

Accident Database

Report ID# 50011

Help

2019-06-14

Date

Thomas Calvin Willie

Victim

21

Victim Age

Teton River

River

United States Idaho, US

Location

High

Water Level

N/A

River Difficulty

Cause Code(s)

- Caught in Low Head Dam Hydraulic

Injury Type(s)

- Does not Apply

Factors

- Inexperience

Other

Boat Type

Reported

Status

Accident Description

Body of drowning victim found in Teton River

By Nate Eaton, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted - Jun 24th,

FREMONT COUNTY, Idaho — The body of a Brigham Young University-Idaho student who drowned in the Teton River was found Monday morning. Thomas Calvin Willie, 21, had been missing since Friday, June 14. The Malad man was floating with a group of friends near Monkey Rock when Fremont County Sheriff Len Humphries said his body became caught near a dam where the rapids are particularly strong. Jean-Luc Lazoore, a BYU-Idaho sophomore, was one of the 10 others floating with Willie. He told the BYU-Idaho Scroll that the river appeared safe and calm the entire way until they saw the diversion dam.

Another group member and Willie's best friend, Robert Wray, exited the water to examine the drop. Wray then warned the group they should get out of the water to avoid the dam. "By that time, most of us were able to get out," Lazoore said. "Some of us were really struggling to get out on time. The water was starting to pick up ... but Cal was already too close."

Rescue crews have spent over a week looking for Willie's body. Specific details of where he was located on the river have not been released.

KDFI, Idaho Falls, ID

Swift water team joins Teton River search

Take caution near diversion dams

By: Ariel Schroeder

Posted: Jun 15, 2019

ANTHONY, Idaho (KIFI/KIDK) - UPDATE: 6/17/19 2:50 p.m. The Bingham and Bonneville County Swift Water Rescue team joined the search for Cal Willie, 21, of Malad Monday. Willie fell off of an inner-tube during a float trip on the Teton River Friday.

Rescuers planned to ease back water levels and reduce flows on the river in an attempt to reduce turbulence near a diversion dam.

the scene Monday as search efforts intensified.

The incident prompted a wider warning from Fremont County Emergency Management Monday.

The office called low-head dams a "drowning machine" because the water spilling over the dam creates such a dangerous hydraulic effect. Re-circulating currents below such dams can trap and drown a victim, even if they are wearing a life jacket.

UPDATE 6/16/19 4:33 P.M.: Fremont County Sheriff Len Humphries has confirmed to Local News 8 and KIDK Eyewitness News 3 the identity of the man they're searching for in the Teton River.

They are searching for 21-year-old Cal Willie of Malad, who is a BYU-Idaho student. They say he was tubing on the river with nine friends on Friday. They were not aware there was a diversion dam on the river. When the group saw the dam, they tried to get out. Nine of the friends made it out, but Willie did not.

Teams of close to 20 people from Fremont County Search and Rescue as well as Bonneville County have been trying to find him. The Sheriff's Office believes Willie's body may be trapped in the severe undertow created by the dam. Sheriff Humphries says the search effort has been hindered because of the dangerous water conditions.

Search crews will be joined tomorrow by the swift water rescue team from Bingham and Bonneville County because the water is too dangerous to send divers in now.

The river has gone up more than a foot since yesterday.

UPDATE 6/16/19 3:25 P.M.: Bonneville County is assisting the Fremont County Sheriff's office in their search.

ORIGINAL STORY: The Fremont County Sheriff's Office and search and rescue are looking for a body in the Teton River. The Sheriff's Office said that two people were stranded in the river and later rescued by emergency responders on Friday night. Crews are still searching for a 21-year-old man on Saturday. He was part of that same group rescued. The Sheriff's Office said he went over a diversion dam and got caught in the undertow. The fast-moving water swept him away.



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