



Marine incidents in Queensland

2010

Foreword

This report, *Marine incidents in Queensland 2010*, is an important tool to further our understanding of emerging marine safety trends, communicate with the boating community and allow the department to formulate actions to reduce incidents on-water.

2010 was a better year for marine safety in Queensland with a significant reduction in the number of persons fatally injured in marine incidents. The number of reported marine incidents was also in line with averages over previous years.

Unfortunately, by year's end, 14 people had died as the result of a marine incident. This was 6 fewer than in the previous year's record high toll.

Alcohol use and failure to wear a life jacket each contributed significantly to the fatality toll in 2010. Frustratingly, these have been recurring features in recent years' marine fatality analyses.

Alcohol use might well be considered more hazardous on the water than in a road environment since it not only increases the likelihood of a person inadvertently entering the water, but once there, also reduces their odds of survival.

The 2010 report features an in-depth analysis of the year's fatalities designed to identify any patterns that could be addressed to reduce the toll in the future.

The fatality analysis importantly concludes that only 3 of the 14 fatalities in 2010 could reasonably be put down to misadventure. There was much that was foreseeable and avoidable in the remainder.

Maritime Safety Queensland's focus is clearly on the future and the challenges it brings. As Queensland's maritime safety agency, we will continue to encourage and foster safety as a core boating value and culture. But the agency cannot alone ensure the safety of Queensland's boating community. A collaborative approach is necessary.

The boating community, industry and government must work together to ensure that boating can safely meet Queenslanders' varied needs for maritime transport, commerce, tourism and recreation.

Dave Stewart

Director-General

Department of Transport and Main Roads

Key points

- In 2010, 779 marine incidents were reported in Queensland—320 marine incidents per 100 000 registered vessels.
- Forty-nine per cent of the vessels involved in marine incidents were being used recreationally, 39 per cent commercially and 12 per cent were used in a hire and drive setting.
- The most commonly occurring types of incident were collisions (36%), groundings (19%) and inundation incidents (16%).
- Approximately 1 in 19 reported incidents resulted in a fatality or serious injury.
- There were 14 fatal marine incidents in 2010 resulting in 14 deaths: that is, 5.8 fatal incidents for every 100 000 registered vessels.
- The consequences of capsizing and person overboard incidents were disproportionate and severe: 167 capsizing and person overboard incidents led to 12 fatal injuries and 6 serious injuries.
- Person overboard incidents represented only five per cent of all the incidents reported in 2010, but 57 per cent of the recorded fatal incidents.
- Alcohol and/or illegal drugs were known to be involved in at least four separate fatal marine incidents.
- In the 14 fatal incidents that occurred, 21 people ended up in the water—14 of them perished.
- Only 2 of the 14 people who perished in marine incidents were known to be wearing a life jacket.

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Purpose

This report was prepared by Maritime Safety Queensland in accordance with Section 127 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994*.

Its purpose is to provide an overview of reported marine incidents that occurred in Queensland waters during the calendar year 2010.

While the reporting of marine incidents is mandatory, evidence suggests that a substantial number of incidents go unreported, particularly those that are considered by boat operators to be innocuous, or those that occur in more remote locations.

In addition, as a consequence of delayed reporting or the need for further investigation of particular incidents, the reported marine incident data upon which this report is based is subject to revision. Consequently the findings of this report should be considered indicative rather than definitive.

Despite these limitations, this report provides a valuable summary of the more serious marine incidents that occurred and a factual basis for informed consideration of how the safety risks associated with commercial and recreational boating activities might be managed in the future.

Incident overview

Over the course of 2010 there were 779 marine incidents reported. These incidents involved 1003 vessels of which 75 vessels sustained major material damage while a further 71 vessels were completely lost.

In addition to these more serious material losses a further 43 per cent of reported incidents resulted in light to moderate levels of material damage to 425 other vessels. In short 60 per cent of marine incidents and 60

per cent of vessels involved in marine incidents, resulted in or sustained some level of material damage. The loss of vessels was overwhelmingly the consequence of inundation incidents which involve a vessel being either swamped, flooded or capsizing, while material damage short of complete loss, was predominantly the result of collisions between two vessels or the unintentional grounding of a vessel.

Regrettably, 14 (1.8%) of the reported marine incidents resulted in 14 individuals being killed while a further 25 (3.9%) incidents resulted in 28 individuals being so seriously injured they were admitted to hospital.

Clearly the nexus between material damage to a vessel and the likelihood of death or serious injury is not strong. In fact 10 of the 14 fatal incidents (71.5%) and 19 of the 25 serious injury incidents (76%) did not result in any material damage to the vessels involved.

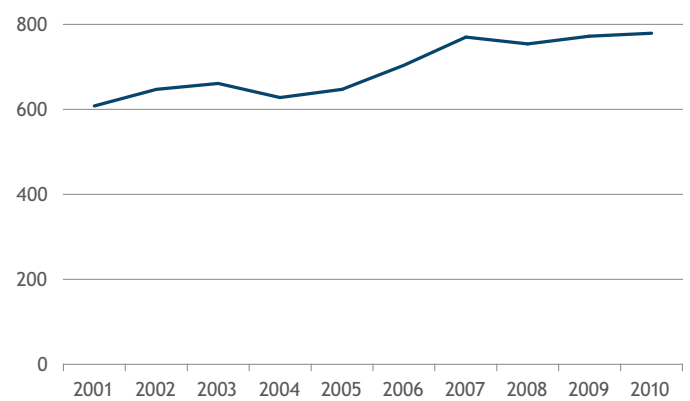
It follows from this that much more can be done by vessel operators in terms of training and trip preparedness, including the carriage and use of safety equipment, to reduce the possibility of anyone being seriously injured or killed should an incident occur.

Trends

The number of reported marine incidents climbed steadily from 2001 to 2007 (see Figure 1). This increase coincided with a substantial increase in vessel exposure due to a 34 per cent increase in vessel registrations over this period.

Since 2007 the number of reported incidents has levelled out with no statistically significant change in the number of incidents reported in subsequent years up to and including 2010. This levelling

Figure 1 Marine incidents, 2001 to 2010



Source: Caseman, marine incident case management database, 2010

off in the number of reported incidents coincided with a slowing in the growth rate of vessel registrations over the 2008 to 2010 period—an average growth of just 2.7 per cent each year, compared with an average of 4.8 per cent in the earlier period.

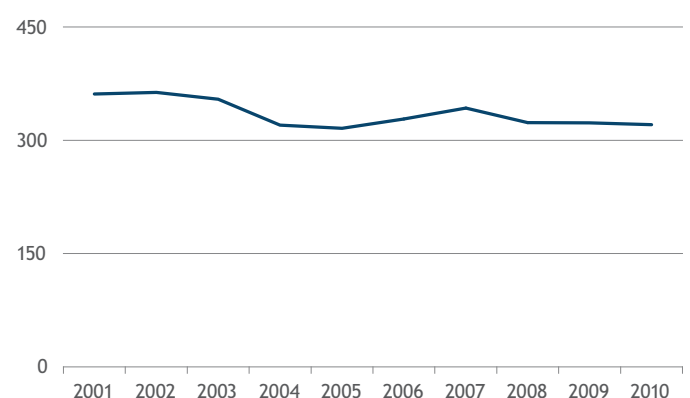
These long-run increases in the number of registered vessels, and by implication boating exposure levels, have occurred exclusively in the recreational boating sector. In the 10 year period 2001 to 2010, the number of registered commercial vessels operating on Queensland's waterways has remained almost unchanged (5415 and 5509) while the number of registered recreational watercraft in Queensland has increased by almost 50 per

cent from 162 923 in 2001 to 237 329 in 2010. One in 15 Queenslanders aged 16 years or over now owns a registered recreational vessel, and one in five Queenslanders aged 16 years or over currently holds a recreational marine drivers licence or a personal watercraft licence.

Rate of marine incidents

The rate of marine incidents per 100 000 registered vessels has usually fallen from year to year since 2001 and now stands at 320.4. This represents a fall of 11.4 per cent over the last decade or an average fall of 1.14 per cent per year over that time. Since 2007, the period during which the number of reported incidents has remained relatively static, the incident

Figure 2 Marine incidents per 100 000 registered vessels



Sources: CASEMAN, marine incident case management database; TRAILS, recreational registration and licensing database; CIRMS, commercial vessel registration database.