



Accident Reporting Overview

Federal regulations (33 CFR Part 173; Subpart C – Casualty and Accident Reporting) require the operator of any numbered vessel that was not required to be inspected or a vessel that was used for recreational purposes to file a Boating Accident Report (BAR) when, as a result of an occurrence that involves the vessel or its equipment:

1. A person dies; or
2. A person disappears from the vessel under circumstances that indicate death or injury; or
3. A person is injured and requires medical treatment beyond first aid; or
4. Damage to vessels and other property totals \$2,000* or more; or
5. There is a complete loss of any vessel.

If the above conditions are met, the federal regulations state that the operator or owner must report their accident to a reporting authority. The reporting authority can be either in the state where the accident occurred, the state in which the vessel was numbered, or, if the vessel does not have a number, the state where the vessel was principally used. The owner must submit the report if the operator is deceased or unable to make the report.

The regulations also state the acceptable length of time in which the accident report must be submitted to the reporting authority. Vessel operators or owners must submit:

1. Accident reports within 48 hours of an occurrence if:
 - a. A person dies within 24 hours of the occurrence; or
 - b. A person requires medical treatment beyond first aid; or
 - c. A person disappears from the vessel.
2. Accident reports within 10 days of an occurrence if there is damage to the vessel/property only.

The minimum reporting requirements are set by Federal regulation, but states are allowed to have stricter requirements. For example, some states have a lower threshold for reporting damage to vessels and other property.

Federal Regulations (33 CFR 174.121) require accident report data to be forwarded to Coast Guard Headquarters within 30 days of receipt by a reporting authority.

States submit their data into an electronic reporting system called the Boating Accident Report Database (BARD). The Coast Guard then reviews and standardizes data so that it could be used for the annual statistics publication of boating accidents and registration.

The Boating Safety Division believes that many non-fatal accidents go unreported because owners/operators are not aware of the requirement to report their boat accident or are unwilling to do so. While the primary source of accident data is state marine agencies, a limited amount may come from other sources such as the Coast Guard, other federal agencies, or, very rarely, from news media sources.

The Boating Safety Division's website is uscgboating.org. The Division publishes an annual statistics report that can be found at http://uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.php. At the back of the report is the aforementioned BAR form. Also on the website is a data search function, which allows a user to produce tables of information based on the selection of several filters.

*Please note that our damage threshold changed from \$500 to \$2,000 on July 2, 2001.



Requested Data

NBSAC member Jim Emmons requested data on the number of accidents and deaths that occurred in 2014 as a result of a vessel alliding with a dock at night.

The Coast Guard determined that BARD has records of 35 accidents involving 4 deaths and 26 injured.

To process this request, the Coast Guard performed the following search:

- 1) Filtered data for accidents that met federal reporting requirements, involved the accident type "collision with fixed object" or "collision with floating object", searched for accidents that occurred at night, and searched narratives that including the word "dock" in the description.
- 2) The Coast Guard then reviewed the narrative to determine whether the accident fell within the scope of the request.

One possible limitation of this search surrounds the narrative. The Coast Guard searched specifically for the word "dock" in the narrative; if the State description was not detailed enough to mention a dock, or if the State used an alternative word, the case would not be returned in the results.

The results included accidents in which the vessel crashed into a dock while under manned operation, as well as the following scenarios: a vessel struck another boat which impacted a dock, a vessel impacted a dock while being towed, an unmanned vessel impacted a dock (the operator was previously ejected from the vessel), and the wake from another vessel caused a boat to strike the dock. It also includes scenarios in which a vessel impacted a walkway or ramp that was associated with a dock.

If we isolate only those cases in which a vessel under manned operation impacts a dock, there are 28 accidents involving 4 deaths and 25 injured.

Questions:
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