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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20591

JUL 3 1968

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

NC-1/NS-20

Admiral Willard J. Smith  
Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard  
Washington, D. C. 20591

Dear Admiral Smith:

The Board shares your concern and that of the Department of Transportation regarding recreational boating safety. We are analyzing the individual accident reports involving loss of life, and also your annual report of Boating Statistics for 1967. President Johnson's consumer message announced the proposed Recreational Boating Act of 1968, and we will be interested to follow its legislative progress. The National Transportation Safety Board will be willing to assist you and the Department in any way we can to support this program, or others needed to improve boating safety.

After the Lake Michigan accident last August, the thought occurred to us that a larger number of Marine Boards of Investigation would serve several useful roles in promoting recreational boating safety. More public information and safety education result from such public investigations than from the routine one-man investigations. Secondly, the final report of Marine Boards of Investigation receives much wider distribution in the marine industry.

We appreciate the fact that these proceedings require more time of senior officers, but they are more apt to produce recommendations to prevent future accidents. The need for additional emphasis on recreational boating safety preventive programs is apparent from the relatively large number of fatalities in this field in comparison with those experienced by commercial vessels. For example, in the calendar year 1967, most of the 4,113 recreational boating accidents occurred on small open boats, as follows:

(no report)

Size of Boat Involved	No. of Boats Involved	Cumulative Percent, Boats	Fatalities	Cumulative Percent Fatal	No. of Persons Injured	Cumulative Percent Injured
Less than 16'	1501	28.5	677	51.6	442	32.4
16' to less than 26'	1884	64.2	298	74.4	564	73.7
26' to less than 40'	716	77.8	76	80.1	148	84.5
40' to less than 65'	157	80.7	25	82.0	23	86.2
65' and over	22	81.2	1	82.0	--	86.2
Unknown	<u>994</u>	100.0	<u>235</u>	100.0	<u>183</u>	100.0
Totals:	5274		1312		1365	

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The predominance of accidents in such small boats warrants, we believe, selection of several such accidents, or a series of them at or about the same date, for Marine Boards of Investigation. A few selected geographical areas of densely populated pleasure boats such as the Great Lakes, Gulf and Florida Coasts, Inland Waterways, California, Pacific Northwest, or East Coast, seem to have the most potential for accidents of this type. The recent capsizing of a 14 foot outboard boat on May 26, off the coast of Maine, with loss of eight lives, is an example of this type of accident. Should several accidents occur in such areas involving a number of small open boats, you may wish to consider convening Marine Boards to review them during the current boating season. Lessons learned from such accidents in small boats, extensively publicized, could serve a useful accident prevention and safety promotion purpose in the fast growing but hazardous sport.

Sincerely yours,

*Joseph P. Connell, Jr.*  
 Joseph P. Connell, Jr.  
 Chairman