

# **SEVEN PEOPLE ESCAPE INJURY IN BOATING INCIDENT**

VCSSO-25-0763

Incident date: July 7, 2025

Release date: July 8, 2025

**CALEDONIA, Min – GENOA, Wis** – Houston County Sheriff Brian Swedberg and Vernon County Sheriff Roy Torgerson jointly report a boating incident occurred on the Mississippi River at the United States Army Corps of Engineers Lock and Dam #8.

On Monday afternoon, July 7, 2025, at approximately 1:30 PM, the Vernon County Sheriff's Office 911 Communications Center received a report that several individuals went through one of the several gates at the dam. At the time of the 911 call, some of the people were still in the water downstream or on the lower side of the dam, all of whom miraculously survived.

Brandon S. Kumm (*pronounced COOM*), age 39, of La Crosse, WI was operating a 2000 *Crownline* pleasure craft with six passengers totaling seven souls aboard. The inboard engine reportedly stalled one to two miles upriver and failed to restart as the boat was approaching the dam. Occupants attempted to paddle, but to no avail. It did not appear that there was any attempt to drop anchor while they were upstream of the dam. There was no initial indication of distress, but once the craft penetrated the 600-foot safety area upstream of the dam, United States Army Corps of Engineers staff stationed at the facility took immediate action to seal the gates in the affected area.

All seven souls disembarked, went underwater beneath the *Tainter* gate, and resurfaced below the dam. Alert Corps staff threw life preserver rings to the distressed mariners. All seven, including one child, some assisting each other, were able to climb to safety atop the dam. By the grace of God, no injuries were reported. All were evaluated at the scene. None were transported to the hospital.

Assisting both Sheriff's Offices were Genoa-Harmony Fire & Rescue, Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance, United States Army Corps of Engineers St. Paul District, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Higher than normal river levels attributed to less swell or turbulence below the dam and provided a greater distance between the riverbed and the bottom of the gate in which all seven people passed through.

Both Sheriffs Swedberg and Torgerson commend the corps for their quick actions, combined with extensive training, that most certainly saved lives. We always appreciate our teams, support staff, and all first responders, most of which volunteer to serve their communities. This collaboration fostered a remarkable outcome.

There were more than the required number of personal flotation devices onboard; however, none were worn when the operator and occupants jumped out of the boat.

The boat remained upright, resting against the gate as designed in a rescue situation. Although no two incidents share the exact same circumstances, remaining inside the boat with life preservers, having phone numbers to locks and dams in areas where you plan to operate, and installation of a marine band radio, though not a requirement for smaller pleasure craft, are other useful and recommended safety tips that would have been advantageous in this situation. As always, call 911 in the event of an emergency. For more information, visit:

<https://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Locks-and-Dams/Water-Safety/>

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/boatwater/index.html>

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Boat>

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Boat/safety>

<https://www.mycg.uscg.mil/News/Article/4188767/six-ways-to-stay-safe-on-the-water-this-summer/>

The middle of the main navigation channel of the Mississippi river at this location separates Wisconsin and Minnesota. Land access to the facility is more readily accessible from the Wisconsin side of the river.

The incident remains under investigation by the Houston County Sheriff's Office with assistance from the Vernon County Sheriff's Office and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

**Sheriff Brian Swedberg**

Houston County Sheriff's Office  
Caledonia, MN

**Sheriff Roy Torgerson**

Vernon County Sheriff's Office  
Viroqua, WI