

The Drowning Report

United States fatal drowning incidents — August 2026



209

fatal drowning incidents recorded in August 2026

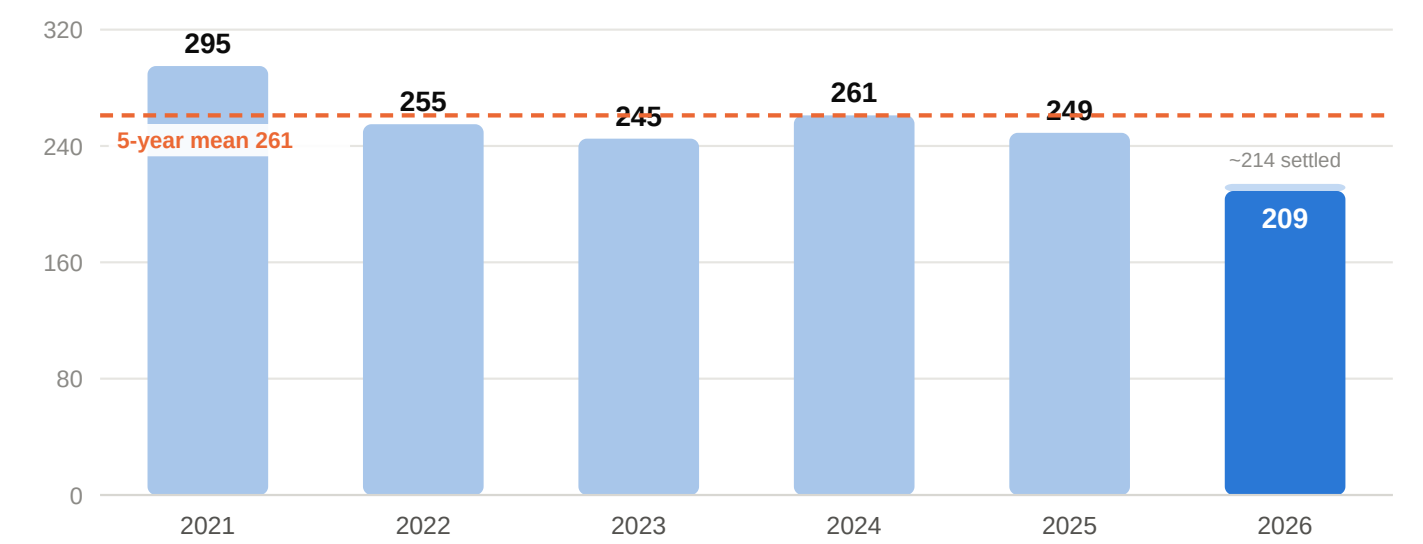
The lowest August in the six-year record.

August 2026 ran 19.9% below the five-year August mean of 261. The shortfall is not spread evenly across the water: 74% of it is lakes.

The month at a glance

209 incidents recorded for August 2026	-19.9% against the five-year August mean (261)	-16.1% against August 2025 (249 incidents)	6th / 6 lowest August in the six-year record
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August 2026 closed at **209 recorded fatal drownings** — 52 fewer than the five-year August mean and 36 fewer than the next-lowest August on record (245 in 2023).



Fatal drowning incidents recorded in August, 2021–2026. The pale extension on 2026 is the expected late-entry allowance described below; the dashed line is the five-year mean.

Three things to know before quoting the number

- 1 • The month is one day old**

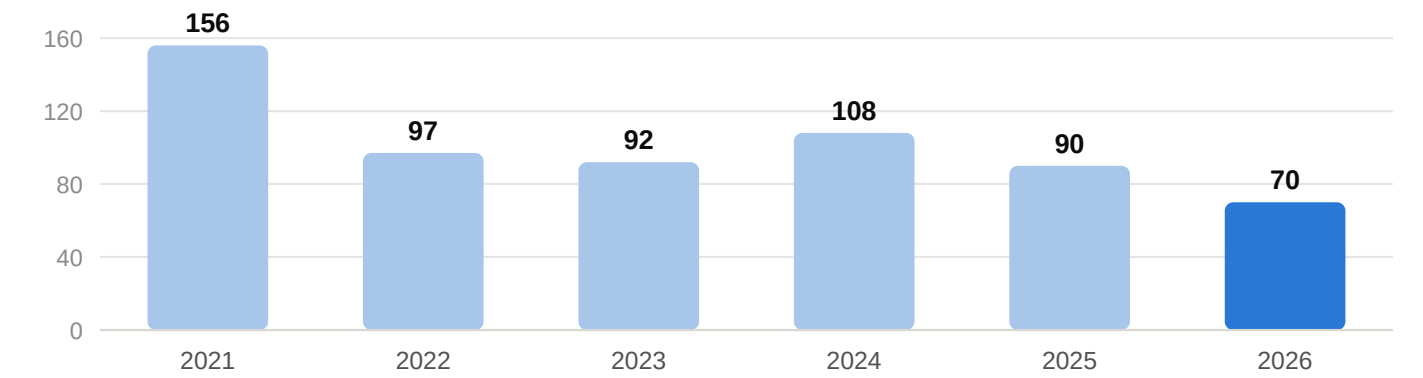
August closed yesterday. Incidents entered after month-end have run **1.2%–3.4%** over the last three months (May 1.2%, June 3.4%, July 2.7%), so August should settle near **214**. That is still 31 below the next-lowest August. **The finding survives the correction with room to spare.**
- 2 • Eight records are held out of the confirmed figure**

Two month-end clusters were entered from breaking coverage before the deaths were confirmed: the Grand Canyon flash flood (5 records, 2 deaths confirmed at source) and a Monongahela River vessel collision (3 records, all of them people still listed as missing). Counting only confirmed deaths gives **201**. Both clusters are flagged in the database and re-checked in two to three weeks.
- 3 • The July 2026 figure has been restated**

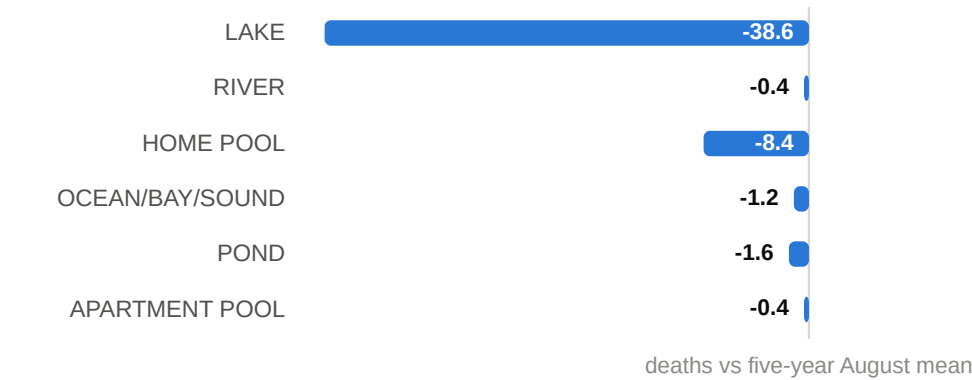
July 2026 was published at 332. Duplicate checks run for this report found one five-death incident recorded three times; ten of its records were removed with approval, five of them July-dated. **July 2026 is now 328**. Anything quoting the earlier figure needs restating. Sixteen duplicate records were removed across both checks — full detail in Section 6.

Where the decline came from

The August shortfall is concentrated almost entirely in one setting. Lakes fell to **70** deaths against a five-year August mean of **108.6** — a drop of 39. The month's total fell by 52. **Lakes account for 74% of the entire decline.**



Lake drowning deaths recorded in August, 2021–2026. August 2021 (156) is an outlier; even against the 2022–2025 mean of 96.8, August 2026 is down 28%.



Deaths by setting, August 2026 against the five-year August mean; blue below, orange above. Every other major setting held roughly steady — rivers flat, ocean and bay slightly up, ponds unchanged.

The lake decline is **broad, not local**. It shows up across Illinois (–6.0 against its mean), Missouri (–5.2), Texas (–4.4), Wisconsin and Minnesota (–3.0 each) and North Carolina (–2.8), partly offset by rises in Colorado (+5.0), Kentucky (+2.8), Massachusetts (+2.6) and Georgia (+1.8). No single state and no single incident explains it.

Setting composition

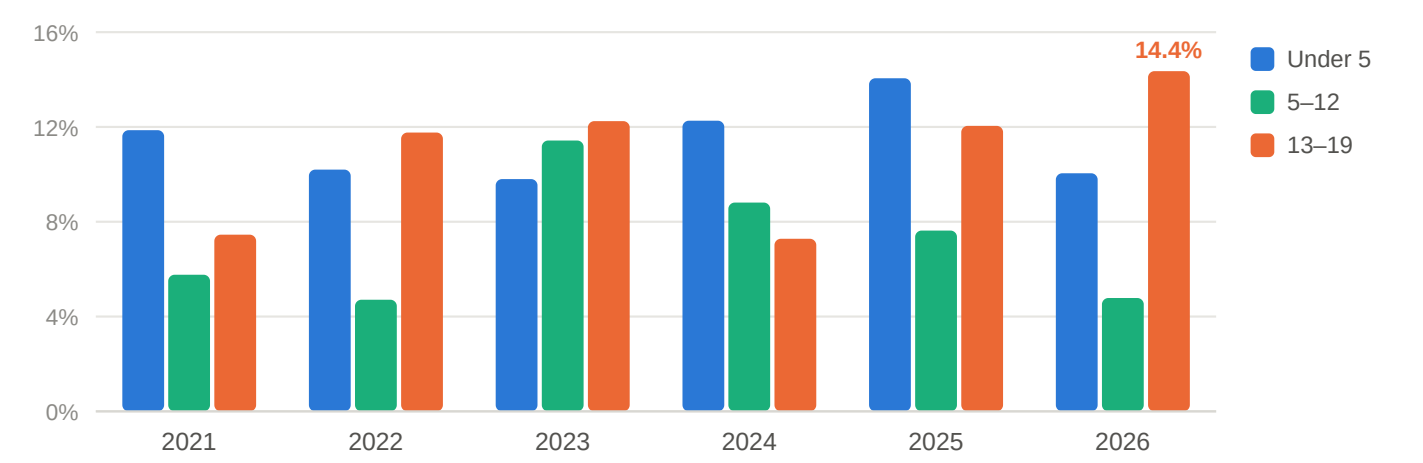
Despite the fall in volume the *shape* of the month is almost unchanged — natural open water was 79.9% of August 2026 deaths against 80.0% across the five prior Augusts. Fewer people died, in the same places, in the same proportions.

Setting group	Aug 2026	Share	5-yr mean	5-yr share
Natural open water	167	79.9%	208.8	80.0%
Pools & spas	36	17.2%	43.0	16.5%
Flood & drainage	4	1.9%	4.4	1.7%
Domestic & other	2	1.0%	4.8	1.8%

Who died

178 male (85.2%) **31** female (14.8%) Age recorded on **149** of 209 (71%) Median age **33**

The male share of 85.2% sits inside the range of the five prior Augusts (81.1%–86.7%) and carries no signal of its own. The age picture does.



Younger cohorts as a share of each August's recorded deaths. Cohort flags are set on effectively every record, so shares are complete even where a numeric age is not. Adults 20+ made up the balance in every year (66–75%) and are omitted for legibility.

Teenagers were a larger share of August's deaths than in any of the five prior Augusts

Thirteen- to nineteen-year-olds accounted for **30 deaths, 14.4%** of the month — above the previous six-year high of 12.2%. In absolute terms the teen count is unremarkable (30 against a five-year mean of 26.2); what changed is that *everything else fell around it*. This is a composition effect, not a teen surge, and it should be described that way.

The 5–12 cohort moved the other way: **10 deaths, 4.8%** of the month, the lowest share in the six-year record. Children under 5 accounted for 21 deaths (10.0%), mid-range. Adults 20 and over accounted for 146 (69.9%).

Circumstances recorded

Powered craft is the month's leading recorded circumstance. These count what was *ticked*; a blank flag means not recorded, not absent.

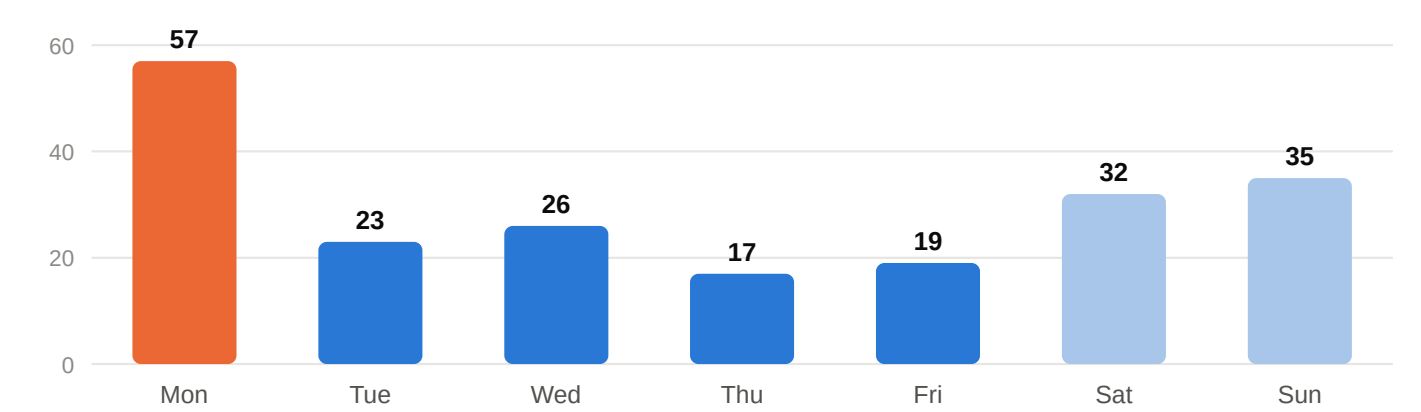
Circumstance flag	Records	Share
Jetski, boat or pontoon	23	11.0%
Flooding	13	6.2%
No PFD or life-jacket	12	5.7%
Paddleboard, kayak or canoe	11	5.3%
Waves or rip current	9	4.3%
Rescue attempt	7	3.3%
Machine, auto or vehicle	7	3.3%
Fishing or hunting	4	1.9%
Lifeguards present	4	1.9%

Geography

Florida and California led the month at 18 each, both close to their five-year August means. The states that moved are mostly small-count states where a single multi-fatality incident swings the percentage — Indiana's rise is one flood, Colorado's is spread across lakes and one flash flood. **Treat every percentage below on a base under ten as noise.**

State	Aug 2026	5-yr mean	Change
FL	17	17.4	-2%
TX	15	18.8	-20%
CA	15	19.8	-24%
MI	12	11.8	+2%
NY	10	11.6	-14%
IN	10	5.6	+79%
NC	9	7.4	+22%
AZ	8	9.4	-15%
SC	8	6.4	+25%
CO	7	1.8	+289%
MA	7	3.6	+94%
WA	6	6.4	-6%

Timing — and a warning about it



Recorded deaths by day of week, August 2026. Monday is highlighted.

The Monday spike is a dating artefact, not a behavioural finding

Monday carries 57 recorded deaths against 32 on Saturday and 35 on Sunday. Real drowning exposure peaks at the weekend, not the Monday after it. The pattern is consistent with weekend deaths carrying the Monday date on which they were reported — the known mixed-date-convention problem in records predating the 4 August 2026 incident-date ruling. **Do not publish a day-of-week finding from this data** until the dating pass is complete.