

Accident Database

Report ID# 10733

Help

2017-07-01

Date

Perry Ratcliffe Jr.

Victim

36

Victim Age

Swatara Creek

River

Near Jonestown, PA

Section

United States Pennsylvania, US

Location

Gage

High

Water Level

N/A

River Difficulty

– PFD Not Worn or Present

Injury Type(s)

– Does not Apply

Factors

– High Water

Private

Trip Type

Kayak - Other

Boat Type

Group Info

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status

Accident Description

The following is a note from Brian Palmer an active paddler and CCGH member: There was some video on the site of the York Daily Record of a couple of kayakers coming off of Swatara Creek near the trailer of one of the water rescue groups and neither was wearing a PFD, both were in rec kayaks. The gauge indicates the river came up about 1000 cfs (from 400 to 1400 cfs) that afternoon from 2:00 to 5:00.

Swatara kayakers caught in storm; one reported unresponsive

Lebanon Daily News

John Latimer , johnlatimer@ldnews.com

Published 5:02 p.m. ET July 1, 2017

Emergency crews assist kayakers stranded by torrential rains in Jonestown. John Latimer, Lebanon Daily News (Photo: John Latimer/Lebanon Daily News)

becoming a drowning victim.

The Lebanon County Emergency Management Agency responded to reports of a possible drowning victim and stranded kayakers at about 4:40 p.m. EMA reports indicated a person was taken out of the water and CPR was being administered, state police said

"An unresponsive man was pulled from the water and he was taken by ambulance to the closest hospital," confirmed Cpl. Nathan Trate, who could provide no other details.

Several other kayakers were stranded and needed assistance to reach the shore where they were assisted by a water rescue team from Fort Indiantown Gap.

A state trooper questions of the men who were rescued while kayaking on the Swatara Creek in Jonestown Saturday afternoon. (Photo: John Latimer, Lebanon DailyNews)

The group, made up of men and women, gathered under the bridge on Jonestown Road next to their colorful kayaks, where they were each questioned by state troopers.

Obviously shaken, none of the survivors wanted to speak about their ordeal.

One man who said he was from Annville, said the group had formed as they floated down the muddy-colored creek on what started out a sweltering summer's day. He said he didn't know the victim but he had been floating with them. "We did all we could," he said.

Kayakers console themselves on the banks of the Swatara Creek in Jonestown after one of their group may have drowned. (Photo: John Latimer, Lebanon Daily News)

The first reports of kayakers in trouble came about 3:45 p.m. Crews from Jonestown, Bunker Hill, Ono and Fort Indiantown Gap fire companies along with a First Aid & Safety Patrol ambulance were dispatched for a water rescue in the area of Supreme Mid-Atlantic and the Jonestown Dam.

Initial reports from the scene indicated there were as many as 14 kayakers and that all were accounted for. The box was put back in service by EMA at 4:09 p.m.

But then came reports about 30 minutes later of a possible drowning victim in the same area.

The identity of that individual or his condition were not known on Saturday evening.

36-year-old man identified as drowning victim in storm-related kayaking incident

Posted on July 1, 2017 at 10:08 PM

By Charles Thompson

cthompson@pennlive.com

A kayaking accident apparently triggered by Saturday afternoon's spotty heavy downpours has claimed the life of a North Lebanon Township man.

State police said Perry Ratcliffe Jr., 36, was pronounced dead at 5:37 p.m., shortly after he was pulled from the Swatara Creek near Jonestown by other members of a group he had been boating with.

The death is being treated as an accidental drowning, said Trooper Eric Dreisbach, of the state police's Jonestown Barracks.

Dreisbach said Ratcliffe and other kayakers were floating down the Swatara when a storm that dumped approximately two inches of rain in about 45 minutes turned portions of the creek into a

recover. Several of his companions were able to bring him to an island in the creek where they started CPR, and resuscitation efforts continued when first responders arrived on the scene. Ratcliffe, however, apparently never regained consciousness.

"It was just a very unfortunate accident, and a bad situation all the way around," Dreisbach said. Emergency personnel responding to the scene were able to successfully rescue several other kayakers who had lost their boats or otherwise had become stranded, police said.



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