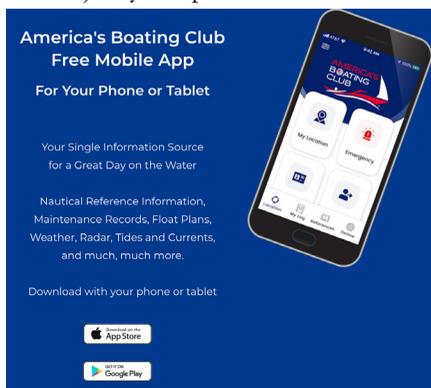


# Focus on Boating Safety

By Dale Wilde, FOLKS President

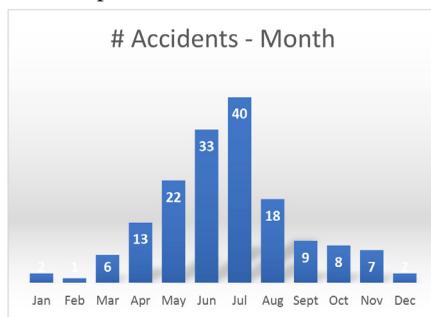
FOLKS regularly teams with the America's Boating Club® -Golden Corner Lakes, a nonprofit boating organization that is part of the United States Power Squadrons. They dedicate hundreds of volunteer hours to providing American Boating safety Courses (ABC) taught by skilled and experienced instructors. Their courses cover a full range of topics from basic boating to advanced education in navigation, boat handling and operation, and boat systems and maintenance. We run their articles and free introductory course schedules in every one of our newsletters. Why do we do this? Because boating safety is extremely important to FOLKS's mission of advocacy, conservation, and education.

U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that in accidents that involve injuries or fatalities, the vast majority of operators had no formal boating education. By contrast, only 6 percent of fatalities involved operators who had taken a state-approved online boating safety course. Courses are available in person and on-line starting at only \$34.95—a small investment of time and money to ensure family and friends boating safety.



**Download the free ABC app and enroll in boating safety courses online**

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) issued a 2020 Law Enforcement Investigations Statistics report that was used for this article. According to their report, in 2020 South Carolina was sixth in the nation for registered boats with 777,008 recreational motorboats registered and thousands of new boats being registered every year. In 2020, Pickens and Oconee Counties had 24,032 registered motorboats. Statewide in 2020 there were 161 accidents reported to the Law Enforcement Investigations section, which included 29 fatalities, 81 injuries, and 222 vessels. There were also 78 non-reportable boating incidents. Lake Keowee alone accounted for 9 accidents, 5 injuries, and 1 fatality.



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 12:01 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. In 85 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."

Every year Lake Keowee has more and more boaters due to new residents and increased visitors. Lake Keowee' attracts visitors from numerous states with its 28-mile-long lake, over 370 miles of shoreline, pristine water, and numerous free public access points. It is also a very popular destination for recreational and sport fishing.

## Is boating safety improving?

Records for 1973 report 64 fatalities statewide as a result of recreational boating accidents with only 128,000 boats registered. When compared to 2020 with 29 reported fatalities and nearly 800,000 registered boats, it is clear that safety has improved. 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 to reduce the number of accidents and fatalities. South Carolina has no requirements for boat safety courses or boating licenses, though some insurance companies do offer discounts on boat insurance if boat owners take safety courses.

## Key boating safety tips

The following are boating safety suggestions. Boating safety is everyone's responsibility.

- Take a boating safety course. The U.S. Coast Guard estimates that 70 percent of boating accidents are caused by operator error.
- Have the proper number of U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket for each person on board. Do not exceed the number of passengers safely allowed on your vessel.
- Check all fuel levels and lighting before leaving the dock.
- Check the local weather. Weather in the Upstate can change quickly.
- Run blowers to evacuate fumes and vapors from the bilge prior to starting your engine.
- Know the states boating regulations. Rules on the water aren't much different than rules on the road. It's important to stay alert at all times, operate at a safe speed, and be courteous to other boaters.
- The primary and backup operator (if you have one) should abstain from consuming any alcoholic beverages prior to or during the outing.

For additional information on boating safety go to <https://americasboatingclub.org/learn/online-boating-education> or <https://www.boat-ed.com/southcarolina/>

***For information about America's Boating Club® - Golden Corner Lakes membership, boating safety classes and activities, visit their website at [gclsaps.com](http://gclsaps.com). They are your local boating club for Lakes Keowee, Hartwell and Jocassee!*** ❖