



**LIFESAVING SOCIETY®**  
The Lifeguarding Experts

# Newfoundland and Labrador Drowning Report

2002 Edition

## Newfoundland Drownings Up In 2000

The number of drownings and preventable water-related deaths in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2000 (23) has increased over 1999's statistics(13). However, the 2000 total of 23 deaths is down from the 29 deaths four years earlier in 1996 (See chart #1).

Taking population into consideration, the 23 (22 male, 1 female) Newfoundland and Labrador deaths in 2000 translated to a preventable water-related death rate of 2.3 deaths per 100,000 population. This is the second lowest death rate during the last five years (see chart #2), which had been up to 3 times the Canadian average of 1.9.

Newfoundland and Labrador have previously had the highest preventable water-related death rate among the Canadian provinces. Unfortunately, drowning statistics for other parts of Canada are not available for comparison.

By time of year, the drop in Newfoundland drownings during 2000 reflected fewer deaths in the summer (5) compared to 1996(11) during recreational, occupational and daily living activities(35%), while the rest of the year represented 62%.

Very different drowning trends are emerging by age in Newfoundland. There has been a slight increase in deaths

*continued on page 2*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 2000 Drowning Statistics
  - 2 Number of Drowning Victims Increased compared to 1999
  - 3 Decrease in Fishing and Power Boating Drownings, Increase in Snowmobiling Drowning Deaths
  - 4 More Drownings in Central and Labrador
- ... And More

## Most Fatalities Happen During Recreational Activities

Recreational activities accounted for 48% of Newfoundland and Labrador water-related deaths during 2000 and contributed to 58% of all deaths during the past five years.

**# Of Preventable Water-Related Deaths  
by Purpose of Activity  
Newfoundland & Labrador**

	<b>94-98 (avg)</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>00</b>
Recreational	18	9	11
Occupational	6	2	8
Daily Living	4	2	4
Unknown	3	0	0

## 2000 Drowning Statistics

In 2000, 35% (8) of water-related deaths occurred between May and August. September through December saw 9 deaths and January through April saw 6 deaths.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of water-related deaths occurred during the weekend (i.e. Friday-Sunday), 17% occurred in the morning, 56% in the afternoon, and the remaining 27% occurred at night.

Also, 52% of all drownings occurred during clear weather. ☺

continued from page 1

among the 13-34 years of age (increase of 7), however, the biggest increase occurred in the adult age range of 35-49 – representing 41% of total drownings, the highest since 1994 see chart #3).

By type of activity, boating continues to account for 56% of all Newfoundland water-related deaths – usually on the ocean involving recreational or commercial fishing. In total 48% (11) of the 2000 water-related fatalities occurred during recreational activity. Recreational fishing and powerboating has decreased from 22% in 1999 to 18% in 2000, while snowmobiling fatalities has increased from no deaths in 1999 to 3 deaths (27%) in 2000 (see chart #4).

Much drowning prevention work remains to be done in Newfoundland and Labrador. Risk-taking behaviour such as alcohol consumption, not wearing lifejackets/PFDs and lack of boat operator training are factors contributing to the high death rate among adult men. Initiatives such as the new federal recreational boating safety regulations, which began to take effect in September 1999, and the LIFESAVING SOCIETY'S B.O.A.T. (Boat Operator Accredited Training ) Safety course will help reduce the drowning toll.

As well, the SOCIETY'S Water Smart public education campaign educated Canadians about how to modify their high risk behaviour and assume greater responsibility for themselves and others when in, on or near water.

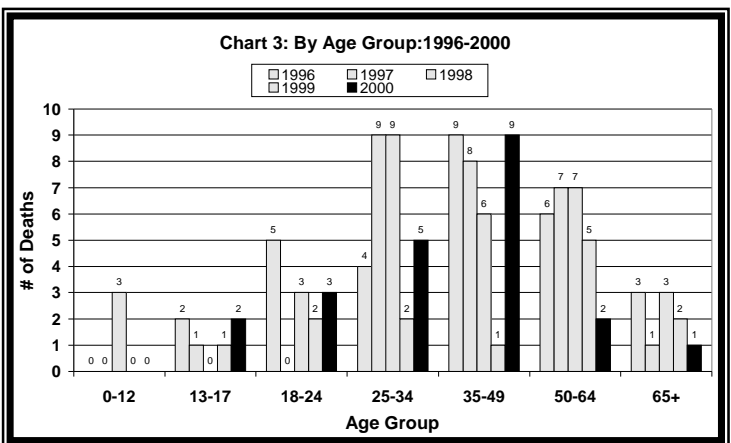
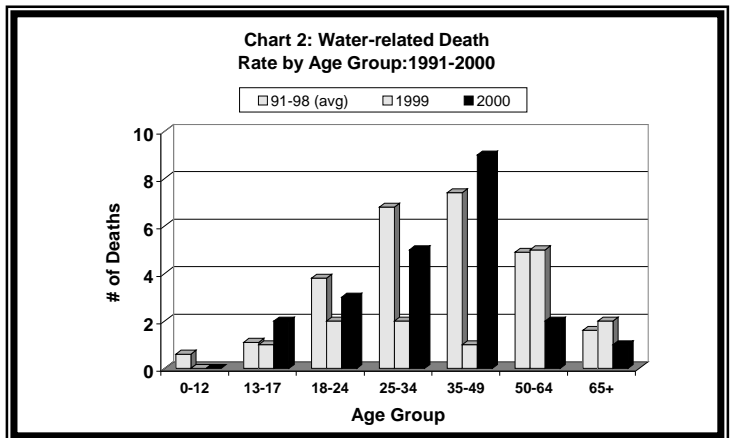
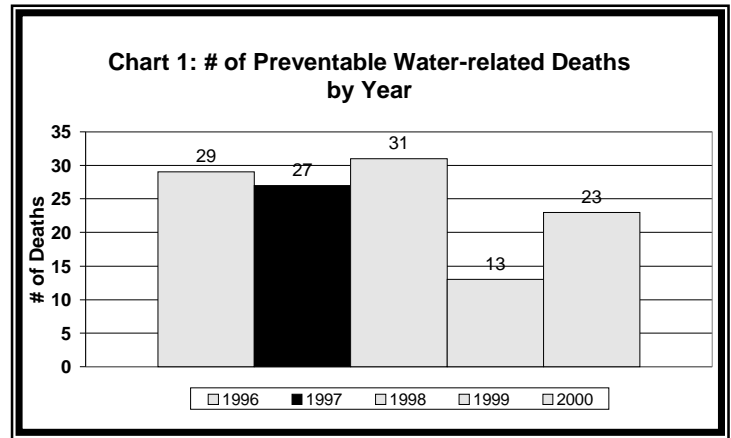
The SOCIETY'S lifesaving and lifeguarding training programs teach self-rescue and how to rescue others, should an aquatic emergency occur, so that they can avoid becoming a drowning statistic. ©

## Number Of Drowning Victims Increased Compared To 1999

In 2000, the number of water-related deaths in Newfoundland increased to 23 from 13 in 1999. This proves that we need to continue with education in water safety and drowning prevention.

During 2000, 5 victims of water-related deaths were under the age of 25. Since 1999's statistics, fatalities in the 19-49 year old range have more than tripled. In 2000, there were 16 deaths in this age group compared to 5 in 1999. However, the age group 5-12 years old have had 5 consecutive years with no drownings.

2000 saw 9 drowning victims between the ages of 35-49, representing almost 41% of total drowning victims. The previous year had only 1 victim in this age range (see chart #3). ©



## Decrease in Fishing and Powerboating Drownings, Increase in Snowmobiling Drownings

The increase in the year 2000 in recreational deaths can be attributed to an increase in snowmobiling drowning deaths. In 1999, there were no deaths by this way, however, in 2000, there were 3 deaths representing 27% of total deaths in this province. Deaths by way of recreational fishing have decreased from 3 in 1999 to zero in 2000. With death by way of powerboat remaining the same as the previous year (see chart #4).

Sixty-five percent (65%) of the drowning victims did not wear a lifejacket or PFD and alcohol contributed to 26% of all water-related deaths.

2000, was the first year that 3 people became victims of non-power boating since 1994. There had been no fatalities in this category from 1995-1997, as well, there were none in 1999. However, there was just one fatality in 1998. The 3 deaths in 2000 represented 27% of all water-related fatalities in that year.

The 1999 statistics indicated that half of Newfoundland and Labrador preventable water-related deaths were boating incidents. The 2000 statistics showed that deaths involving boating represented almost 57% of the total deaths for that year. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of boating fatalities involved boats over 5.5 meters (18 feet), boats 5.5 meters and under represented almost 8%, while rowboats represented 23% (see chart #5).

Most Newfoundland boating fatalities occurred on ocean (61%) or lakes and ponds (50%) (See chart #6).

Of the 18 deaths that occurred on the ocean, 44% were of recreational activity, 44% were occupational, and 11% involved daily living activity.

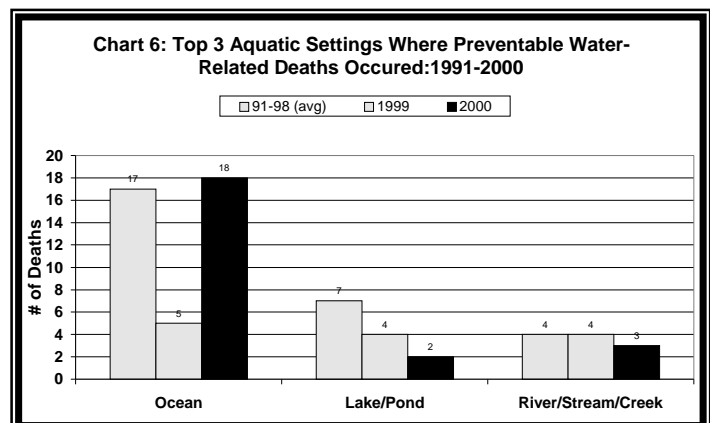
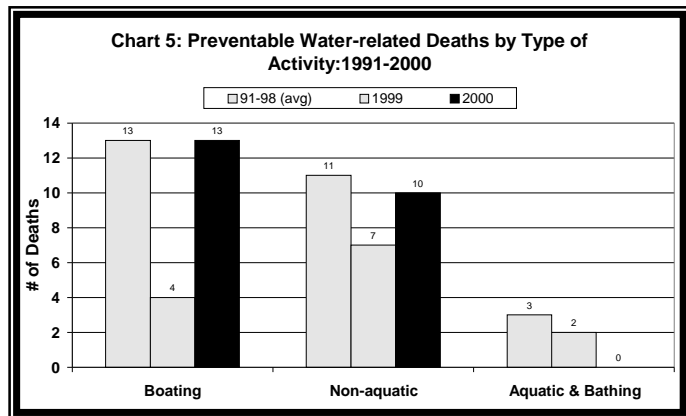
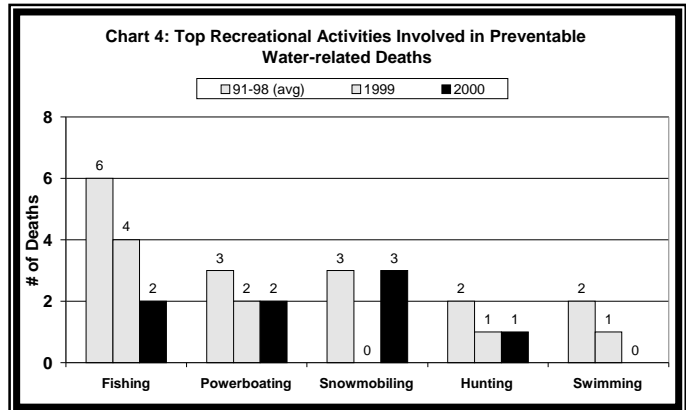
In most fatal boating incidents, the boat capsized (30%), while swamping contributed to 8%, and falling or getting thrown overboard represented 13% of all fatalities involving boats.

The boat was more likely to have capsized in ocean incidents (35%) than lakes/ponds (0%). Also, the victim was more likely to have fallen overboard on the ocean than lakes, ponds, rivers or streams.

Most of the drownings occurred during recreational activity representing almost 48% - most often snowmobiling and boating. Occupational activity accounted for 35% of all

fatalities (Commercial fishing contributed to 8 drowning victims), while daily living activity represented almost 17%.

Alcoholic beverage consumption was involved in 37% of all boating deaths, and 55% of recreational boating deaths during 1993 to 1997. The victim was only wearing a lifejacket/PFD properly in 14% of all boating deaths, while 48% did not wear one even though 17% of the time there was a lifejacket/PFD present. C





### More Drownings in Central and Labrador

Since 1999's statistics, water-related deaths have more than tripled in Central Newfoundland. In 1999, there were 2 deaths, in 2000 there were 9 deaths. In Labrador, drownings went from 1 in 1999 to 4 in 2000. All of these water-related fatalities involved males between the ages of 18-49. These two districts have accounted for almost 57% of all Newfoundland and Labrador deaths in 2000. However, both the Central and Western districts have accounted for over 56% of total drownings over the last 5 years. The Eastern district drowning fatality (1) is at an all time low. It has never been this low in the 10 years that statistics have been kept by the Society. c



### Rowboats More Deadly Than Powerboats for Recreational Boating

In 1996, the Canadian Coast Guard estimated that 30,600 boats were owned or rented for pleasure and recreational use in Newfoundland<sup>1</sup>. The vast majority (99%) were owned privately. One in 9 Newfoundland households (11%) own at least one boat, and boat-owning households on average have 1.5 boats per household<sup>1</sup>.

More than half (58%) of the 30,600 boats for recreational use in Newfoundland are powerboats<sup>1</sup>. A further 21% are canoes and kayaks, and 18% are rowboats. There are still relatively few personal watercraft in Newfoundland (800 in 1996).

Powerboats accounted for about a little over half (56%) of all Newfoundland boating deaths during 1993-1997. Rowboats were the next most involved craft (19%), followed by canoes (8%). Focusing in on recreational boating deaths only, powerboats (38%) and rowboats (31%) each accounted for about one-third of recreational boating deaths. Powerboats involved in recreational deaths were usually small open powerboats under 5.5 metres (18 feet) in length. Larger powerboats over 5.5 metres are more likely to be involved in occupational incidents (eg. commercial fishing, marine shipping). There has been only 1 personal watercraft fatality during the past five years; it occurred in 1996.

While powerboats and rowboats account for similar numbers of recreational boating fatalities, relative to the number of craft, the water-related death rate for rowboats at 46 deaths per 100,000 boats per year, is much higher than for powerboats, at 17 deaths per 100,000 boats, or other types of boats. Risk-taking behaviour is contributing to the higher death rate for rowboats. Most rowboat victims were not wearing a PFD (79%), half (50%) had consumed alcoholic beverages, and almost half (43%) were out after dark; on the ocean (64%) or a lake/pond (36%). c

	'000's of Boats for Pleasure Use-1996 <sup>1</sup>	# of Recr. Boating W-R Deaths-1993 -1997 Total	W-R Death Rate - # of Deaths per 100,000 Boats per Year
Powerboats	17,800	15	17
Personal Watercraft	800	1	26
Canoes & Kayaks	6,400	6	19
Rowboats	5,600	13	46
Other/type unknown	--	7	--
Total	1,403	43	27

Note: 1. Source—Canadian Coast Guard, 1996, "Small Vessels Inventory in Canada". Includes estimated number of boats for pleasure use in private Canadian households and boats rented for pleasure/recreational use. Estimates are † 12%.

## Do You Know How to be Water Smart™?

### BE A WATER SMART™ BOATER...

- 1) **KNOW THE BOATING "RULES OF THE ROAD"!** More details available from the Canadian Coast Guard ([www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca](http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca)), but you should know that the rules change as of September 1999:
  - ▮ No child under 12 years of age may operate a powerboat with more than a 10 HP motor.
  - ▮ Youths 12 to 15 years of age may only operate a boat with a motor over 40 HP if accompanied and directly supervised by someone 16 years or older.
  - ▮ Minimum age for operating a personal watercraft (PWC) is 16 years of age.
  - ▮ New small vessel safety equipment and safety precautions requirements for boaters include a new "careless operation of a vessel" offence which requires boaters to travel safely and avoid putting themselves and others at risk.
  - ▮ Operators of powerboats must have proof of operator competency. As of September 1999, this applied to any person under 16 years. As of September 2002, it applies to any person operating a powerboat less than 4 metres, including PWC's. As of September 2009, it applies to all operators of all powerboats and PWC's.
- 2) **GET TRAINED ON BOATING SAFETY!**
  - ▮ Not only to get your boat operator "licence", but because it's the Water Smart<sup>1</sup> thing to do!
  - ▮ Youth and adults can take the LIFESAVING SOCIETY's B.O.A.T.™ (Boat Operator Accredited Training) safety course at a local facility.
- 3) **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!**
  - ▮ Avoid potential danger by taking a few minutes with a simple checklist ...What's the weather forecast? Any local hazards? Have your maps or charts? Have your PFD's? Have your first aid kit, tools and spare parts? Safety equipment all working? Have enough fuel? Have let someone know

where you are going and when to expect you back?

- 4) **ALWAYS WEAR A LIFEJACKET!**
  - ▮ Don't just have it in the boat, pick one and wear it ...only 20% of Newfoundland drowning victims were wearing a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) properly; one third or more of victims in powerboats, canoes and rowboats were not wearing PFD's.
  - ▮ PFD not even in the boat for over 50% of boating fatalities
- 5) **WEAR THE RIGHT GEAR!**
  - ▮ Your PFD of course, but also good sunglasses and appropriate clothing.
  - ▮ Paddles, whistles and flares are the right gear too.
- 6) **BOAT SOBER ...DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE YOUR BOAT!**
  - ▮ Alcohol intensifies the effect of fatigue, sun, wind and boat motion to adversely affect your balance, judgment and reaction time.
  - ▮ Alcohol is involved in 40% of all Newfoundland preventable water-related fatalities and half or more of recreational powerboating and snowmobiling deaths.
- 7) **DRIVE YOUR POWERBOAT OR PWC RESPONSIBLY!**
  - ▮ Look before you act, stay low, drive at moderate speeds, be aware of changing weather conditions, and drive with extreme caution and proper lights after dark.
  - ▮ Capsizing, swamping or falling overboard involved in 75% of fatal boating incidents in Newfoundland.

### BE WATER SMART™ ON ICE...

- 8) **DON'T WALK, PLAY OR SNOWMOBILE ON THIN OR UNKNOWN ICE!**
- 9) **RIDE SOBER AND DON'T DRIVE YOUR SNOWMOBILE ON ICE AFTER DARK!**
- 10) **LEARN MORE ABOUT ICE SAFETY AND ICE RESCUE...** Get the LIFESAVING SOCIETY's ice safety resource guide "Ice: The Winter Killer".

### BE A WATER SMART™ SWIMMER...

- 11) **LEARN TO SWIM!**
- 12) **NEVER DIVE INTO SHALLOW WATER!**
- 13) **DON'T GO IN THE WATER ALONE!** ...Always swim with a buddy.
- 14) **ALWAYS SUPERVISE YOUNG CHILDREN NEAR WATER!** ...If you're not within arm's reach, you've gone too far!
- 15) **PLAY AND SWIM IN SUPERVISED AREAS!**
- 16) **LEARN LIFESAVING SKILLS!**
  - ▮ Go further...Take a LIFESAVING SOCIETY Canadian Swim Patrol, Bronze Star, Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, National Lifeguard Service or other lifesaving program at your local pool or aquatic facility.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

##### CONTACT:

Lifesaving Society  
Newfoundland & Labrador Branch  
P.O. Box 8065, Station "A"  
St. John's, NF  
A1B 3M9  
Telephone: (709) 576-1953  
Fax: (709) 738-1475  
E-Mail: [lifeguard@firstcity.net](mailto:lifeguard@firstcity.net)  
Website: <http://lifesaving.nfld.net>

The Lifesaving Society acknowledges assistance in preparing the Newfoundland & Labrador Drowning Report from:

- ▮ Office of the Chief Forensic Pathologist, Newfoundland Department of Justice
- ▮ Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS)
- ▮ Lifesaving Society and CRCS volunteers and staff
- ▮ Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
- ▮ Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- ▮ Canadian Coast Guard
- ▮ Environment Canada

The Lifesaving Society is a national volunteer-based, charitable organization which works to prevent drownings through its training programs, public education, research, consulting and international liaison.