

NEWS

2 Bucyrus men drown in Sandusky River

Telegraph-Forum staff report

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UPPER SANDUSKY – Two Bucyrus men died Sunday evening after their kayaks overturned in the Sandusky River in Upper Sandusky.

Billy Zornes, 45, and Lewis Zornes, 46, were removed from the river after authorities searched for their bodies for about an hour and a half, Upper Sandusky police Chief David M. Olds said.

The police department received a call that two kayaks had overturned in the river near the dam at 7:15 p.m. Billy Zornes' body was recovered first.

Several agencies responded to the scene to search for the bodies in addition to the Upper Sandusky Police Department — the Upper Sandusky Fire Department, Wyandot County EMS, Water Rescue Team and Wyandot County Sheriff's Office. The Zornes were pronounced dead by the Wyandot County coroner.

An investigation into the drownings is being conducted by the Ohio Division of Watercraft's Alum Creek office. The volume of water in the Sandusky River was high Sunday after more than a week of rain, a spokesman said.

"The water was flowing over the dam. One gentleman went over and the other one then tried to assist," said Matt Edelstein, a spokesman for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Edelstein said that kayaking is allowed in the river above the dam and that there are no signs posted warning of potential hazards because of the dam's proximity. However, Edelstein said, several maps of the waterway do include warnings and advise kayakers to steer clear of the dam during periods of high water.

The Zornes' deaths were the third and fourth drowning deaths in the region in recent days. On Friday, two teenagers — Chloe Ernest and Austin Weyhmeller — died swimming in the spillway at the Pleasant Hill Dam in Ashland County.