of all accidents and

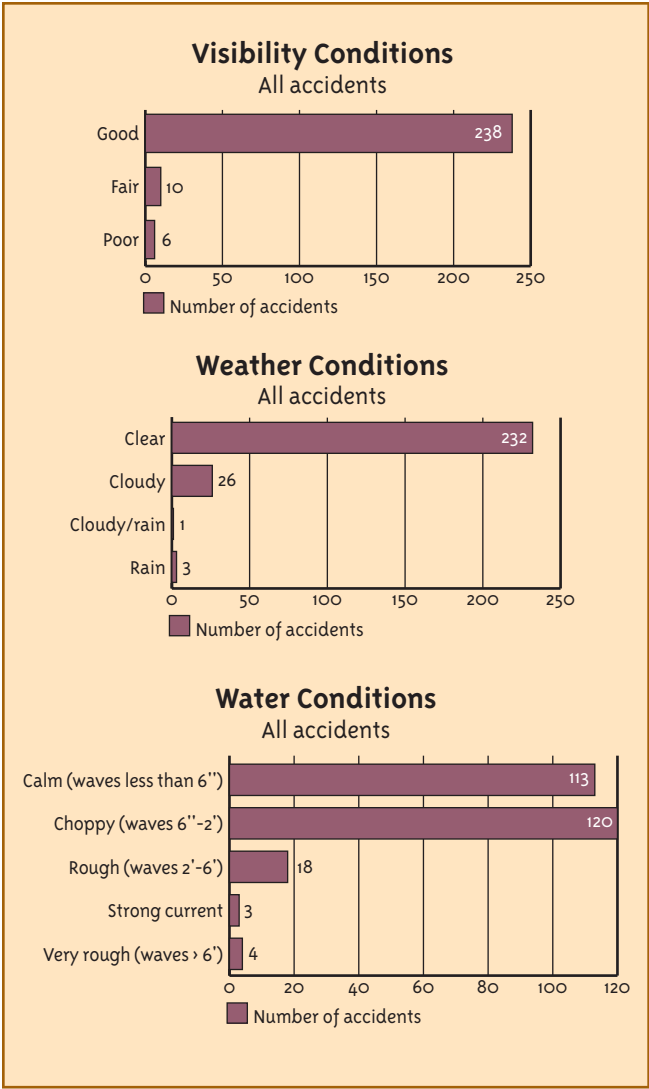
39 percent of all injuries. Many of these accidents can be attributed to the fact that numerous first-time operators are renting or have just recently purchased a PWC. A PWC is operated differently and averages more time on the water than a traditional watercraft. What is encouraging is that there were no fatal PWC accidents recorded in 2005.

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.

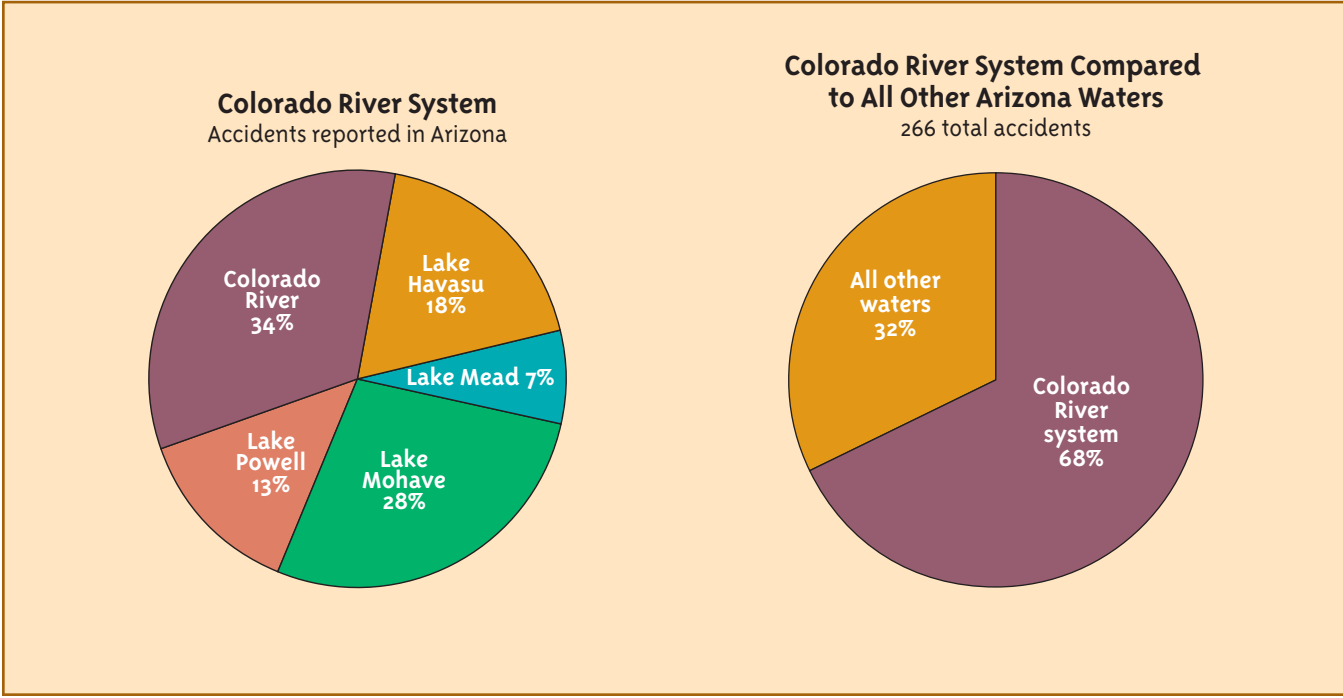
Combined 2005 Colorado River statistics from California, Arizona and Nevada:

*255 accidents, 166 injuries, and 9 fatalities.*

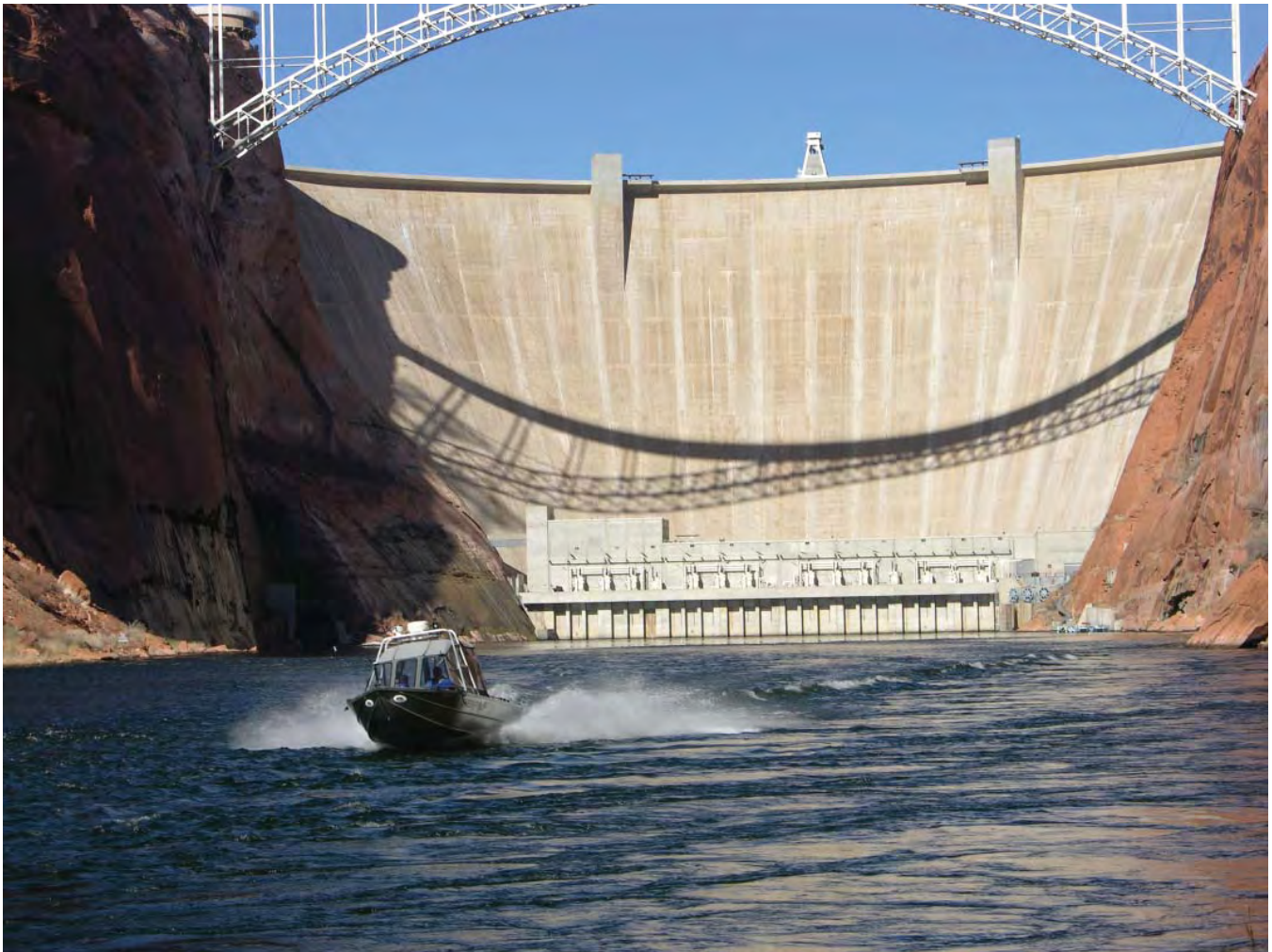
In 2005, 68 percent of all Arizona watercraft accidents occurred along the Colorado River. Since 1993, statistics demonstrate that 65 percent of all Arizona fatal watercraft



Statistics show a significant number of boating accidents are alcohol related. The watercraft law enforcement agencies along the Colorado River regularly schedule OUI special enforcement projects to identify and remove impaired boaters from the water. Here, an Arizona Game and Fish officer completes a contact during an inter-agency OUI checkpoint at Callville Bay on Lake Mead in 2005.







*Coconino County Sheriff's deputies in the frigid waters just below Glen Canyon Dam head downstream towards Lees Ferry. Boaters must take year-round precautions against cold-water immersion, as the waters of Lees Ferry remain very cold throughout the year.*

accidents occurred along the Colorado River. Of the Colorado River fatalities, 80 percent involved California operators. That means that since 1993, 50 percent of all Arizona fatalities have involved California operators. An increase in law enforcement activity on both sides of the river, particularly OUI enforcement, and a focus on boating education have been shown to help reduce the number of boating accidents along this high-use area.

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.



*During a 2005 search-and-rescue exercise, a Bullhead City Police Department patrol boat prepares to deploy divers as it navigates upstream along the Colorado River in the Bullhead City area.*



## ARIZONA'S 2006 BOATING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Deputy Jared Kyer is a full-time boating officer for the Mohave County Sheriff's Office and is assigned patrol duties in the Lake Havasu and Colorado River area between Lake Havasu and Golden Shores, Arizona. Lake Havasu is considered to be the busiest waterway in the state of Arizona. Hundreds of thousands of visitors flock to the area during our extended summer season. As a result, congested waterways mingled with many inexperienced, and sometimes impaired operators, have all the ingredients for tragedy.

Deputy Kyer is a two-year veteran and recognized the significant problems facing law enforcement in the boating arena of Lake Havasu. Looking to make a difference in boating safety, he asked

to be assigned to educational programs to increase his skills through advanced education. He was able to attend a boat accident investigation course, as well as the state's boating officer course. Deputy Kyer single-handedly investigated more than 12 accidents this past year and effected 48 arrests for operating under the influence.

During the 2005 boating season, Deputy Kyer recorded 31 law enforcement assists, over 100 safety inspections, and greatly supported the maintenance of a rather large fleet of patrol boats. He was also "called out" from his home on several occasions for nighttime search-and-rescue missions. One mission in particular

involved a hit-and-run accident in which two subjects were forced into the water as their boat sank. After searching for nearly two hours, Deputy Kyer located the subjects floating in the water. The two individuals were unharmed and thankful that the deputy went the "extra mile" to locate them. This heroic act performed by Deputy Kyer quite possibly saved the lives of these two individuals. His dedication and perseverance personify the officer that he is.

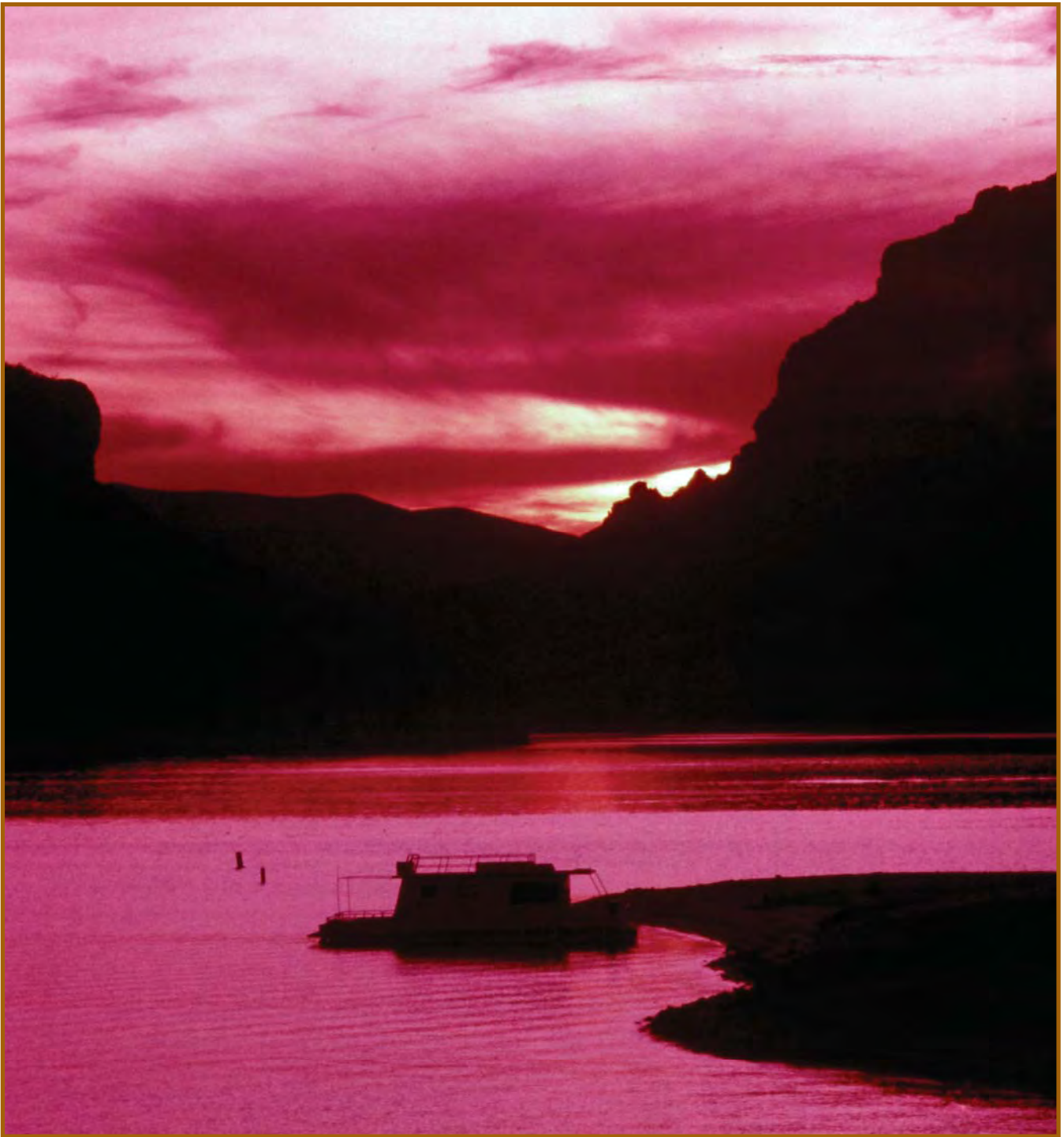


*Mohave County Sheriff's Deputy Jared Kyer*

Deputy Kyer also was involved in educating the young people of Lake Havasu City. He has a way of captivating young people, and getting the message to "stick." Deputy Kyer has been assigned to the training staff of the boating safety volunteer program, and over 70 local citizens have received the same captivating and professional instruction from him.

### **Previous Arizona Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Recipients:**

- 2005 Tim Baumgarten, Arizona Game and Fish Department
- 2004 Jerry Burns, La Paz County Sheriff's Office
- 2003 Deanna Pflieger, Arizona Game and Fish Department
- 2002 No Arizona officer named
- 2001 Gerald Duvall, Bullhead City Police Department
- 2000 Steve Andrews, Arizona Game and Fish Department



- Wear your life jacket
- Boat sober
- Take a boating class
- Get a vessel safety check



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