

# **Some Possible UK Kill Cord Preventable Boat Propeller Accidents**

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a stripped down version of a much larger UK History of Boat Propeller Safety available from:

<http://www.propellersafety.com/7608/history-propeller/uk-history-boat-kill-cord-propeller-safety/>

It only includes boat accidents that “MIGHT” have been preventable with the use of a kill cord. The actual determination of the preventability of each accident is normally decided by boat accident investigators and/or a team of people analyzing much more information than is available than these brief reports. See the U.S. Coast Guards effort to determine kill cord preventability of accidents in their Boating Accident Report Database (BARD) at: [Preventable Deaths and Injuries Report](#).

Also please note:

1. This list was prepared at the request of RIBnet
2. The list of accidents in our UK History from which this list was derived was never meant to be a complete list of accidents. Thus this list is in no way a complete list of possible kill cord preventable accidents.
3. We deleted all narrowboats, canal boats, barges, etc.
4. We deleted all accidents outside of the UK (as best we could, I am not skilled in UK geography)
5. We are ABSOLUTELY NOT saying these were kill cord preventable accidents. We are merely saying these are some accidents we sorted from our larger UK History that might have been kill cord preventable. In many instances it is not obvious if the injured party was a boat operator or a passenger, or if the operator might have been ejected at the same time. This list is just an easier place to begin sorting them out than the full UK History.
6. Many accidents go unreported. In the U.S. it is mandatory to report boat accidents requiring medical assistance beyond first aid, causing boat or property damage of \$2,000 or more, involving a death or disappearance, or complete loss of the vessel. However, on several occasions, the U.S. Coast Guard has estimated only about 10 percent of the reportable accidents are actually reported. They do suggest the more severe ones are more likely to be reported. It is my understanding there is not a requirement to report boat accidents in the UK. Thus there is no database to begin a search for these types of accidents from, beyond the MAIB investigations of a few of them. If anyone knows of such a database, please contact us.
7. **This list is intended for use as an EXAMPLE of how these accidents happen NOT as a STATISTICAL REPORT of how frequently they happen.**

## ACCIDENTS

17 August 1997 a 15 year old girl from Awliscombe, Devon was boating with a friend at Exmouth. The dinghy struck something, they were both ejected. She was struck by the propeller in the face and suffered horrific face injuries.

22 January 2000 **Tristan Douglas-Johnson**, age 20, a boat dealer, and an 18 year old girl with Tristan were in an 18 foot RIB being demonstrated at the Southampton Boat Show. The inexperienced 18 year old girl was operating the boat without the kill cord attached. When she opened up the throttle, the boat veered to the right, the boat flipped up, and all three on board were ejected. Tristan was badly cut in his chest by the propeller of the circling boat and pronounced dead shortly later. In May 2013 Tristan's father, Heddon Johnson, launched a petition for mandating the use of boat kill cords.

11 August 2003 **Michael Murray**, 36 of Youghal, Cork County, Ireland was towing someone on an inflatable when his boat was struck by a 15 year old boy on a jetski / PWC. The boy on the jetski died shortly after the collision. Michael was thrown into the water and his legs were severely struck by the propeller. The person being towed was also thrown into the water. A fisherman and Irish Coast Guard volunteers were quickly on the scene trying to recover all three people from the water while the unmanned boat circled. Michael was not wearing the kill cord, but it was also found to be faulty. The Marine Casualty Investigation Board report called for speedboat operators to carry someone to act as a dedicated lookout for them when towing and for jetski operators to wear protective headgear (a helmet).

13 March 2005 while not a propeller accident, this RIB accident has relevance to the current kill cord discussions. **Angus Buchanan** and his two young daughters were in his 6.4 meter RIB on Loch Lomond. While he was operating the boat at high speed without the kill cord attached, the boat lurched to port. Angus and his youngest daughter were ejected. His oldest daughter, still on board, was unable to pull them aboard. She drove the RIB for help, but her father and sister were never seen again. MAIB investigated and [reported](#).

July 2005 **Steven Patient**, 32 of Rayleigh, was at sea in West Mersea, fell overboard, and was struck by the propeller. His femur was broken in half, kneecap was partially severed, and he had three severe wounds down his leg. Steven's leg appeared mostly attached by some hamstring and skin. A passing helicopter was able to quickly get him to a hospital and save his life.

7 August 2005 three teenagers were in a 4.5 meter RIB approaching the beach in Abersoch, Lloen, North Wales. The operator slowed and started to turn left, the console and steering wheel detached from the deck, and the operator fell overboard. The RIB turned hard starboard, a passenger was thrown overboard and struck by the propeller receiving deep cuts to his chest and left side. He was hospitalized for 3 weeks. MAIB investigated and [reported](#). MAIB issued a [safety bulletin](#) on this accident in March 2005 and a safety flyer in February 2006 titled, [Almost a Deadman's Handle](#), see pages 72-74.

11 December 2005 a member of the Cardiff Diving Club was in Cardiff Marina at Harbor Three. As a trainee he was in a RIB used in a boat handling class for man overboard drills. The water was rough, the boat turned sharply, he was ejected and suffered deep propeller cuts to his left foot and up to his knee. He also had broken bones in his right foot. BSAC suggested his neoprene diving suit might have reduced his injuries.

22 July 2006 a 35 year old woman from east Africa fell from a boat near Llanddwyn Island, Anglesey, North Wales and suffered serious propeller injuries to her head. She was life flighted to a hospital in Bangor.

21 June 2008 a man in his 40's fell from a fishing boat during a competition off Saltburn Beach in rough water. He suffered a severe head wound from the propeller, was rescued by RNLI, and life flighted to a hospital.

27 August 2010 **Ian Cope**, 41, and his nephew **Tyler Cope**, 15, were on a 17 foot dory that struck bottom near Pentewan Sands, near Mevagissey, Cornwall. They were both ejected and the boat began to circle. The boat struck both of them twice, and they were both injured by the propeller. Ian was struck in the face, knocked unconscious, and life flighted to Royal Cornwall Hospital in Truro. Tyler was taken by ambulance to the same hospital with serious leg injuries. RNLI recovered the boat when it ran out of gas and said the kill cord was found wrapped around the steering column. Ian came forward in May 2013 citing the similarities of the Milligan accident to his.

1 July 2011 **Joel Eager**, 21 of Kings Walk, Shoreham was on a dinghy with 2 friends in Chichester Harbour. He fell overboard and died two days later from propeller injuries to his head.

3 July 2011 - **Patrick Beach**, 33 of Surrey, fell from a cruiser near Portsmouth Harbor. He suffered fatal propeller injuries to his head. His mother went on to raise funds for the RNLI to thank them for keeping him alive long enough for her to reach the hospital and be with him the last few hours of his life.

9 June 2012 **Owen Corkery** fell from a boat in Cork Harbor, Ireland. The kill cord switch was not working and he did not wear the kill cord. The boat, a RIB powered by a 250 HP Evinrude, circled and repeatedly struck him with the propeller. He was injured in the back of his head, forehead, back, and his left arm was amputated above the elbow. Ireland Report No. MCIB/217 (No.3 of 2013) provides additional information. Corkery thinks the boat struck something before he was ejected.

31 July 2012 a 54 year old man from near Blacon fell from a boat on River Dee between Eccleston and Aldford and suffered horrific leg injuries from its propeller.

Approximately 8 August 2012 - a couple from Tiptree on holiday rescued a young boy struck by a boat propeller at Colchester.

5 May 2013 **Nicholas Milligan**, 51, and **Emily Milligan** his 8 year old daughter, his wife and other two children were in his RHIB powered by a large Yamaha outboard motor near Padstow Harbor. They were all ejected, the boat circled, Nicholas and Emily were killed, his wife lost part of a leg and his son had severe leg injuries. His other two daughters had minor injuries. The kill cord was not in use. As of late May, MAIB had not yet publicly identified which family member was operating the boat at the time of the accident.

**Please note this is not a complete list of accidents. It is intended for use as an EXAMPLE of how these accidents happen and as a REMINDER (history) of some of the previous accidents. It is NOT a STATISTICAL REPORT of how frequently they happen.**