

Boating Accidents 2009

I publish "accidents of the year" to inform our readers of the dangers in boating or improperly using a boat in hope that it will help prevent accidents in the future. Boating safety starts with understanding what can happen. I also hope that our readers will pass on what they have learned to their boating friends and family. My duty is simply to inform.

The News Tribune, March 4, 2009

A teen has had five surgeries and has swelling on the brain after a boat accident on American Lake. D.K. Ross began paddling across the lake in a bright orange kayak at about 1:30 PM. His father, David Hermansen followed in his power boat. Hermansen made it across, but didn't immediately see his 14 year old son. Then he noticed D.K.'s kayak about 100 yards offshore, upside down, and the boy was nowhere to be seen. Another boat had smashed into D.K.'s craft, and by the time Hermansen found his son, the boy was badly hurt and being treated by medics. Hermansen can't figure out how someone failed to notice D.K. "The boat was orange. The raincoat was orange. You could see him," Hermansen said. "They just left him in the water face down." A fisherman had found D.K. and pulled him to shore, where medics worked on him before taking him to the hospital. Police are still looking for the boater who smashed into the Spanaway Lake High student. D.K. Ross went through five surgeries Sunday, has broken ribs and a large gash in his head. The crash ruptured his spleen, which had to be removed, and doctors had to remove part of his skull to relieve swelling of his brain.

Update: The Seattle Times, April 4, 2009

Pierce County prosecutors have decided not to file felony charges against the boater who struck and critically injured a boy kayaking on American Lake. "There's no evidence that the boater was speeding, drinking, or intentionally hit the kayak. D.K. Ross has not regained consciousness since he was hit March 1." The city of Lakewood may still file misdemeanor charges for the watercraft violations.

Update: The Seattle Times, July 30, 2009

The city of Lakewood will not file charges against the driver of a boat that hit a kayaker on American Lake. There were no criminal options that would stand up in court. The boat's driver was given a \$343 ticket for negligent boating. After multiple surgeries, D.K. Ross was recently moved into a nursing home for long-term care.

The Seattle Times, July 13, 2009

The body of a 48 year old Lake Stevens woman was found in 50 feet of water after an hours-long search that began when the 20 foot ski boat the woman was piloting sank in Lake Stevens. The victim's body and her boat were located with the help of the Seattle Police Department's dive rescue team. By the time rescuers arrived at the scene, nine other people who were aboard the boat had made it safely to shore. They told rescuers that they tried to get to the boat's driver but couldn't.

Update: king5.com, August 6, 2009

Cindy Tate lost her life last month when her boat flipped over. Now we've learned that law enforcement is investigating the boat's manufacturer. Rescue officials questioned why Tate's "Tiger Trax" ski boat sank so quickly. Tiger Trax boats were built in the late 1990's with Phil Warnock at the company's helm. The controversial builder faces new questions about whether his boats are safe. Warnock ordered his workers to use low-cost foam for buoyancy. "The open cell foam in the boat absorbs water and after a period of time will soak up the water like a sponge." Absorbent foam can make a boat unsafe when water gets in the hull. Sources tell us the boat's seaworthiness is under investigation. Detectives are also investigating whether the boat was overloaded with 10 people on board, none of whom were wearing life jackets. Phil Warnock's boat brands and corporations are: Gaelic Marine, Jolly Roger, Fibertech, the "new" Jolly Roger, Global marine Specialties, G-Force, Ski-Master, Ski-Max, Tiger Trax, Mirage and Sidewinder.

The Seattle Times, July 19, 2009

A group of teenagers on an outing with a church organization made it to safety after their boat sank in the Columbia River. The leader of the group said that trouble with the steering began Friday afternoon, when water started flowing into the boat. Seven teens, all of whom were wearing life jackets got onto two 8 foot wide inflatable platforms and paddled to shore, leaving two teens to swim to shore.

Boattest.com, August 12, 2009

An 8 year old girl pulled from a Huntington County lake in Indiana died after breathing in exhaust from the boat she was a passenger on. Jessylyn Gustin had been sitting on the swim platform on a boat. She apparently passed out and fell into the water. Officers were called to the lake in response. She was flown to a Fort Wayne hospital, where she died shortly thereafter. She died as a result of a lack of oxygen to her brain caused by carbon monoxide poisoning, an autopsy revealed.