

Booze, boating pose dangerous mix

Booze-fueled boating has caused dozens of deaths and injuries in Massachusetts in the past five years alone, according to federal data.

All told, 19 people have died and 30 people have been injured in boating accidents attributed to alcohol abuse since 2009, according to data from the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division.

The U.S. Coast Guard reported that nine people — or about 16 percent of all people injured in boating accidents in the state last year — were hurt in accidents involving alcohol.

So far this year, police officials told the Herald there have been five arrests for boating under the influence in Massachusetts. The Saturday incident in which a 19-year-old woman lost her arm is the only Boston drunken boating arrest this year. Massachusetts Environmental Police reported nine arrests last year for boating under the influence, with only one incident occurring in Boston.

“By and large the boating community are a responsible group,” said Boston police Lt. Detective Michael P. McCarthy, who told the Herald that Boston police serve as the harbormasters for Boston Harbor.

“They respect what's out there and the incidents we have are few and between,” McCarthy said.

Those caught boating while intoxicated face a stiff penalty. First-time offenders can find themselves hit with a fine up to a \$1,000 and face up to 2 1/2 years in prison, according to state law.

By Erin Smith