

Accident Database

Report ID# 508

Help

1998-05-18
Date
Bobby Canipe
Victim
43
Victim Age
Catawba River
River
Morgantown
Section
Dam, Morganton Water Treatment Plant United States North Carolina, US
Location
Gage
Medium
Water Level
N/A
River Difficulty
Caught in Low Head Dam Hydraulic
Cause

Injury Type(s)
– Does not Apply

Factors
– Failed Rescue

Inexperienced

Victim Experience Level

Commercial

Trip Type

Other

Boat Type

Group Info

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status



Accident Description

On May 18, 1998 a man was offering rides in his 22 foot powerboat at a river festival along the Catawba River near Morganton, NC. Suddenly he saw an kayaker trapped in the backwash of the dam at the city of Morganton water treatment plant. Then he heard a man screaming for help. He approached and attempted to throw a rope to the man, but the victim didn't grab hold. He was sucked into the backwash of the dam while attempting to throw the man a rope. He slammed into the dam, swamped, and capsized, throwing everyone into the water. He, the kayaker, and the two passengers swam to safety after a horrible thrashing. The other passenger, Bobby Canipe, 43, was pushed from the hydraulic unconscious. Paramedics were unable to revive him.

SOURCE: Charlotte [Observer](#)

ANALYSIS: (Walbridge) The first rule of rescue is not to compound the problem by creating more victims. Dam backwashes often have a surprising reach, and rescuers should always be careful to stay clear of it.

May 18 A Man offering powerboat rides at a river festival along the Catawba River in North Carolina when he saw a kayaker trapped in the backwash of the dam at the city of Morganton water treatment plant. He approached and attempted to throw a rope to the man, but the victim didn't grab hold. Without taking his riders to safety he entered the backwash of the dam, swamping and then capsizing his boat. He, the kayaker, and the one passenger swam to safety; the other passenger drowned.



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