

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources



**Law Enforcement
Investigations Statistics
2020
www.dnr.sc.gov**

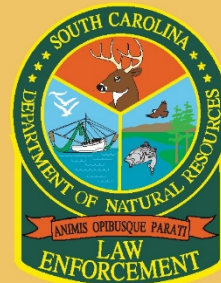


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INTRODUCTION

The state of South Carolina has an abundance of water resources with 8,000 miles of rivers, 460,000 acres of lakes, and 3,000 miles of coastline. Whether it's fishing, water-skiing, hunting or pleasure boating, these resources are used every day by thousands of recreational boaters. Currently there are 777,008 recreational motorboats registered in South Carolina with thousands of new boats being registered every year. Currently South Carolina is sixth in the nation for registered boats.

In 1973 there were sixty-four fatalities as a result of recreational boating accidents. That same year there were only 128,000 boats registered in this state. An increase in law enforcement personnel, additional laws like the Boating Safety Act of 1996, Drew's Law, and concentrated boating education classes statewide have all combined in an effort to reduce the number of accidents and fatalities.

The information found in this report is useful in our Boating Safety Education program as a reference for stressing facts relating to careless boat operation. This information helps to impress upon each student the importance of safe boating and shows that accidents do in fact happen.

This report is published by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Investigations Section. Copies are made available to SCDNR, the news media, and concerned individuals whose efforts will make boating not only safe but enjoyable.

ACCIDENT REPORTING

When a person operating a boat on the waters of South Carolina is involved in a reportable accident, they are required to notify the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Accidents involving injury or loss of life must be reported within 48 hours; accidents in all other cases are required to be reported within 10 days. Any person violating these requirements is liable to a penalty for each violation.

Any of the following constitutes a reportable boating accident:

- A. Loss of life
- B. Injuries Incapacitating a person for more than 24 hours
- C. Injuries rendering a person unconscious.
- D. Injuries requiring medical treatment.
- E. Physical damage to boats or real property in excess of \$2,500.00.

All boating accident reports are forwarded to the Law Enforcement Investigations Section where they are reviewed by designated personnel for completeness and accuracy. Reports that are incomplete or lack pertinent information are returned with an explanation of what additional information is needed. The primary and secondary causes of the accident are determined by the information given in the report. Copies of all "reportable accident" reports are forwarded to the United States Coast Guard.

THE PAST TEN YEARS

Year	Recreational Boating Accidents	Recreational Boating Fatalities	
2020	161	29	3*
2019	146	14	1*
2018	142	15	0*
2017	163	15	0*
2016	140	23	7*
2015	131	19	4*
2014	127	15	1*
2013	108	28	4*
2012	111	14	3*
2011	98	19	4*

2011- 447,227 REGISTERED MOTORBOATS

2020- 777,008 REGISTERED MOTORBOATS

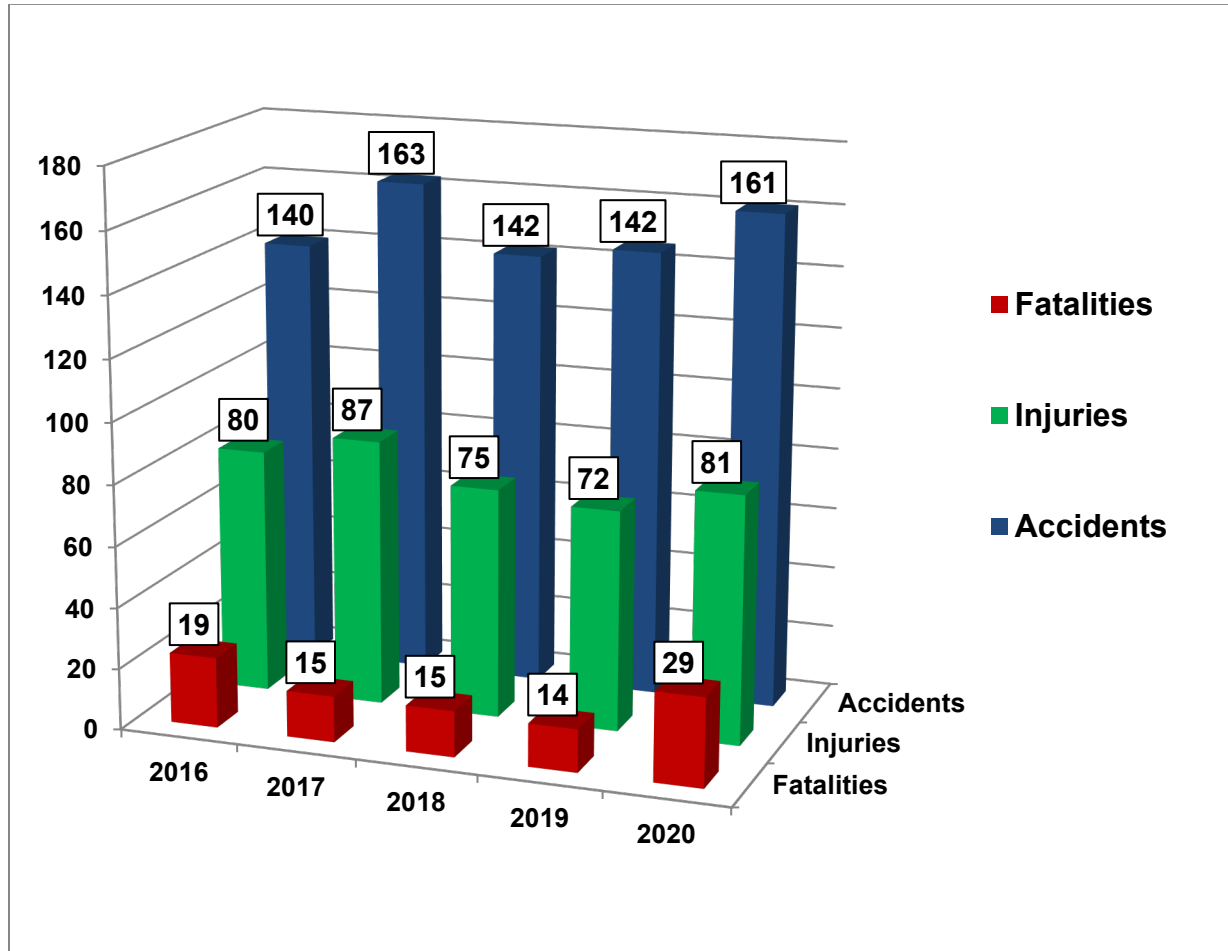
LAKES- 460,000 ACRES

RIVERS- 8,000 MILES

COASTLINE- 3,000 MILES

* Represents the number of private pond fatalities that are included in the total. Boating safety regulations are not enforced on private ponds.

FIVE YEAR HISTORY



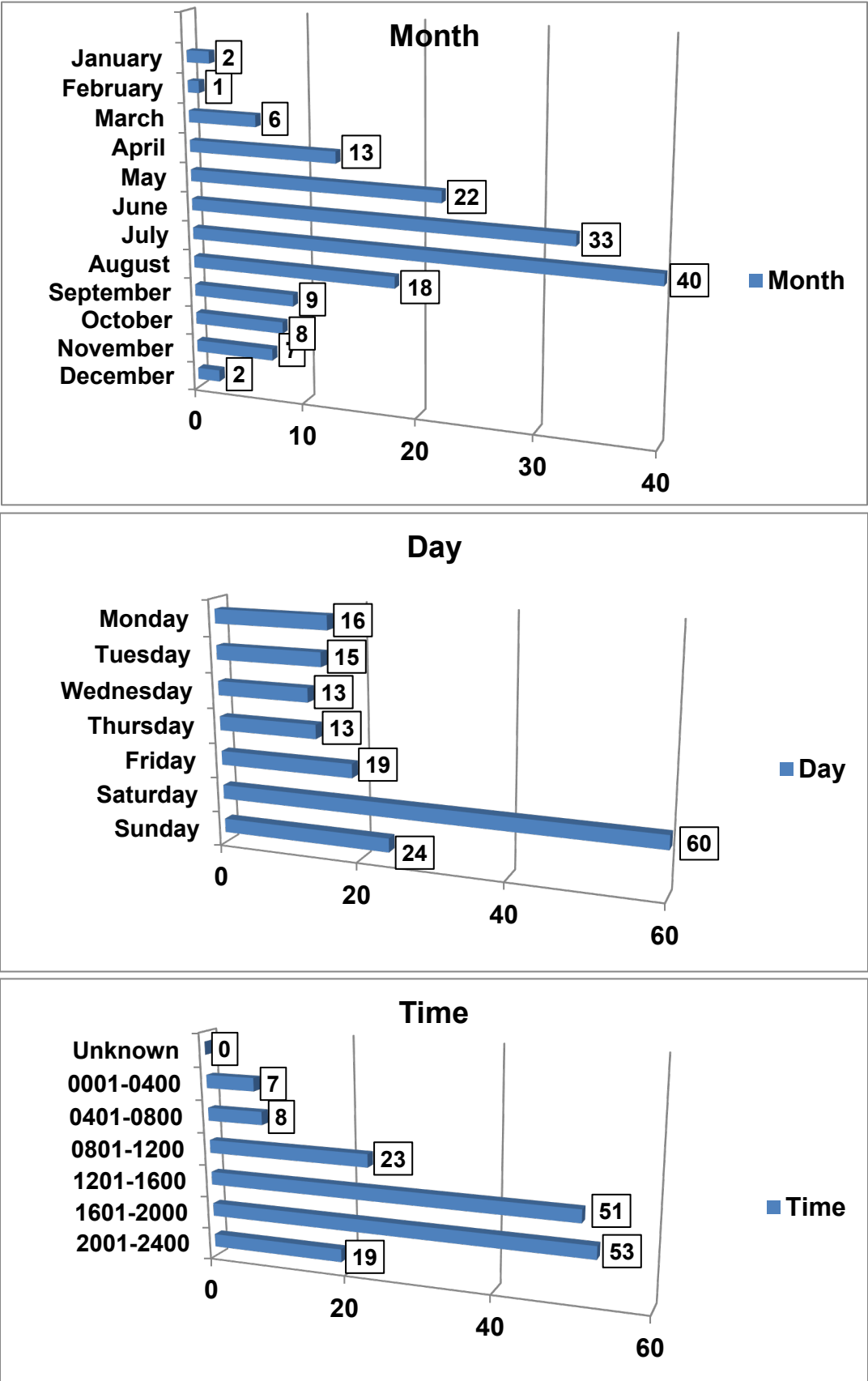
2020 Boating Statistics by County

County	Boats	PWC	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Vessels
Abbeville	3,243	222	0	0	0	0
Aiken	13,305	985	0	0	0	0
Allendale	483	8	0	0	0	0
Anderson	19,181	2,193	3	2	0	4
Bamberg	1,205	40	0	0	0	0
Barnwell	2,376	72	0	0	0	0
Beaufort	16,440	836	13	10	0	15
Berkeley	19,235	1,276	8	6	3	9
Calhoun	2,533	95	4	1	3	4
Charleston	38,154	1,615	26	9	1	40
Cherokee	3,374	212	0	0	0	0
Chester	2,665	126	0	0	0	0
Chesterfield	2,874	151	2	0	2	2
Clarendon	5,585	362	2	0	0	2
Colleton	5,464	219	2	2	2	3
Darlington	5,775	212	0	0	0	0
Dillon	2,330	125	1	0	1	1
Dorchester	9,701	702	0	0	0	0
Edgefield	2,471	182	1	0	1	1
Fairfield	2,325	280	3	1	0	5
Florence	13,081	627	0	0	0	0
Georgetown	10,075	391	8	7	2	14
Greenville	20,953	2,659	1	2	0	2
Greenwood	5,196	694	2	1	0	3
Hampton	1,996	57	0	0	0	0
Horry	24,681	2,499	34	17	2	51
Jasper	2,050	80	0	0	0	0
Kershaw	6,444	599	1	0	0	2

County	Boats	PWC	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Vessels
Lancaster	4,019	394	0	0	0	0
Laurens	6,491	687	2	0	0	2
Lee	1,089	50	0	0	0	0
Lexington	29,376	3,674	11	3	3	11
Marion	3,102	108	1	0	0	1
Marlboro	1,456	67	0	0	0	0
McCormick	1,624	158	2	1	0	2
Newberry	5,474	537	5	2	2	8
Oconee	11,774	2,034	6	4	0	12
Orangeburg	7,578	358	2	4	1	2
Pickens	9,107	1,117	3	1	1	4
Richland	14,770	1,302	3	0	1	4
Saluda	2,825	331	3	3	1	4
Spartanburg	16,941	1,861	0	0	0	0
Sumter	7,971	394	0	0	0	0
Union	2,062	117	0	0	0	0
Williamsburg	3,564	85	1	0	1	1
York	14,767	2,033	11	5	2	17
Totals	387,185	32,886	161	81	29	226

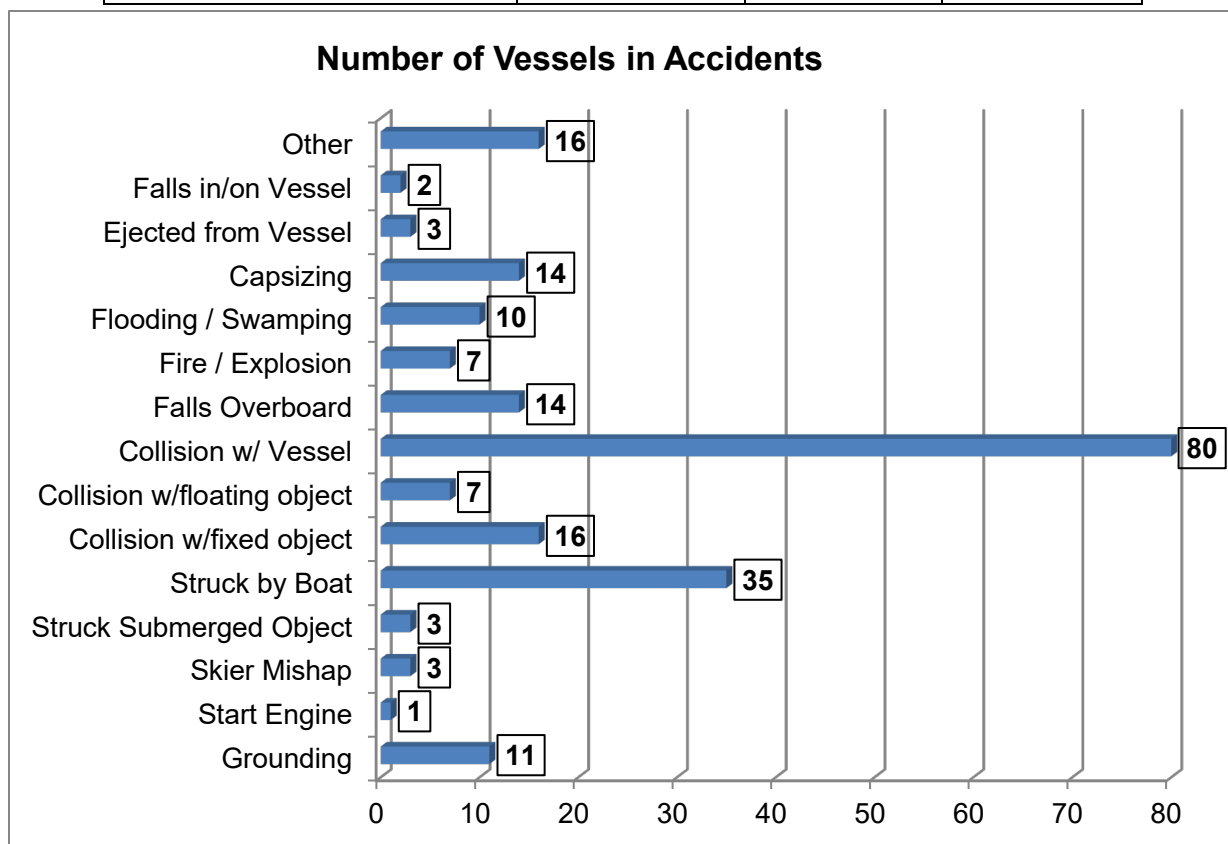
**** The total number of registered boats is 777,008 which includes all active and inactive boats, Personal Watercraft, state owned boats and boats reported stolen.**

Month, Day of the Week, Time of Day Accidents Occurred in 2020



Statistics by Accident Type

Accident Type	#Deceased	#Injured	# Vessels
Capsizing	5	3	14
Grounding	0	5	11
Skier Mishap	0	5	3
Starting Engine	0	1	1
Struck by Boat	2	6	35
Struck Submerged Object	0	0	3
Other	4	3	10
Collision w/ Fixed Object	6	12	16
Collision w/ Floating Object	0	3	7
Collision w/ Vessel	0	16	80
Fall in Boat	0	2	2
Fall Overboard	8	7	14
Fire/Explosion	0	4	7
Flooding / Swamping	2	0	10
Sinking	0	0	4
Ejected from Vessel	1	2	3
Sudden Medical Condition	0	1	1
Unknown	1	0	1
Total:	29	70	222



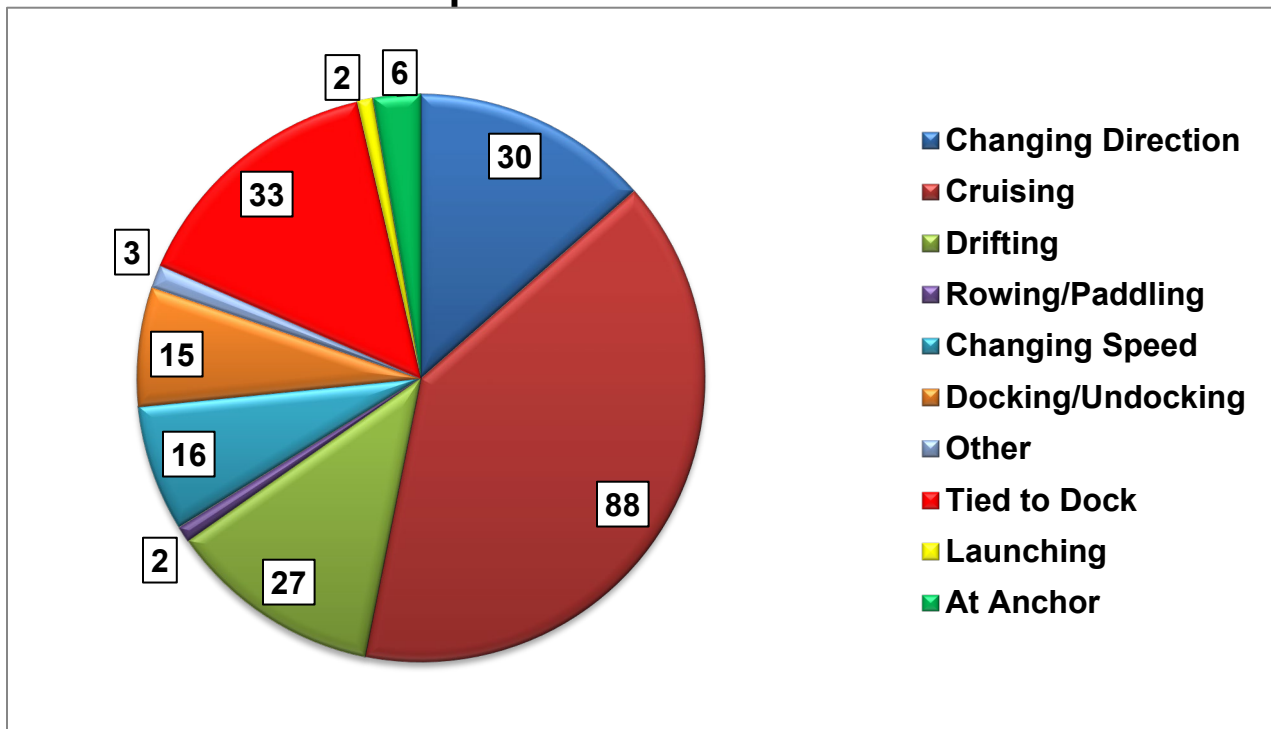
Primary Causes of Accidents

Accident Cause	Accidents	Fatalities	Injuries	Vessels Involved
Alcohol Use	3	2	3	4
Careless/Reckless	5	0	3	8
Excessive Speed	10	0	9	15
Failure to Vent	0	0	0	0
Falls Overboard	3	3	0	3
Fault of Equipment	9	1	5	10
Fault of Machinery	8	0	1	10
Fault of Hull	2	0	0	2
Ignition of Fuel/Vapor	0	0	0	0
Improper Anchoring	3	1	0	3
Improper Lights	3	0	6	6
Improper Loading	0	0	0	0
Navigation Rules Violation	0	0	0	0
No Proper Lookout	27	3	17	44
Operator Inattention	21	1	8	27
Operator Inexperience	25	2	15	40
Other	6	5	1	6
Overloading	2	2	2	2
Restricted Vision	4	0	3	6
Passenger/Skier Behavior	2	1	1	2
Sharp Turn	0	0	0	0
Standing/Sitting on gunwale	0	0	0	0
Struck Submerged Object	1	0	0	1
Unknown	6	5	0	8
Wake	2	0	1	2
Weather/Hazardous Water	19	3	6	23
Total:	161	29	81	222

2020 Statistics by Operation

Vessel Operation	# Fatalities	# Injuries	# Vessels
Changing Speed	2	7	16
Docking/Undocking	1	0	15
Tied to Dock/Moored	2	3	33
Changing Direction	3	14	30
Cruising	7	46	88
Drifting	8	4	27
At Anchor	0	2	6
Rowing/Paddling	2	0	2
Launching	0	2	2
Other/Misc.	4	3	3
Totals:	29	81	222

Vessels Operation at Time of Accident

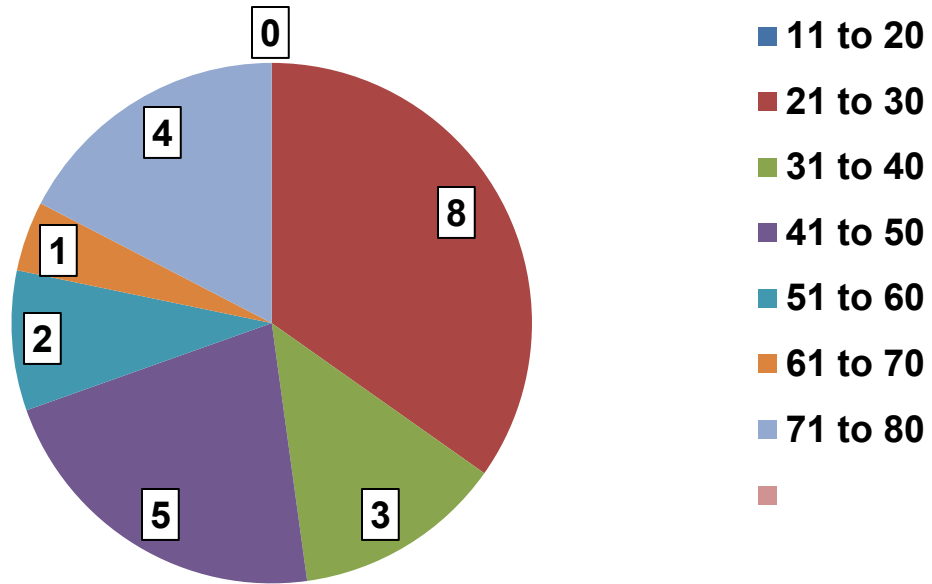


Statistics by Body of Water

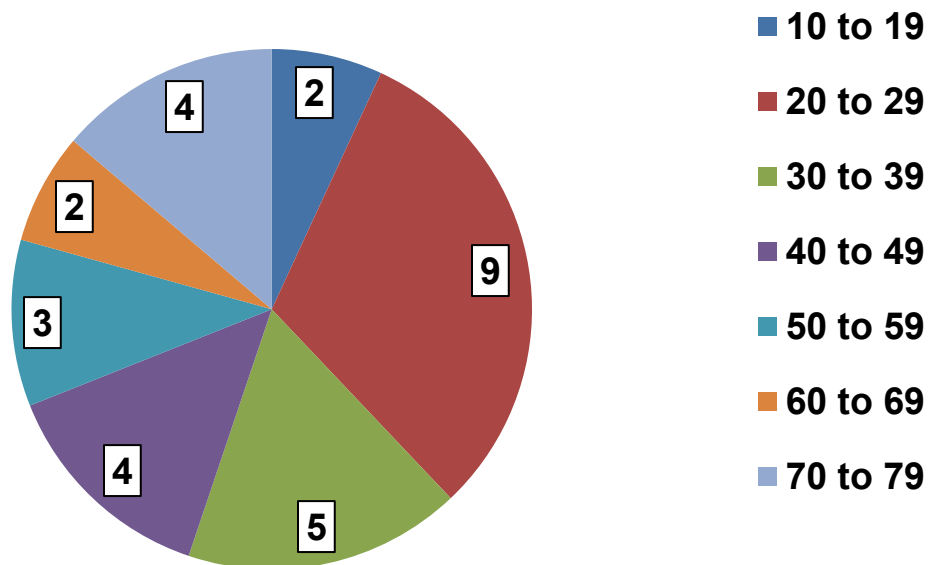
Body of Water	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Vessels Involved
Ashley River	5	0	0	8
Atlantic Ocean	5	5	0	7
Beaufort River	3	2	0	4
Big Pee Dee	1	1	0	1
Broad River	1	0	2	2
Bulls Bay	1	1	0	1
Catawba River	2	0	1	2
Charleston Harbor	4	2	0	6
Chechessee River	2	1	0	3
Combahee River	1	1	0	2
Congaree River	1	0	1	0
Cooper River	5	2	0	5
Cowhouse Creek	1	0	0	1
Edisto River	1	1	2	1
Eddings Creek	1	1	0	1
Folly River	1	0	0	2
ICW Mt Pleasant	2	1	0	4
ICW Murrells Inlet	2	2	0	3
ICW Myrtle Beach	19	6	1	26
ICW Stono River	1	0	0	1
Lake Greenwood	2	0	0	4
Lake Hartwell	4	3	0	6
Lake Keowee	8	4	1	12
Lake Lanier	1	2	0	2
Lake Marion	7	4	4	9
Lake Moultrie	5	4	3	5
Lake Murray	19	8	4	23
Lake Robinson	1	0	1	1
Lake Thurmond	2	1	0	2
Lake Wateree	3	0	0	6
Lake Wylie	8	5	0	14
Little Chechessee	1	0	0	1
Little Pee Dee	3	1	1	4
Little River	7	5	1	11
Mackay Creek	1	1	0	1
Murrells Inlet	3	2	0	5
Port Royal Sound	1	0	0	1
Private Pond	2	1	1	2
Saluda River	1	0	0	1
Sampit River	1	0	1	1
Santee River	2	0	1	3
Shem Creek	1	0	0	1
Skull Creek	1	1	0	1
Stono Inlet	1	0	0	1
Stono River	2	2	0	3
Waccamaw River	1	0	1	1
Wando River	1	0	0	1
Wappoo Creek	1	0	0	1

Body of Water	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Vessels Involved
Whale Branch	1	1	0	1
Totals:	161	81	29	222

Fatalities By Age of Operator

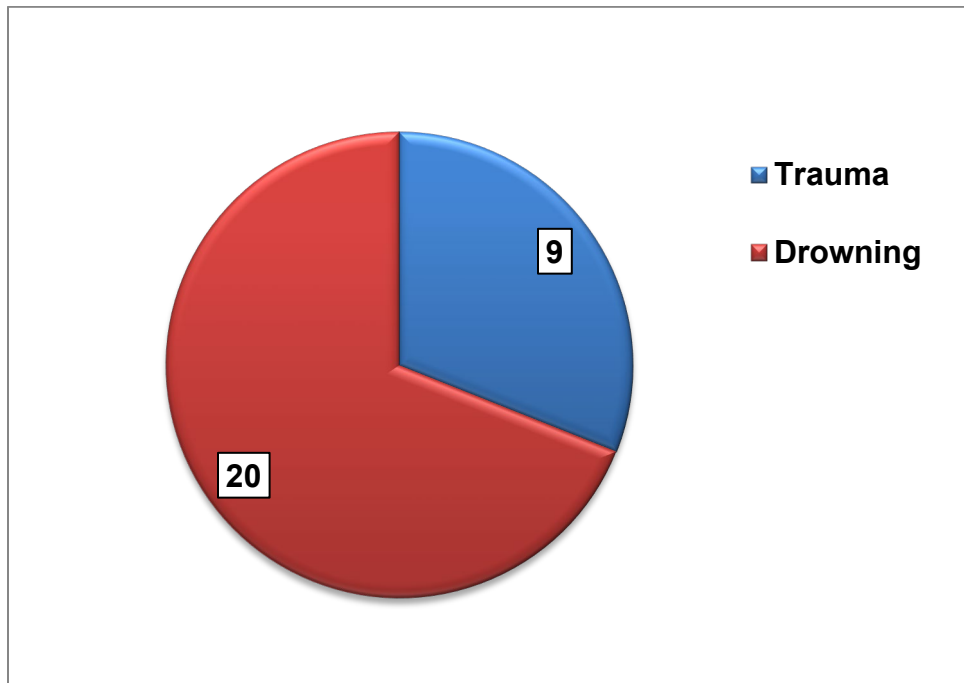


Age of Deceased



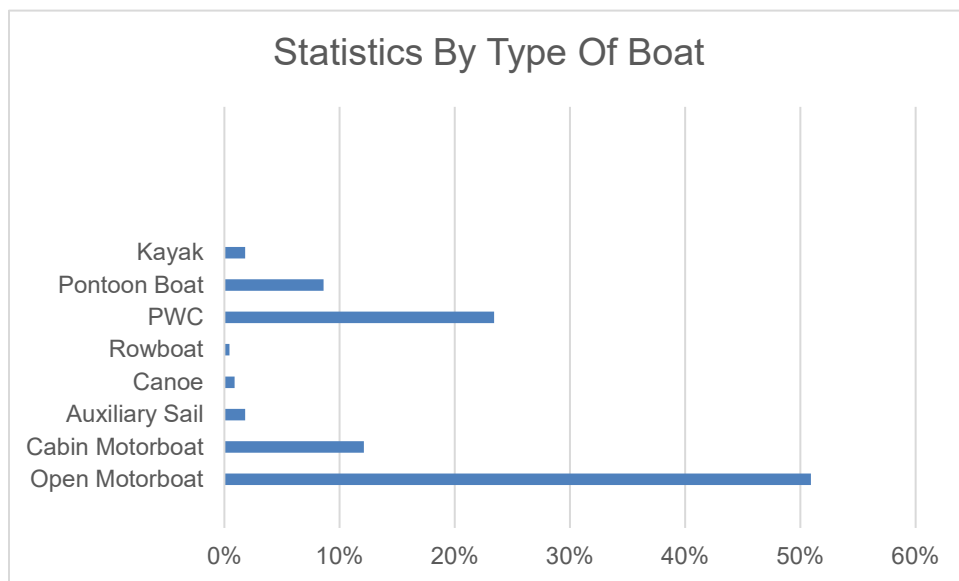
Statistics by Accident Type and Cause of Death

Type of Accident	Cause of Death	#Fatalities
Capsizing	Drowning	7
Collision w/Fixed Object	Drowning & Trauma	5
Collision w/Floating Object	Drowning	8
Collision w/Vessel	Trauma	2
Fall Overboard	Drowning & Trauma	6
Flooding/Swamping	Drowning	1
Total		29



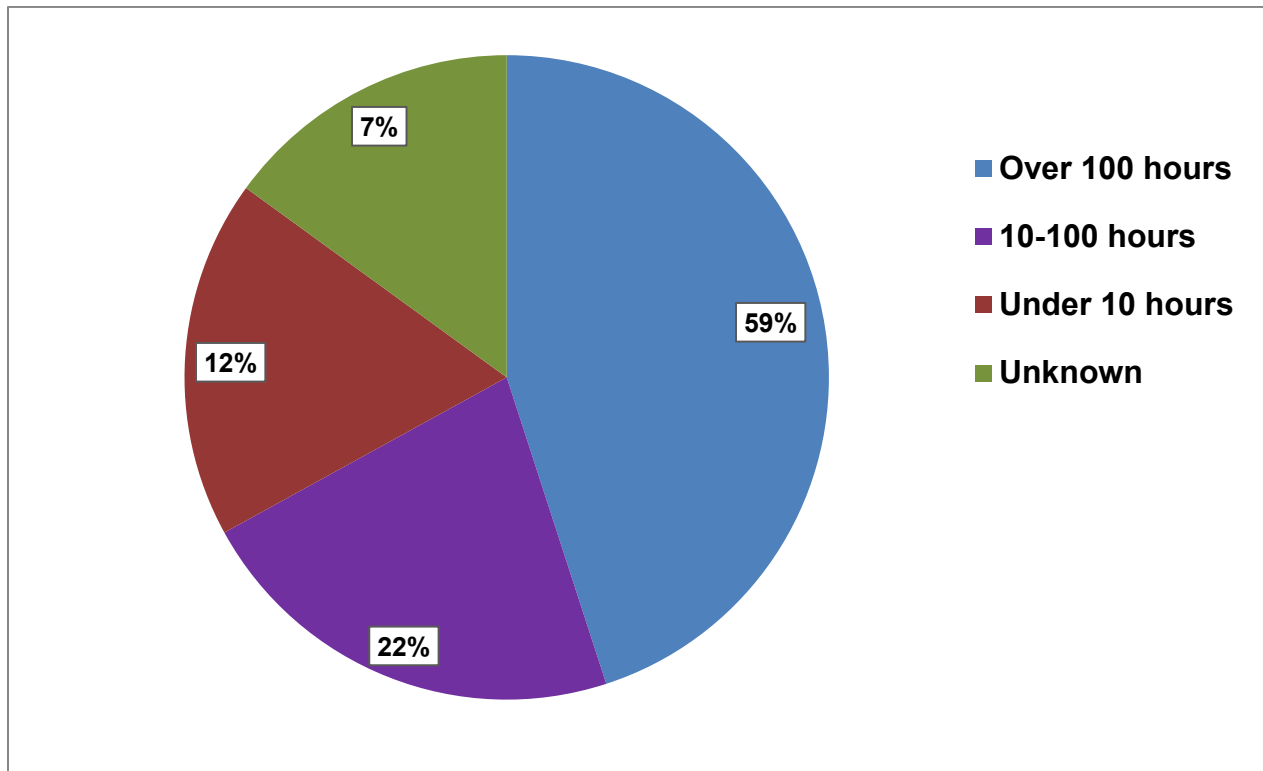
Statistics by Type of Boat

Boat Type	# Injuries	#Fatalities	#Vessels
Open Motorboat	46	19	113
Cabin Motorboat	2	1	27
Auxiliary Sail	0	0	4
Sail Only	0	0	2
Rowboat	0	1	1
PWC	22	2	52
Pontoon Boat	10	2	19
Kayak	1	4	4
Total:	81	29	222



Statistics by Operator Experience

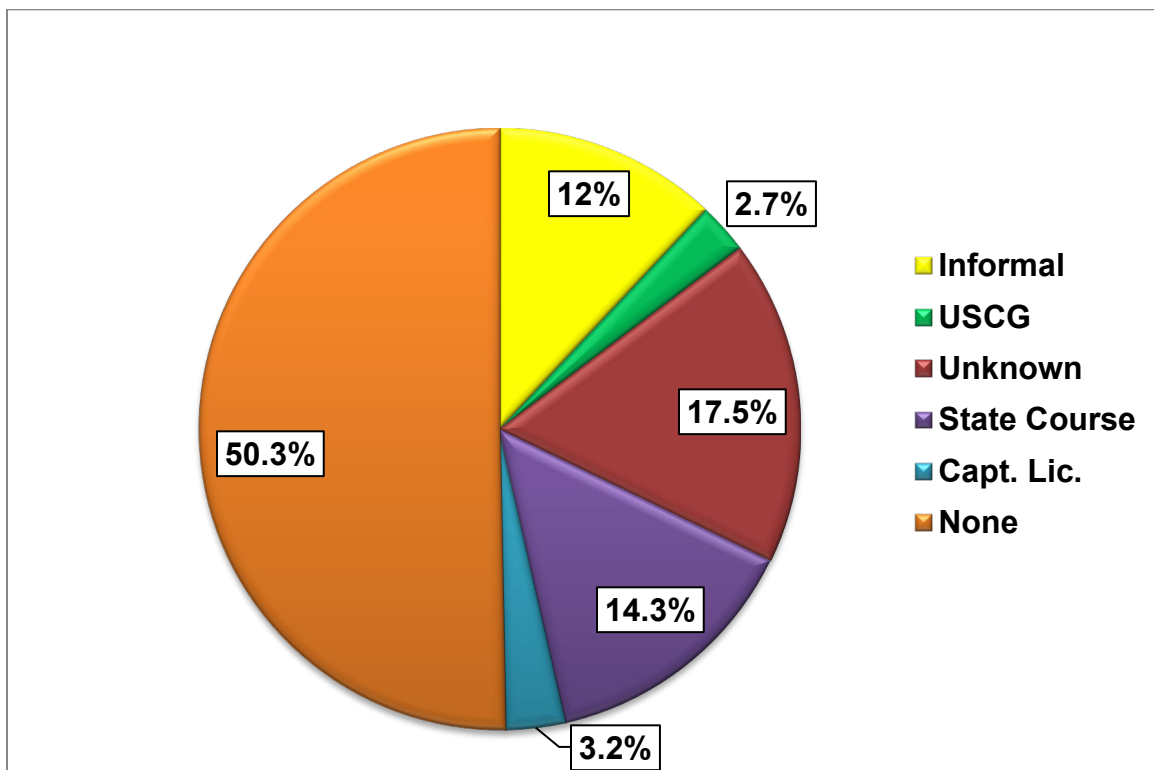
Operator Experience	# Fatalities	# Injured	# Vessels
Over 100 hours	12	39	100
10 – 100 hours	8	28	49
Under 10 hours	4	10	41
Unknown	5	4	32
Total	29	81	222



Statistics by Operator Education

Operator Education	#Fatalities	#Injuries	#Vessels
CAPTAINS LICENSE	0	0	5
INFORMAL	7	9	22
NAVY	0	1	1
NONE	10	43	96
SAILING CLUB	0	0	0
STATE	3	13	23
UNKNOWN	8	15	25
US POWER SQUADRON	0	0	3
USCG AUXILIARY	1	0	4
USCG MASTER LICENSE	0	0	1
TOTAL:	29	81	180 *

*Not all vessels had operators.



SUMMARY

In 1971 the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department began investigating accidents and keeping records. The first year, with 79,804 registered boats, there were 85 reported accidents with 45 fatalities. In 2009, South Carolina had its lowest year of fatalities on record with 11.

In 2020 there were 161 accidents reported to the Law Enforcement Investigations section, which included 29 fatalities and 81 injuries. There were 78 non-reportable boating incidents.

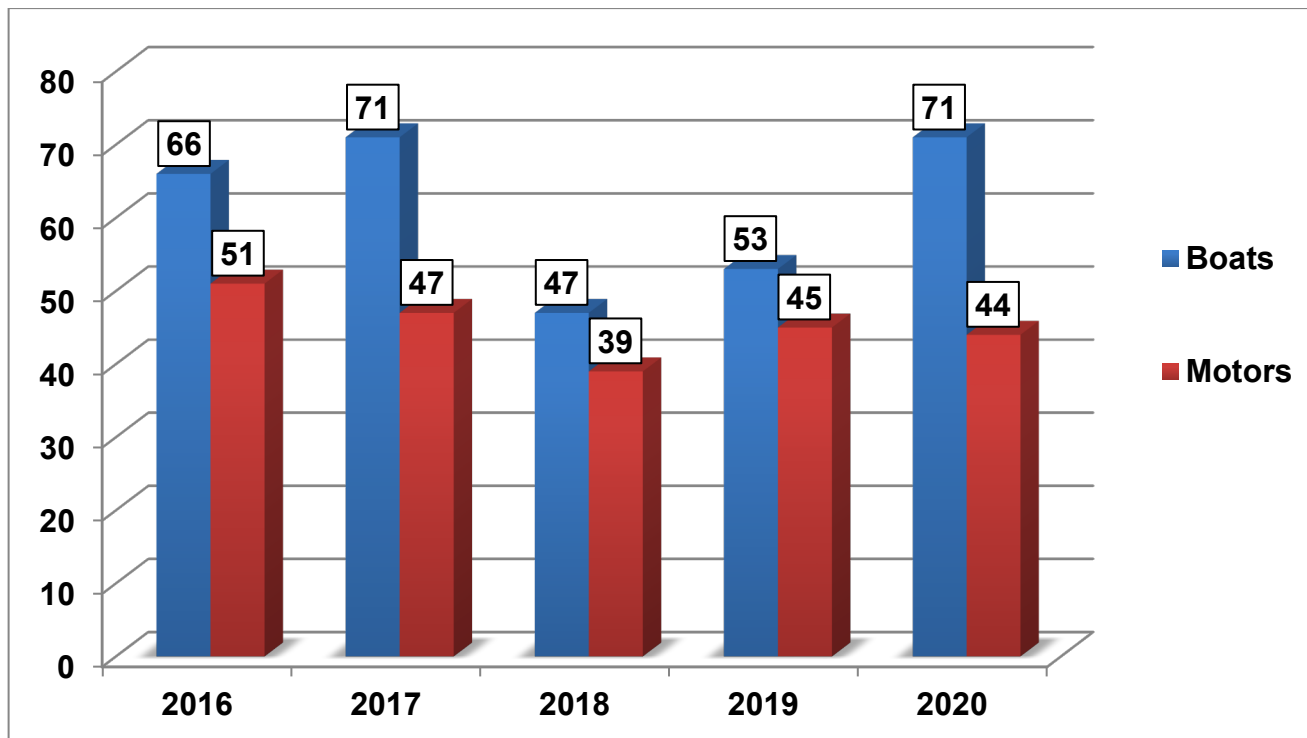
Boating accidents occurred in every month. Fifty two percent of all accidents occurred on Saturday and Sunday. Sixty four percent occurred between the hours of 12:01pm and 8:00pm. In eighty five percent of all accidents, the operator was twenty years of age or older. In 29% of all accidents a criminal case was made.

Collision with Vessel ranks as the number one type of accident. Capsizing ranks as the number one type of fatal accident. The majority of accidents are the result of No Proper Lookout. There were 161 recreational boating accidents, with 23 percent involving Personal Watercraft.

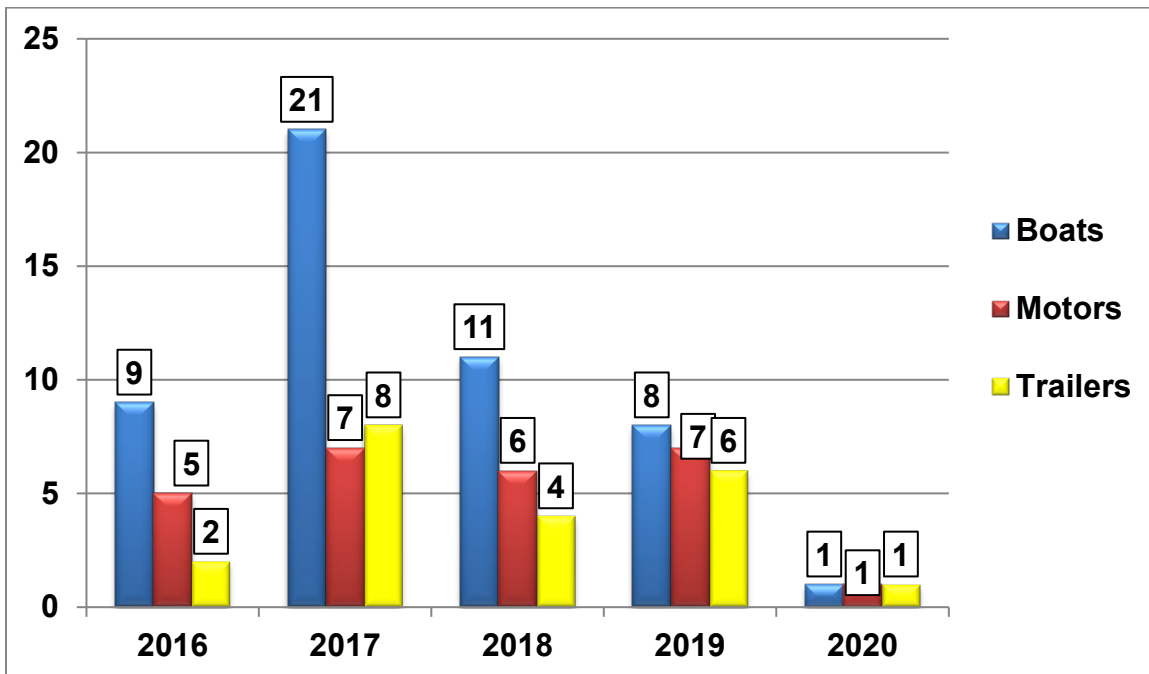
Marine Theft Investigations Annual Report 2020

South Carolina is sixth in the country in reported thefts of boats and motors. This year the Marine Theft Investigations section conducted 811 investigations. Throughout the year, investigators examined 719 boats, with 111 motors. One boat, one motor and one trailer were recovered. The total approximate values of these recoveries were \$1,964.00. These recoveries were made by SCDNR Investigators and do not include recoveries by outside agencies. During the year investigators issued 20 summons tickets and 163 warning tickets. This year a total of 71 boats and 44 motors were reported stolen in South Carolina.

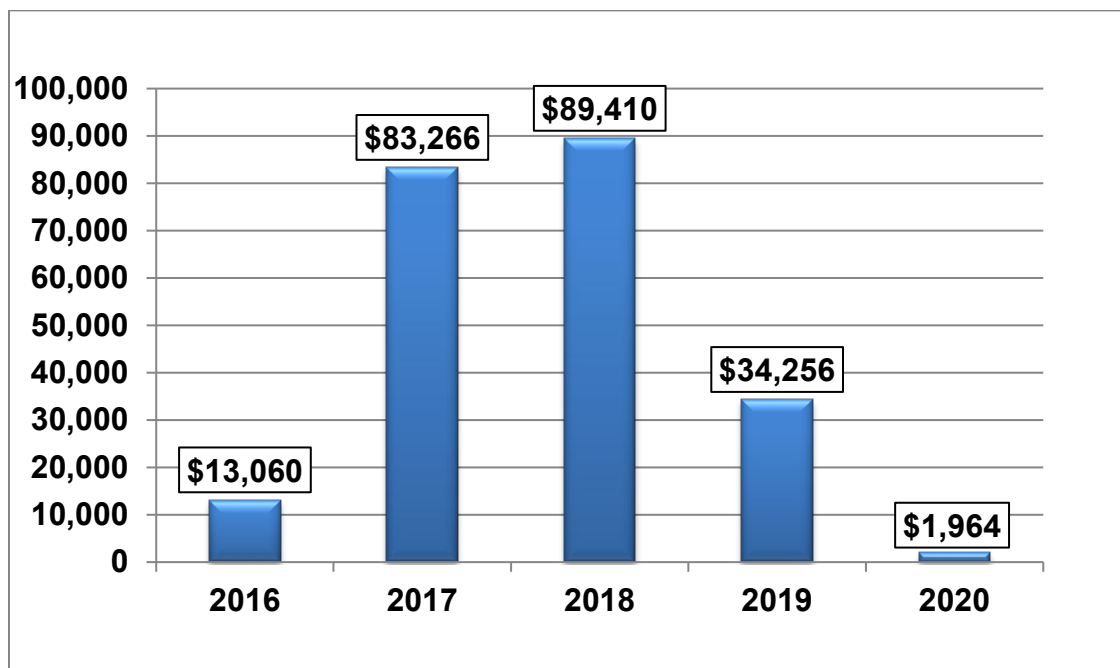
SC Registered / Titled Reported Stolen Boats / Motors



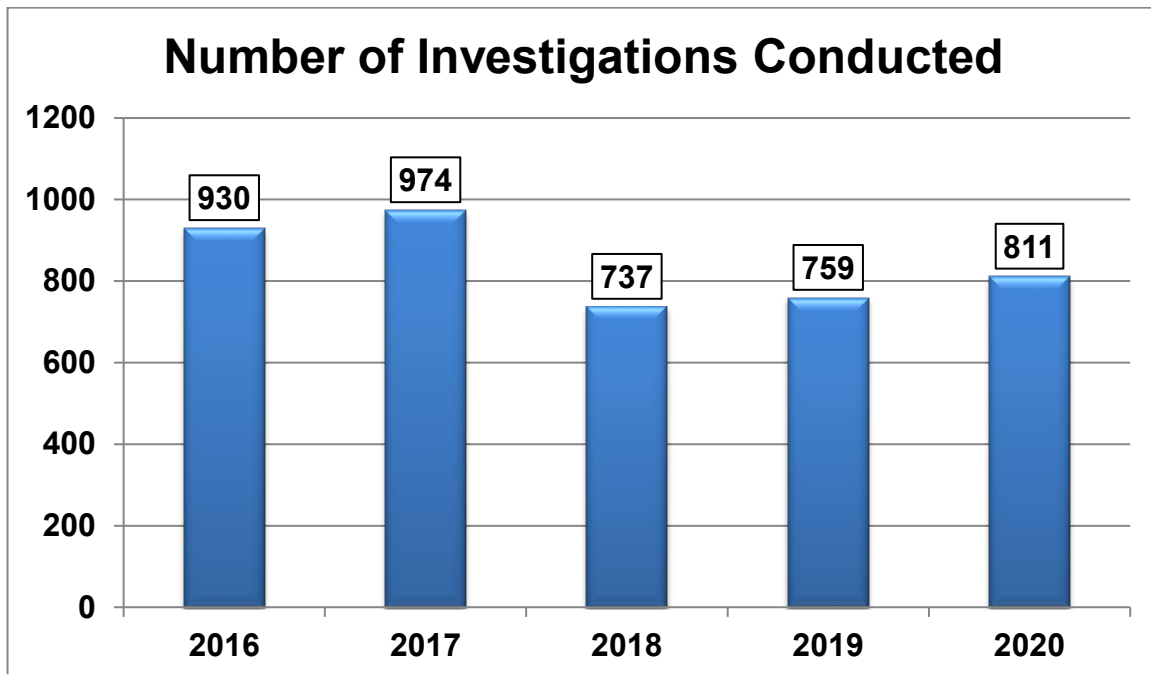
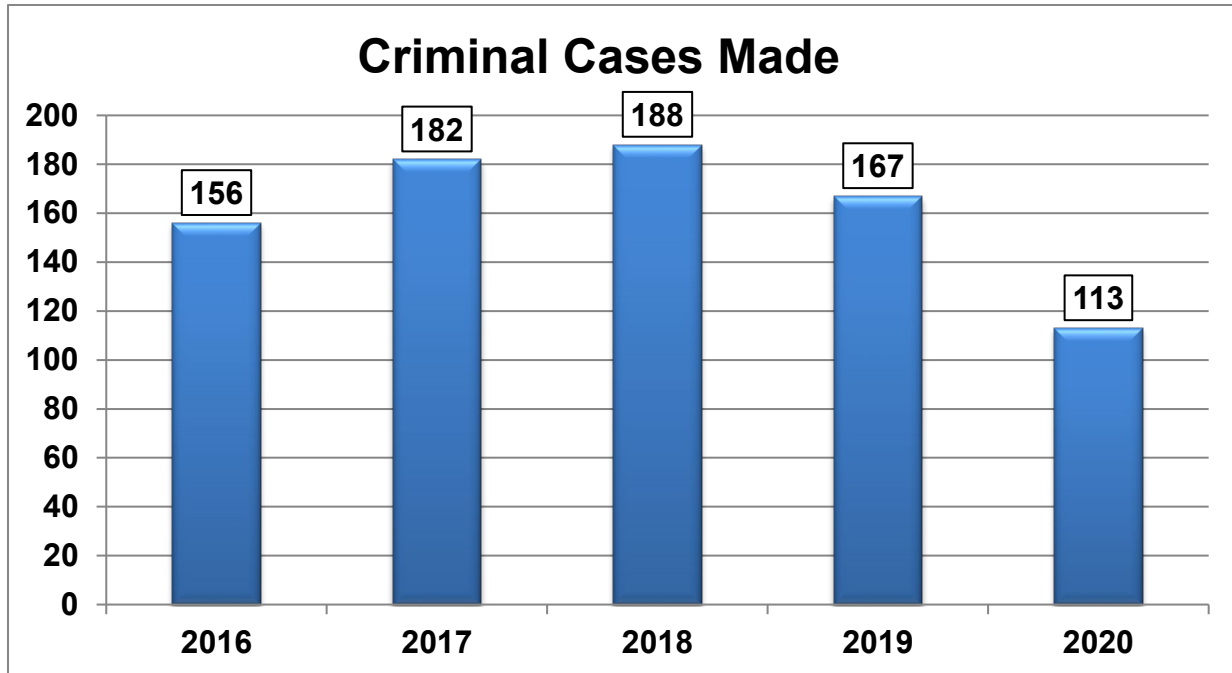
Marine Theft Recoveries 2020



Value of Recovered Property



Marine Theft 2020



Aids to Navigation

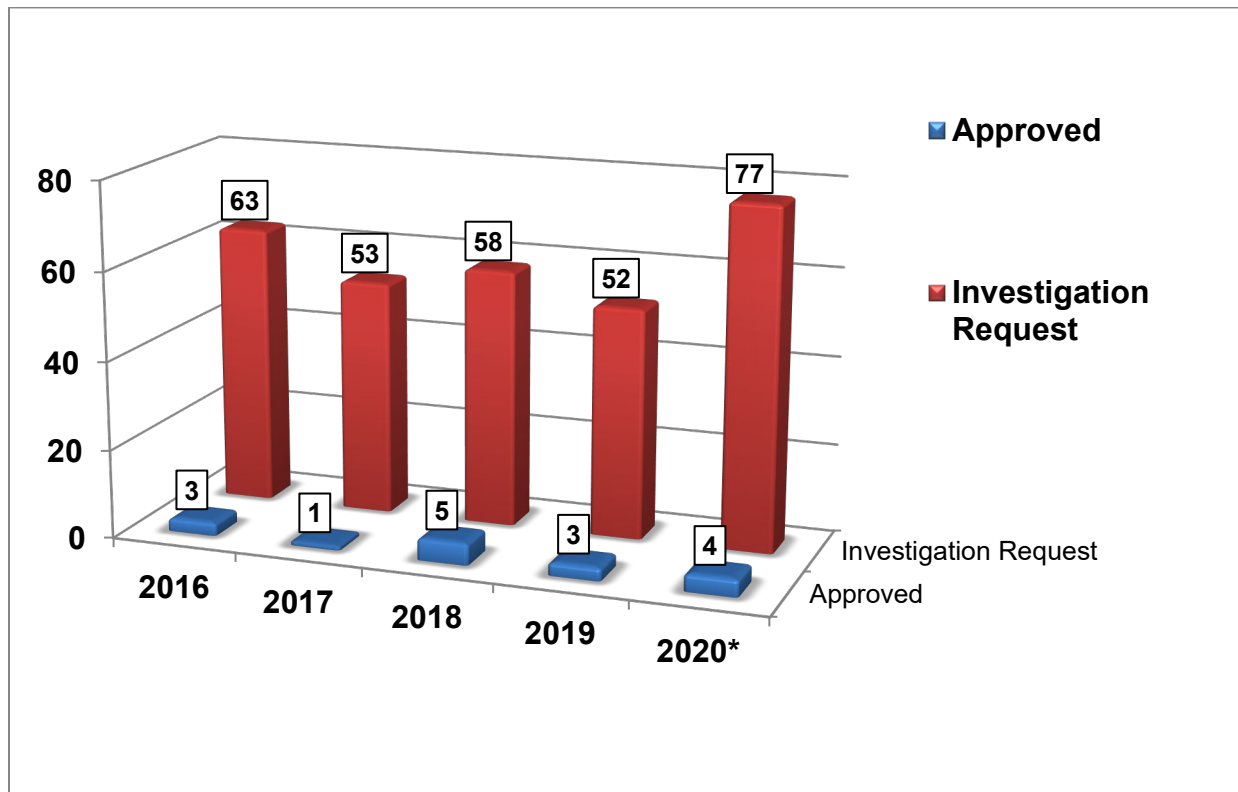
The Aids to Navigation Program requires regular monitoring and routine maintenance on 2,291 aids to navigation. There are 297 official Regulatory Zones throughout South Carolina. Incorporated into these Regulatory Zones are 657 No Wake Buoys, 768 No Wake Signs, 137 Boat Exclusion Buoys and 7 Boat Exclusion Signs. There are 727 hazard buoys that currently mark hazardous locations. The majority of these hazards are located on the inland lakes of South Carolina with almost 50% located on Lake Murray alone. In 2020 there were 166 Hazard Buoys, 146 No Wake Buoys, 44 No Wake Signs, and 21 Boat Exclusion Buoys placed across the state as part of ongoing maintenance. The Aids to Navigation staff continues to work closely with security personnel at all water treatment facilities and nuclear power stations on all the states lakes to enhance homeland security efforts. Maintenance of these Aids to Navigation required 2,237 man hours. Of these hours, 1,032 were boating hours.

During 2020, a total of 77 areas were investigated on the waters of South Carolina for regulatory zoning. There were four regulatory investigations that met the required consideration for official zoning. The Department of Natural Resources provides official information signs stating “Slow You Are Responsible for Your Wake” to be posted in areas that do not meet the zoning consideration, ninety one information signs were distributed in 2020. An increase in Boating Law Enforcement in these areas was also recommended to local officers in an effort increase safety and public awareness.

Statewide Aids to Navigation 2020

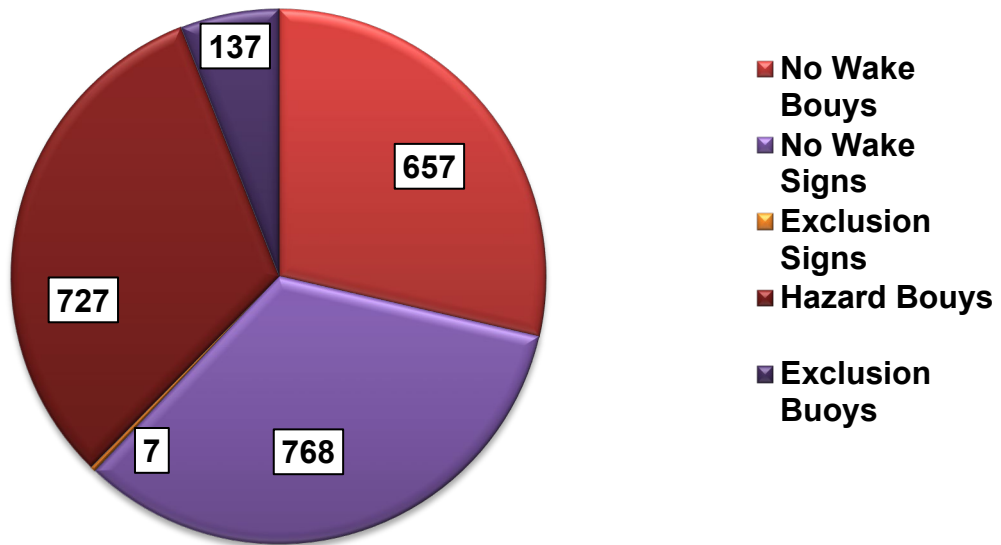
Description	Quantity
Official Regulatory Zones	297
No Wake Buoys and Signs	1,425
Hazard Buoys	727
Exclusion Buoys and Signs	144
Devices Added in 2020	27
Aids to Navigation Boating Hours	1,032
Aids to Navigation Maintenance Man-Hours	2,237

Zoning Investigations

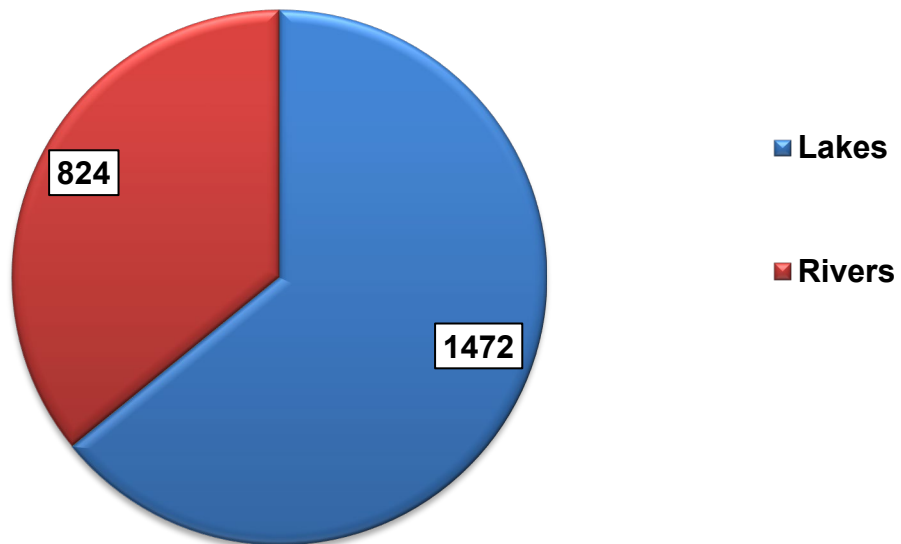


- 4 no wake zones were approved, two of which were no wake zone extensions.

Aids To Navigation Equipment



Equipment Placement



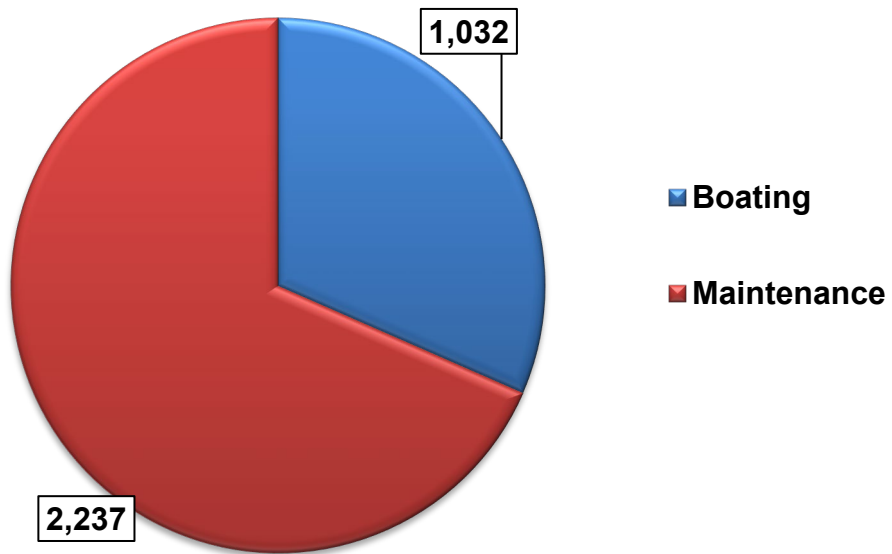
Official No Wake and Exclusion Zones By County

COUNTY	NO WAKE ZONES	EXCLUSION
Abbeville	4	0
Barnwell	1	0
Berkeley	10	2
Beaufort	33	3
Calhoun	2	0
Charleston	28	2
Clarendon	17	1
Colleton	2	1
Darlington	1	1
Dorchester	3	0
Fairfield	5	0
Georgetown	6	0
Greenwood	9	3
Greenville	3	1
Horry	9	0
Kershaw	8	0
Laurens	6	3
Lexington	21	5
McCormick	1	0
Newberry	13	1
Oconee	24	4
Orangeburg	6	1
Pickens	5	1
Richland	3	1
Saluda	9	0
Spartanburg	12	5
Sumter	7	2
Union	0	1
Williamsburg	2	0
York	7	0
Total	257	38

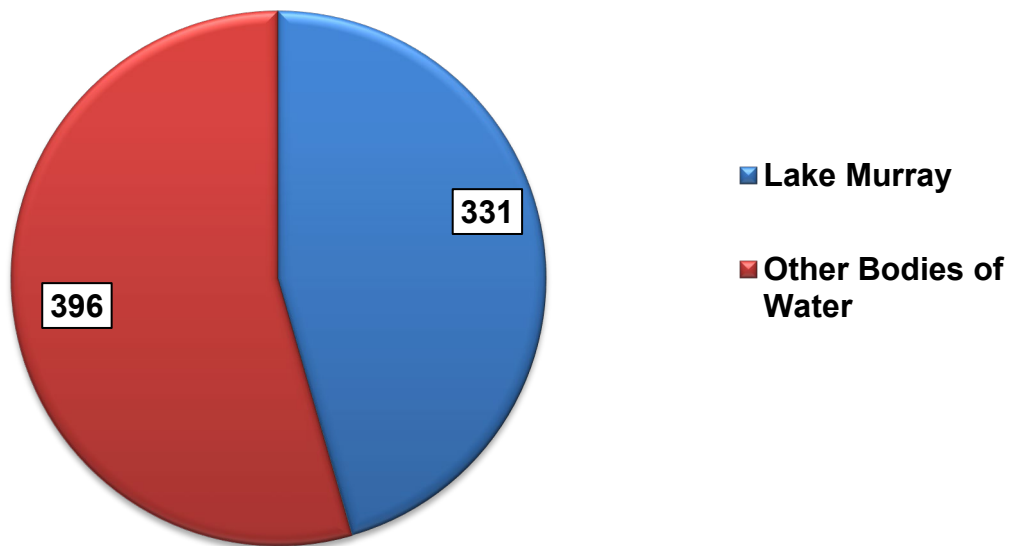
Hazard Buoys 2020

Body of Water	Quantity
Lake Blalock	5
Lake Bowen	6
Fishing Creek Lake	2
Lake Greenwood	60
Lake Jocassee	14
Lake Keowee	114
Lyman Lake	3
Lake Marion	6
Lake Monticello	35
Lake Moultrie	6
Lake Murray	331
Lake Robinson	18
Saluda Lake	7
Savannah River	15
Lake Secession	18
Lake Wateree	38
Lake Wylie	49
Total	727

Man Hours



Hazard Bouys

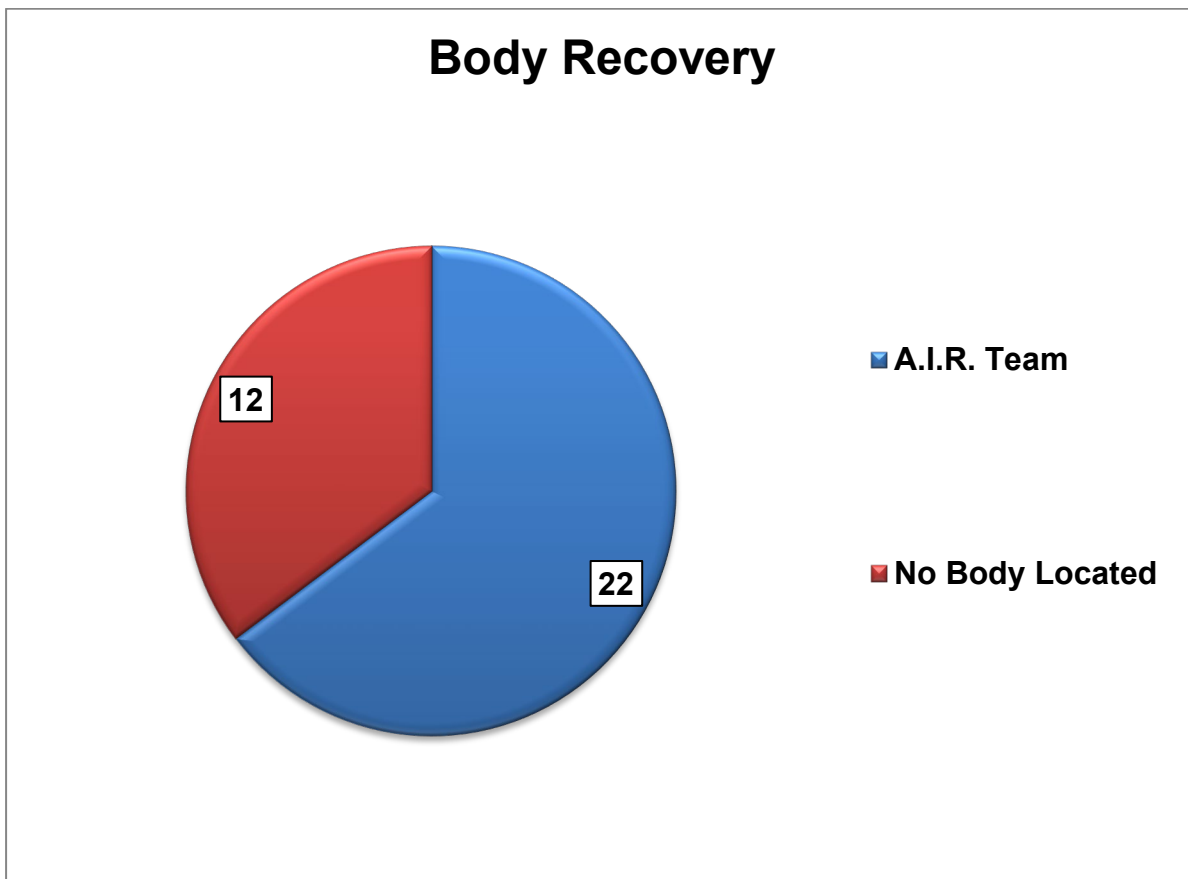


Aquatic Investigation and Recovery (AIR)

In 2020 the AIR Team participated in 45 recovery assignments involving 34 victims. The AIR Team recovered 22 victims on these assignments and 12 bodies were not recovered by the AIR Team.

The AIR Team responded to 11 evidence assignments and recovered evidence on 7 of the assignments.

Five divers have achieved the level of Assistant Instructor and 226 hours were dedicated to training this year.



BODY RECOVERY ASSIGNMENTS

County	Body of Water	Activity
York	Pond	Fishing
Georgetown	Black River	Missing Person
Aiken	Pond	Missing Person
Chesterfield	Lake Robinson	Swimming
Dorchester	Pond	Missing Person
Beaufort	Port Royal Sound	Diving
Lexington	Lake Murray	Boating
Berkeley	Cooper River	Swimming
Berkeley	Cooper River	Swimming
Florence	Lynches River	Missing Person
Orangeburg	Lake Marion	Boating
Edgefield	Pond	Missing Person
Chesterfield	Pond	Fishing
Florence	Pond	Missing Person
Charleston	Cooper River	Missing Person
Charleston	Wando River	Missing Person
Berkeley	Lake Moultrie	Boating (found alive)
Charleston	Cooper River	Missing Person
Chesterfield	Cheraw State Park	Swimming
Colleton	Edisto River	Swimming
Calhoun	Lake Marion	Boating
Williamsburg	Santee River	Boating
Lexington	Congaree River	Swimming
Berkeley	Lake Moultrie	Boating
Newberry	Broad River	Boating
Laurens	Lake Rabon	Swimming
Kershaw	Pond	Missing Person
Georgetown	Sampit River	Fishing
Berkeley	Cooper River	Diving
Georgetown	Sampit River	Missing Person
Georgetown	Black River	Ran car into river
Horry	Little Pee Dee River	Missing Person
McCormick	Pond	Missing Person
McCormick	Saluda River	Missing Person

TOTAL NUMBER OF RECOVERY ACTIVITIES:

Boating 7
Swimming 7
Missing Person 14
Fishing 3
Diving/other 3

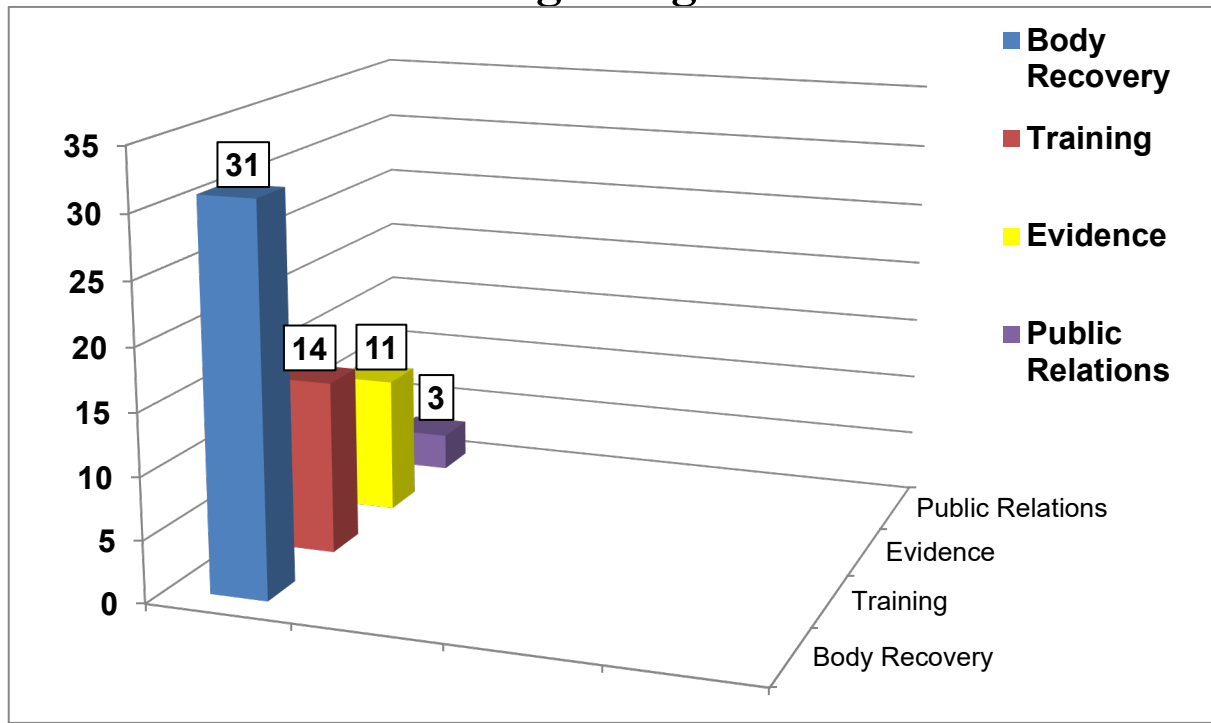
EVIDENCE ASSIGNMENTS

County	Body of Water	Agency
McCormick	Lake Thurmond	SLED
Aiken	Edisto River	SCDNR
Barnwell	Edisto River	SCDNR
Dorchester	Pond	SLED
Orangeburg	Lake Marion	Orangeburg SO
Lexington	Lake Murray	SCDNR
Dorchester	Edisto River	SCHP
Georgetown	Black River	Georgetown SO
Hampton	Lake Warren	SLED
Georgetown	Black River	Georgetown SO
Horry	Pee Dee River	Horry SO

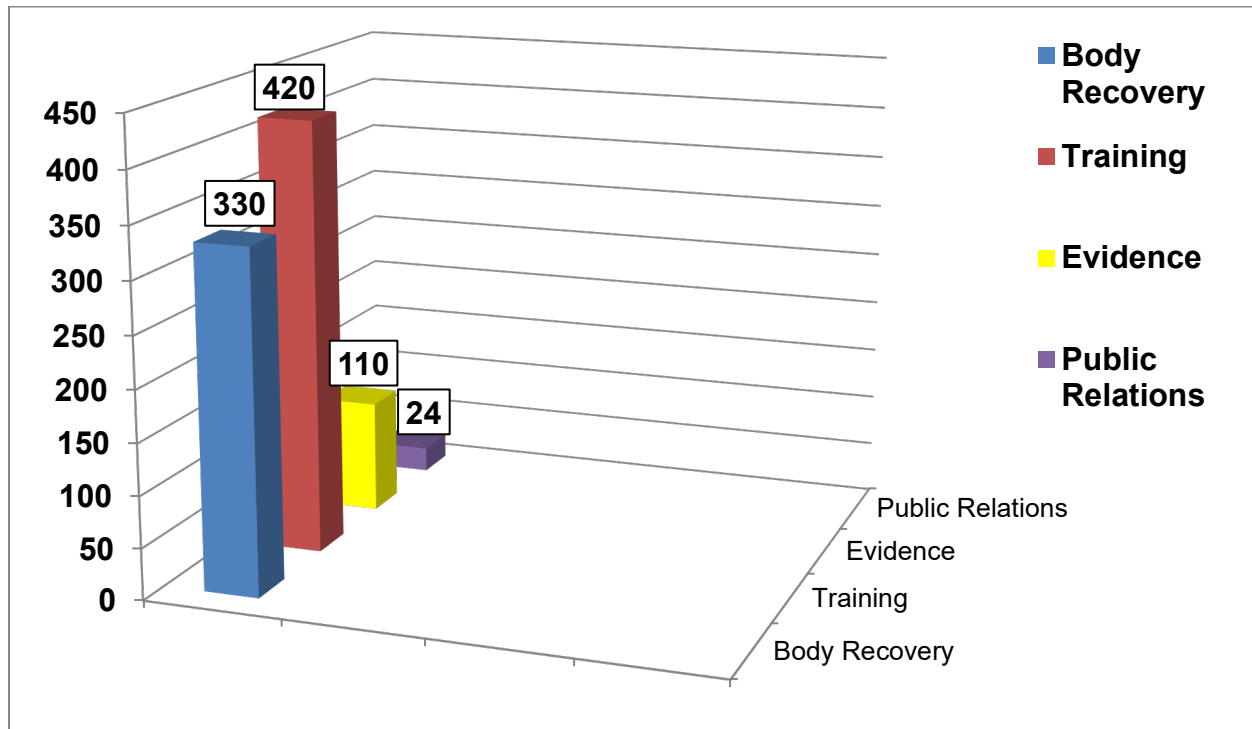
SO= Sheriff's Office

2020 DIVING OPERATIONS

Diving Assignments



Man Hours



2020 MARINE EVENTS

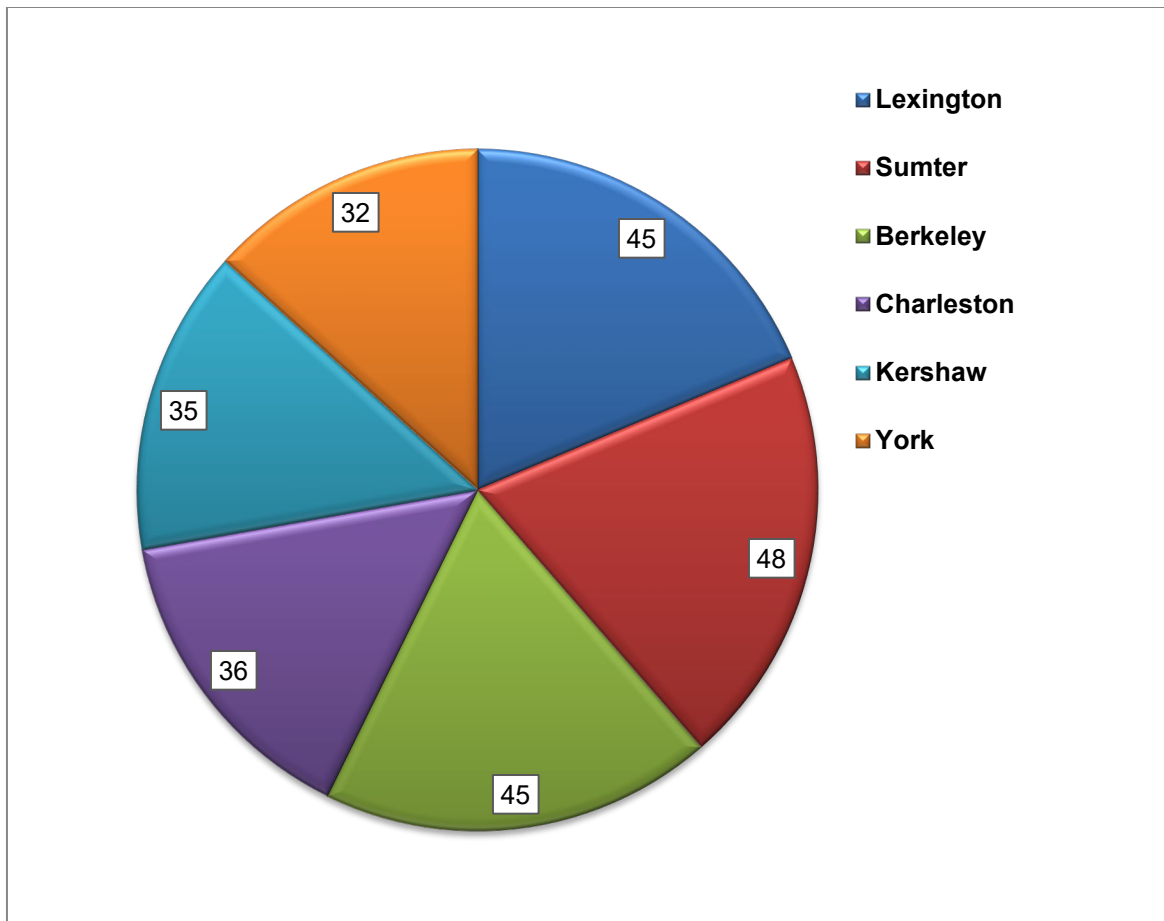
A total of 393 marine events were held in 2020 on the waters of South Carolina. Below is a break-down by county, total of events in each county, body of water and number of events held on each body of water.

County	Events	Body of Water	Per Body of Water
Abbeville	1	Lake Secession	1
Aiken	0		
Anderson	25	Lake Hartwell	23
		Lake Russell	2
Bamberg	5	Edisto River	5
Barnwell	0		
Beaufort	16	Atlantic Ocean	5
		Beaufort River	8
		Broad River	1
		Calibogue Sound	1
		May River	1
Berkeley	45	Cooper River	32
		Lake Marion & Moultrie	13
Charleston	36	Ashley River	5
		Bohicket Creek	5
		Charleston Harbor	20
		Cooper River	0
		Folly River	0
		ICW / Mt. Pleasant	1
		McClellanville	4
		Wando River	1
Calhoun	0	Lake Marion	0
Chester	3	Fishing Creek Reservoir	3
Clarendon	3	Lake Marion	3

County	Events	Body of Water	Per Body of Water
Colleton	3	Ashepoo River	0
		Atlantic Ocean	0
		Edisto River	3
Darlington	2	Lake Robinson	2
		PeeDee River	0
Fairfield	2	Lake Monticello	2
Georgetown	15	Murrells Inlet	5
		Sampit River	10
		Waccamaw River	0
		Winyah Bay	0
Greenwood	17	Lake Greenwood	17
Greenville	1	Lake Robinson	1
Horry	13	Atlantic Ocean	0
		Pee Dee	3
		North Myrtle Beach	3
		Pawleys Inlet	0
		Waccamaw	7
Jasper	1	Harbor River	0
		Savannah River	1
Kershaw	35	Lake Wateree	35
Lancaster	1	Lake Monticello	1
Laurens	0	Lake Greenwood	0
Lexington	45	Lake Murray	45
Marlboro	0	Great Pee Dee River	0
Marion	0	Little Pee Dee River	0
McCormick	14	Lake Clark Hill	14
Newberry	7	Lake Greenwood	0
		Lake Murray	7
Oconee	8	Lake Jocassee	7
		Lake Keowee	1
Orangeburg	2	Lake Marion	2
Pickens	9	Lake Hartwell	0
		Lake Keowee	9
Richland	0	Lake Murray	0
Saluda	0	Lake Murray	0
Out of State	4	Lake Hartwell & Sav River	4

County	Events	Body of Water	Per Body of Water
Spartanburg	0	Lake Bowen	0
		Lake Lyman	0
		Lake Blalock	0
Sumter	48	Lake Marion/Moultrie	48
		Santee River	0
Williamsburg	0	Black River	0
York	32	Catawba River	0
		Lake Wylie	32
Total	393		393

2020 Marine Events (Top Counties)



Boating Safety Action Force

The Boating Safety Action Force (B-SAF) is a team of 26 officers that travel the state at the request of the Law Enforcement Region Captains working boating safety saturation patrols on major holidays and for special water events. The B-SAF team provides additional Law Enforcement efforts with an emphasis on alcohol detection.

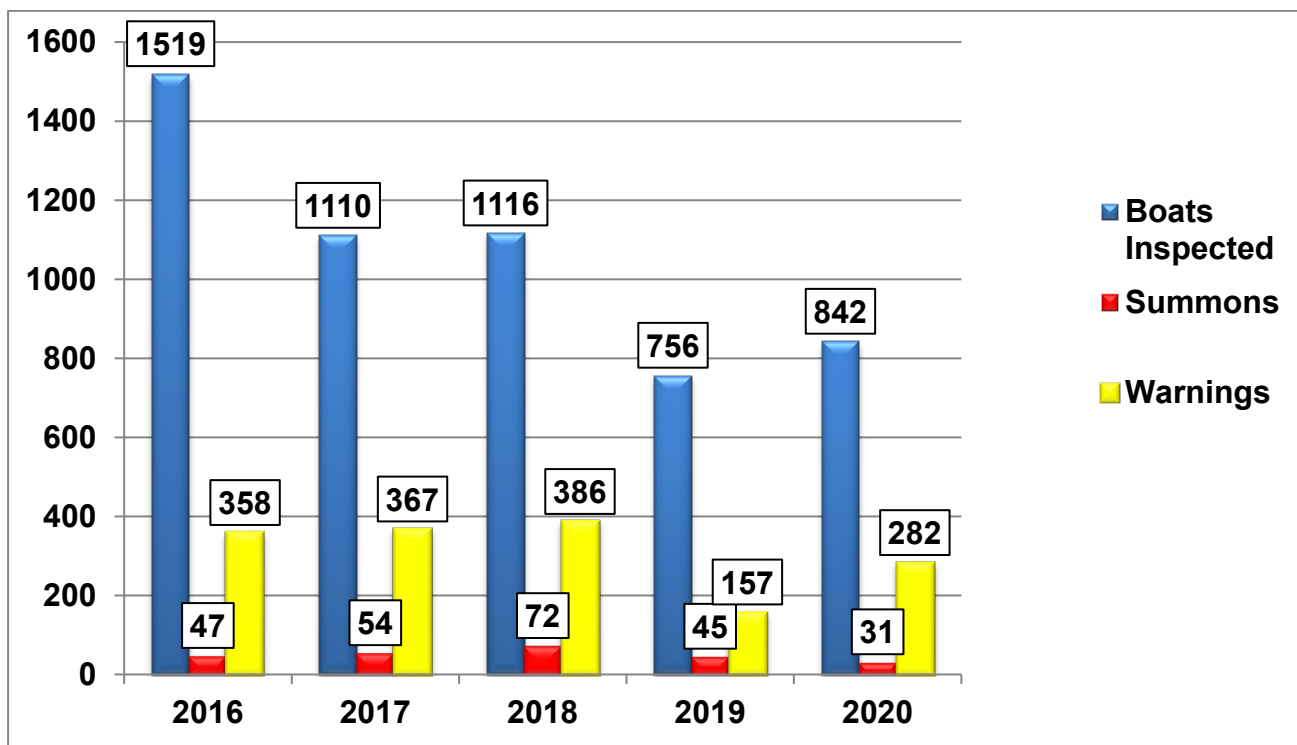
The B-SAF team works 10 scheduled patrols a year, accounting for 21 days on the water, utilizing up to five boats per patrol with two officers to a boat.

This year the B-SAF team worked 19 days on the water for a total of 8 patrols utilizing an average of 4 boats per patrol. Due to COVID-19 concerns, 1 BSAF event was cancelled. A total of 842 boats were checked and 1 boat operator was tested for BUI at the B.A.T Mobile (mobile data master). The B-SAF Team issued 1 summons tickets for BUI and 31 summons tickets and 282 warning tickets were issued.

*The following pages include a breakdown of: patrols and days on patrol; contacts, cases and warnings made; and number of negligent operations and PFD cases.

Boating Safety Action Force 2020

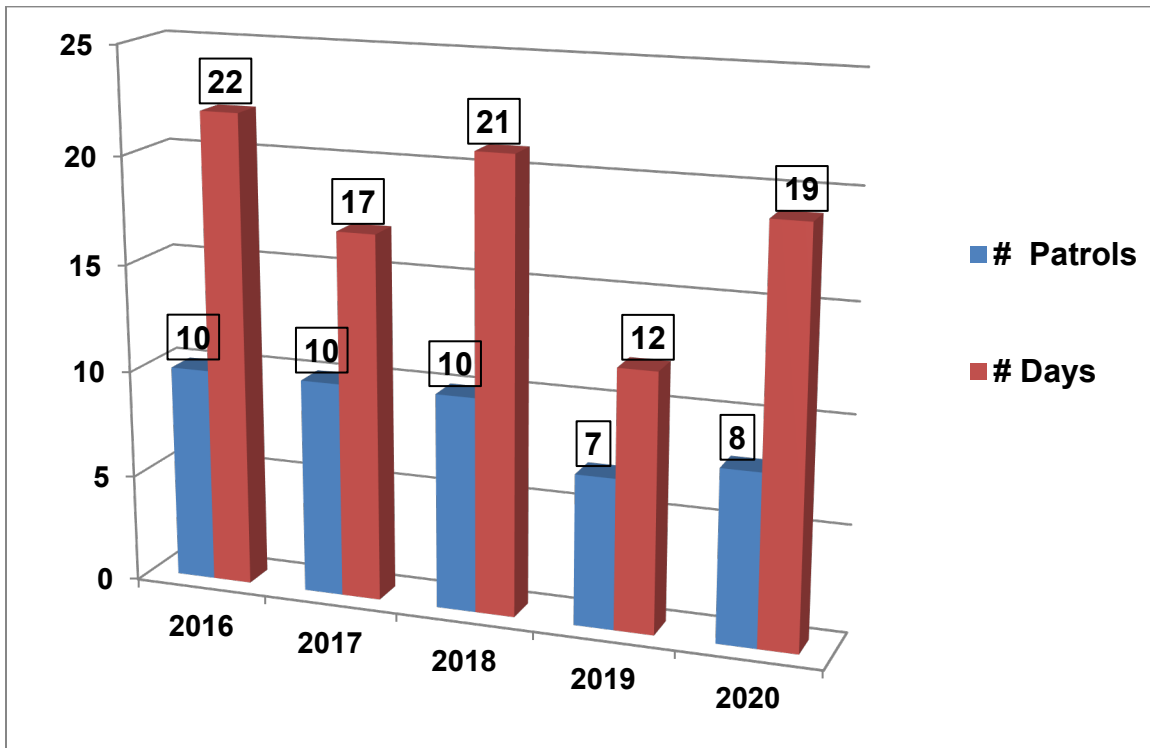
Year	Boats Inspected	Cases	Warnings
2020	842	31	282
2019	756	45	157
2018	1,116	72	386
2017	1,110	54	367
2016	1,519	47	358



Boating Safety Action Force 2020

Year	# Patrols	# Days
2020	8	19
2019	10	12
2018	10	21
2017	10	17
2016	10	22

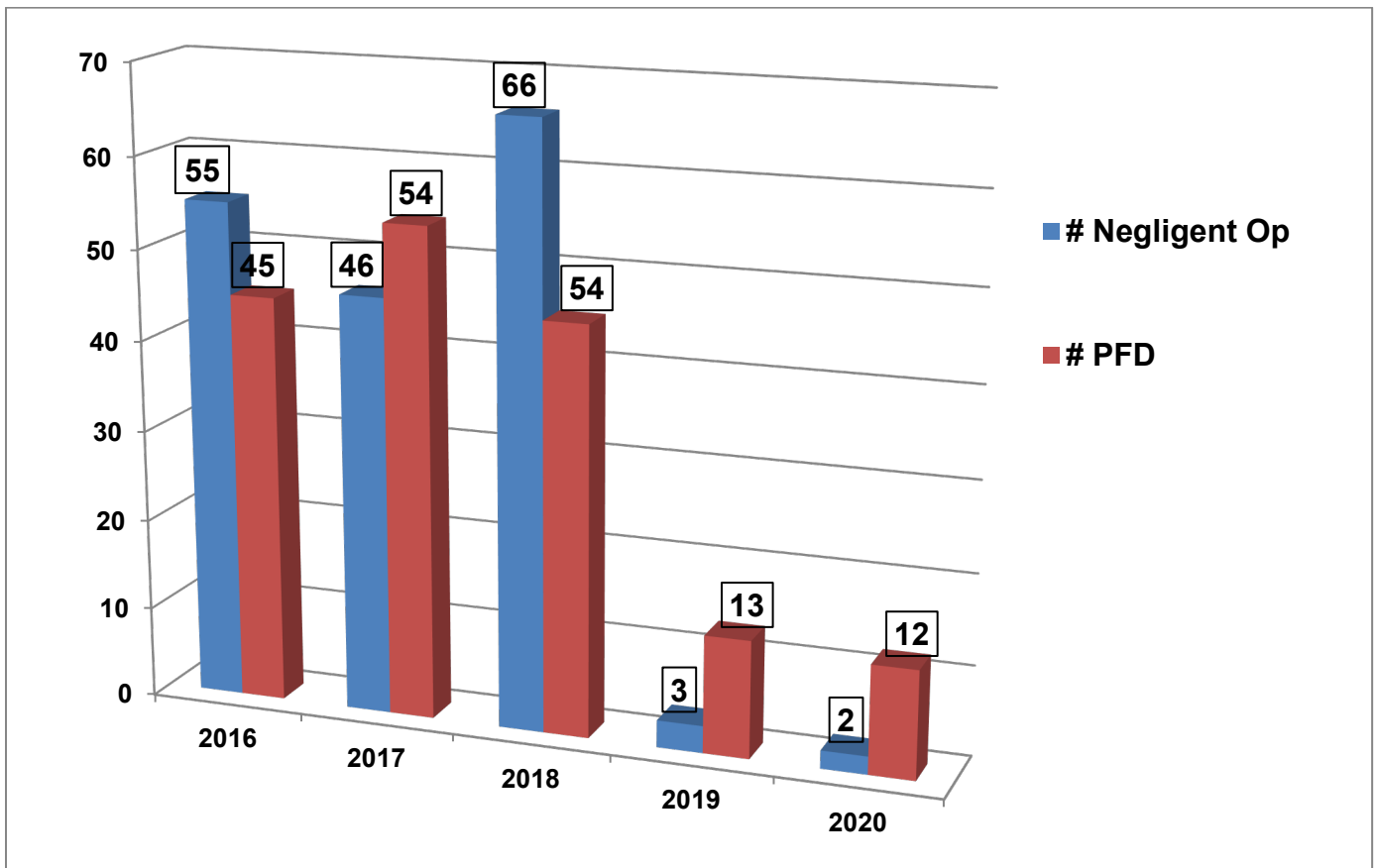
Patrols / Days



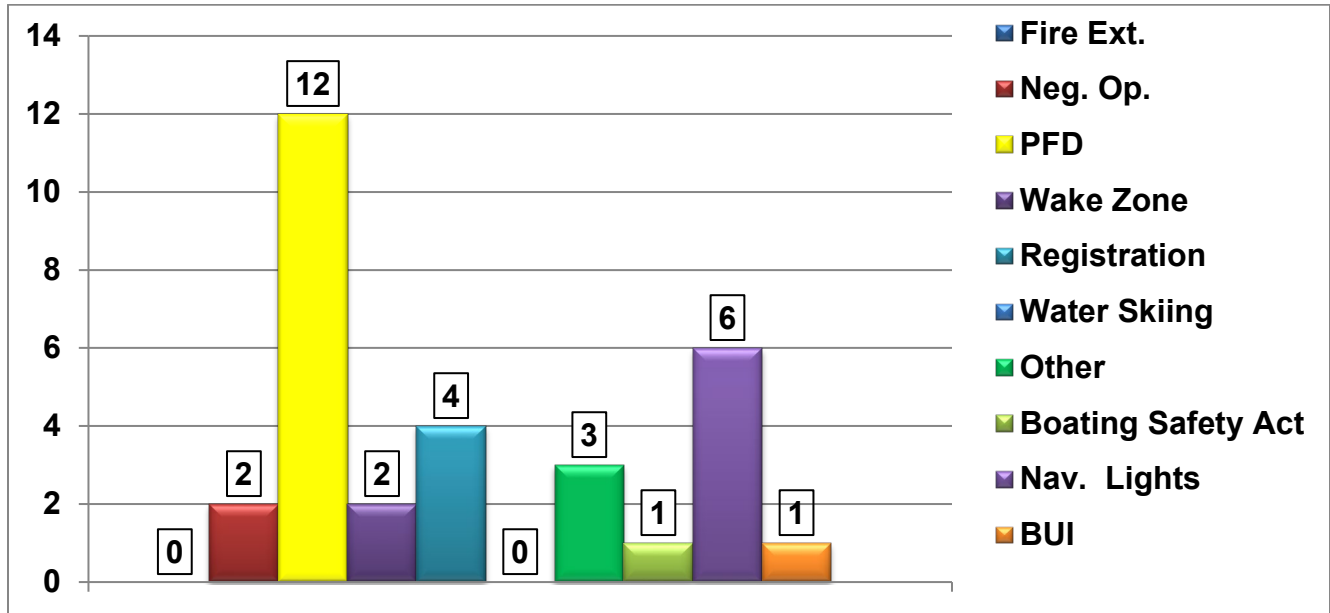
Boating Safety Action Force 2020

Year	# Negligent	# PFD
2020	2	12
2019	3	13
2018	66	45
2017	46	54
2016	55	45

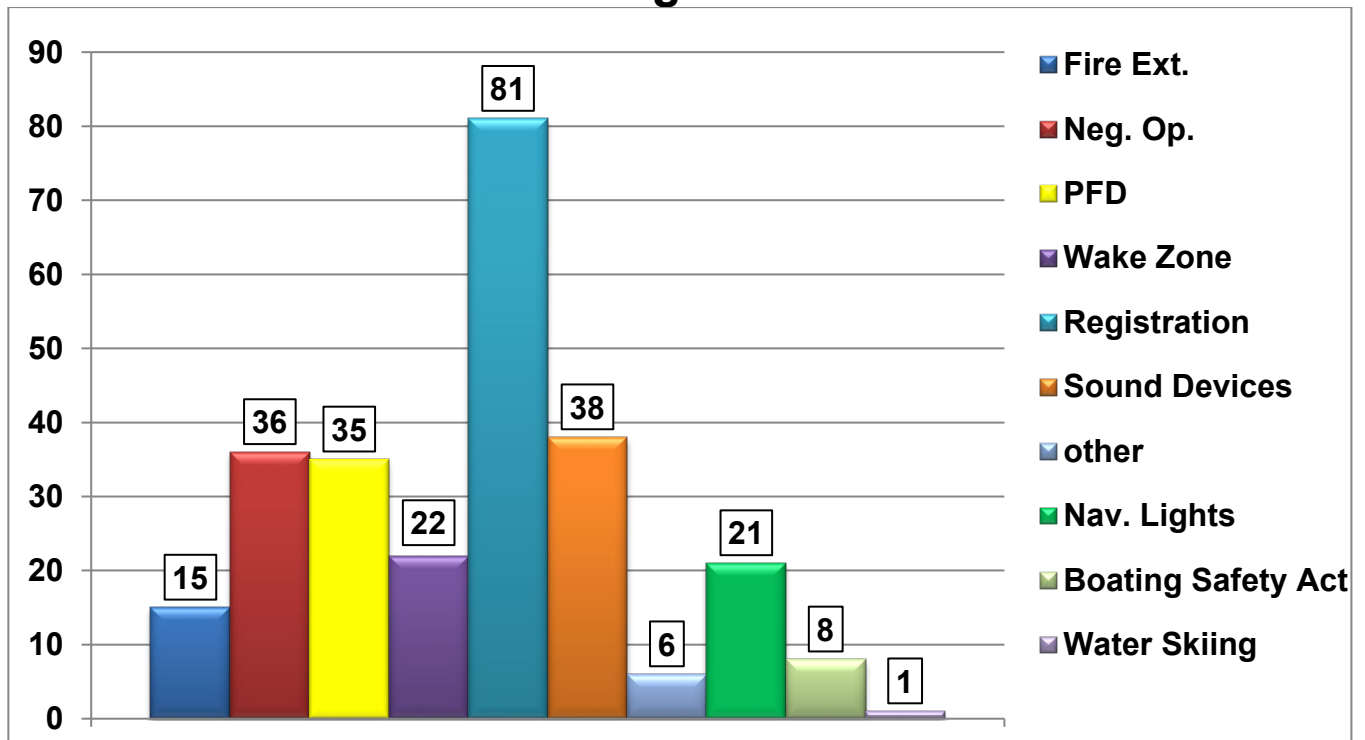
Negligent Operations / PFD Cases Made



Boating Safety Action Force 2020 Summons Tickets



Warning Tickets



ABANDONED BOATS

In 2008, South Carolina passed legislation to identify abandoned vessels, their owners and to impose penalties for those responsible for abandoning their vessels on State waters.

The SCDNR Law Enforcement Investigations section is responsible for managing the abandoned boat program.

During the initial survey conducted in 2009, there were 215 boats meeting the criteria for initiating an investigation. The abandoned boat numbers continue to be a significant problem along coastal areas. Boat owners, no longer choosing to be responsible for fees associated with maintaining, storing or removing their unwanted equipment, or failing to tend to their property as required, abandon their vessels on our waterways. Some owners leave their vessel unattended for years, in the seemingly “free space” of our public waterways. These derelict vessels become significant problems for the quality, safety and aesthetics of our waterways.

After surveying waterways and lakes, files are created for each vessel identified for possible abandonment. The ownership history is researched, and the file is assigned to an investigator. The investigator posts the vessels that meet the established definition. The owner or responsible party may be identified and given an opportunity to make corrections for noted problems. If the responsible party fails to correct the problem, and, only after 45 days, may be charged with abandoning their vessel on state waters. If found guilty, the owner is responsible for the boat removal within 14 days, at his/her own expense. If the owner/responsible party is undetermined during the investigation and after 45 days, without tending the vessel, the vessel is categorized as abandoned.

In 2020, we were able to remove 19 abandoned boats from Georgetown County, 15 from Charleston County, and 9 from Beaufort County.

In December 2019, a complete coastal survey was done resulting in 143 vessels being addressed. We are continuing to locate and contact owners to determine which vessels are abandoned.

In 2018, there were 32 vessels surveyed and investigated as abandoned, 31 of those vessels were reclaimed by their owners or pending disposition, and 1 vessel was destroyed.

In 2017, as a result of Hurricane Matthew there were 53 vessels surveyed and investigated in Beaufort County resulting in 17 vessels being destroyed with 4 being returned to their owners or insurance companies. The remaining vessels were reclaimed by

their owners. An additional survey was conducted, post Hurricane removals in Beaufort and Charleston counties. There were 47 vessels posted and investigated as abandoned, 40 were reclaimed by owners or removed by counties, and 7 vessels have gone through the abandoned boat process and are awaiting disposition.

The local county and city jurisdictions may remove vessels in the abandoned status category.

The combined efforts of the state and local jurisdictions will ensure our waterways will not become cluttered with abandoned vessels. The removal of these vessels will provide safe navigation for those using state waters and help in creating a higher water quality and aesthetic value, for those enjoying our water resources, while also providing a cleaner environment for organisms and wildlife that are dependent upon clean water.