

IS THIS WHAT WE WANT ON SAUSALITO'S STREETS AND WATERWAYS?

Timeline: 15 'Ride The Ducks' Boat Crashes Around the World

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Duck tours are operated in major cities around the world; tourists are transported in an amphibious vehicle that can drive on city streets while also functioning as a boat. They are popular in cities with lakes or rivers near other popular tourist attractions.

The first company calling its tour offerings "duck tours" began operating in the 1940s. As fleets aged and more duck tours hit the road, accidents increased. Since then, there have

been numerous serious and fatal accidents that have resulted in a number of personal injury and wrongful death lawsuits filed against the company alleging negligence.

1999

Hot Springs, Arkansas: A military surplus DUKW vehicle sunk while on tour on Lake Hamilton. 13 of the 20 people on board, including three young children, lost their lives. Passengers were not wearing life preservers. The boat took on water rapidly and submerged within a few minutes.

The NTSB blamed the sinking on inadequate maintenance. Investigators determined that the vessel, built by the Army in 1944, was not designed for passenger service. As a result, it did not have the proper buoyancy to remain afloat.

2002

Ontario, Canada: A custom-build vehicle called the Lady Duck sunk in the Ottawa River while on a tour. Four passengers were trapped under the Lady Duck's canopy and drowned; six passengers, the tour guide, and the driver escaped.

2010

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: An amphibious bus was disabled in the water by an engine fire. A tugboat operator was distracted by his cell phone while pushing a barge; the barge struck the disabled duck boat, killing two passengers from Hungary. Thirty-three other passengers and two crew members survived.

Seattle, Washington: A Ride the Ducks vehicle rear-ended a passenger vehicle at Third Avenue and Pike Street. No injuries were reported. The driver told police that it was impossible to see the car before hitting it.

2011

Seattle, Washington: A motorcyclist was seriously injured after a Ride the Ducks boat ran over him. He was stopped at a red light when the larger vehicle came up behind him. His arm, leg, and pelvis were crushed, and he was dragged into the next block while he was stuck beneath the undercarriage.

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Seattle, Washington: A Ride the Ducks boat rear-ended a car at Aurora Avenue North and Denny Way. No injuries were reported. Once again, the driver told police that the height of the Duck boat made it impossible to see the car directly ahead.

2013

Liverpool, UK: A Yellow Duckmarine sinks at the waterfront. Some passengers swim to shore; others are rescued by nearby crafts. Investigators review the company's records and find "a high number of mechanical breakdowns, hull failures and flooding incidents."

*The **Marine Accident Investigation Branch** released a report on the sunken vehicle, finding that "Its hull was heavily corroded and was covered with a patchwork of unapproved substandard repairs, it was mechanically unreliable, and regularly failed to climb out of the dock. The vessel was not seaworthy and it should not have been operating on the water." Survivors reported that they had been provided life jackets, but they were difficult to remove from their packets.*

London, UK: Passengers were forced to jump overboard after a duck boat caught fire on the River Thames. Survivors reported that it was difficult to remove the life jackets from their protective packets. Investigators found that the cause of the fire was faulty buoyancy foam.

2015

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: A duck boat struck and killed a 68-year-old woman who was crossing the street in Chinatown. Witnesses said that the woman was distracted by an iPad while crossing the street, but safety advocates pointed out that the bow of the boat created a blind spot that made it difficult for the driver to see a pedestrian directly in front of the vehicle.

Seattle, Washington: A pedestrian was struck by a Ride the Ducks vehicle while crossing the street. He suffered minor injuries. According to police, he was crossing against the light.

Seattle, Washington: 5 people were killed, eight were critically injured, and eight were seriously injured after a Ride the Ducks vehicle veered out of its lane on the narrow Aurora bridge and struck a bus carrying international college students on a tour of the city.

An investigation found that the front axle of the boat had sheared off, and that the company operating the boats had over 400 safety violations in addition to requiring its drivers to simultaneously entertain passengers and operate the unwieldy vehicles on city streets.

In 2019, a jury awarded about \$123 million to the victims and families of this fatal crash. The jury determined that Ride the Ducks International, the manufacturer of the duck boat vehicle, was 67-70% responsible for the crash, while Ride the Ducks of Seattle, the duck boat tour operator, was 30-33% at fault.

2016

Boston, Massachusetts: A woman died when her moped was hit by a Duck Boat making a turn onto Beacon Street. She went under the vehicle and ended up beneath it. Her boyfriend, who was riding on the same moped, was injured but survived the crash.

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Seattle, Washington: A Ride the Ducks vehicle rear-ended a small sedan, crunching the car's truck. According to a witness, the driver was trying to get out of the way of an oncoming ambulance and could not see the sedan in front of it.

2018

Branson, Missouri, July 19, 2018: A tourist duck boat capsized on Table Rock Lake, killing 17 people, including children, as severe thunderstorms struck the area.



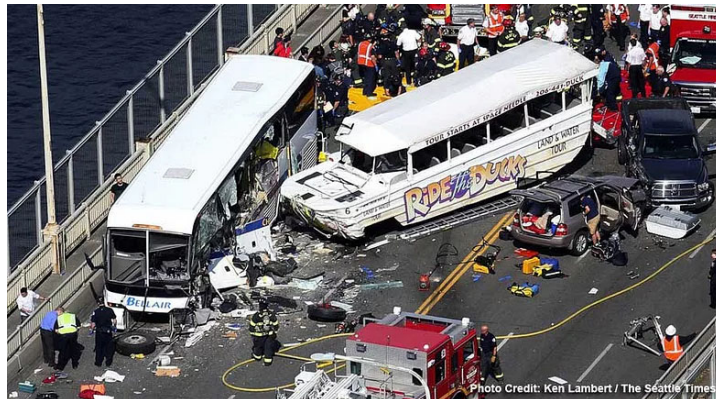
Additionally, seven were badly injured and four others remain missing. There were 31 people on board, according to ABC News.

The deadly sinking in Missouri brought back painful memories of a similar accident nearly two decades ago in Arkansas.

Both duck boats had overhead roofs or canopies that the National Transportation Safety Board warned could greatly increase the risk of passengers becoming trapped in the boat and drowning.

2019

Seattle, Washington: Five Students Killed, Others Critically Injured in Duck Tour Boat Accident



Several witnesses told news agencies that the duck tour boat and the charter bus were going in opposing directions on Aurora Bridge when the duck tour boat seemed to go out-of-control. According to witness Jesse Christenson, the duck tour boat signaled to move into the left lane. When the duck boat began to move over, it lurched suddenly.

All of a sudden, smoke appeared and the front left wheel seemed to pop off of the duck boat vehicle, according to Christenson, who was in a vehicle roughly 450 feet behind the duck tour boat. The duck tour boat then clipped an SUV before it veered directly into the path of the oncoming bus, which it T-boned on Aurora Bridge. The impact was vicious, caving in the left side of the charter bus.

AND WHO REGULATES THESE VEHICLE/VESSELS?

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)? The United States Coast Guard? The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration? National Transportation Safety Board? **No agency in particular!**

The NTSB makes recommendations, but has no regulatory power to enforce them. The fact that their recommendations after the 1999 Arkansas duck boat disaster have gone largely ignored frustrates **Jim Hall, the former NTSB chairman.** "It's clear," he said. **"State authorities should ban them for recreational usages." Hall believes duck boats should be outlawed.**