



EL DORADO COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Wednesday June 14, 2023

Date/Time of Occurrence: 06/14/2023 9 a.m.

Nature of Occurrence: Second Drowning in Two Days Prompts Warning – Local Waterways are Dangerous This Year

Contact: Fire Captain Jacob Poganski

Phone: (530) 644-9630

Email: pio@eldofire.com

El Dorado County, CA – June 14, 2023 — This week El Dorado County firefighters have responded to two separate drownings that occurred less than 24 hours apart. These incidents occurred in both lakes and rivers.

On Monday June 12, just after 4:15 p.m. firefighters responded to Jenkinson Lake in the Sly Park Recreation Area near Pollock Pines, CA for a drowning. Crews received initial reports of an 18-year-old male (exact age was unknown at the time of the initial 9-1-1 call) who was last seen approximately 30 to 40 ft off a shoreline near an island within the lake. El Dorado County firefighters responded with the assistance of CAL FIRE, US Forest Service, Diamond Springs - El Dorado Fire Protection District, and Reach Air Medical Services' CALSTAR 3. Crews searched along the shore, on the water in boats, and with rescue swimmers in the water. CALSTAR assisted with searching from the air. Units on scene were ultimately unable to locate the victim and search efforts were turned over to El Dorado County Sheriff's Office Dive Team just before 6 PM. The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office Dive Team located and recovered the deceased 19-year-old victim at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday morning.

At 1:14 p.m. Tuesday June 13, firefighters responded to another drowning on the South Fork of the American River in Lotus, CA to an area just downstream from Henningsen Lotus Park. A single male victim, estimated to be in his 60s, was submerged under water and caught in tree branches. This type of entrapment is commonly referred to as a "strainer". The victim had been traveling in a non-guided private raft with two female companions who were able to get to safety on their own after the raft overturned. Initial reports indicated that the raft was wrapped around the tree pushing onto the victim. Due to the victim's known location close to the shore, firefighters were able to join with bystanders to form a human chain to pull the victim from the water. It is unknown if the victim was wearing a life jacket at the time of the incident. Crews

began life saving measures including CPR. Paramedics at the scene ultimately declared the victim deceased. CAL FIRE and Garden Valley Fire District assisted in this response.

We remind everyone who visits our local waters that even though our waterways are generally safe, this year is different. A longer winter and heavy precipitation are contributing to cold and swift waters. Visiting our local waterways is still encouraged but everyone needs to know the risks being faced so that steps can be taken to reduce risks.

- Even strong swimmers can become fatigued and overwhelmed in the currents and cold waters.
- Swimmers should not go out further than where they can touch the ground in static waters.
- Cold waters can lead to hypothermia that can be a dangerous and life-threatening condition.
- Wet suits or dry suits can help to reduce the likelihood of cold exposure.
- Dams control much of the river flows which can cause sudden fluctuations in flow rates and water levels.
- Boating on whitewater rivers should be avoided unless accompanied by experienced local river guides and where proper safety equipment and practices are used.
- Everyone, especially children, in water or near the water edge should wear a life jacket.
- Even wading in the moving currents of rivers is discouraged beyond getting ankles and calves wet.
- Go with others, inform people of your plans, and have access to a cell phone to call 9-1-1 if needed.
- Watch small children closely, keep them within arm's reach.
- Follow the advice of posted signs, warnings, and barricades. Listen to local forecasts and advisories especially related to water flows.
- Be mindful of your skill level and don't exceed your abilities.

The El Dorado County Fire Protection District provides fire, rescue and EMS services in the communities of Placerville, Shingle Springs, Pollock Pines, Camino, Pleasant Valley, Cool, Coloma, Lotus, Pilot Hill, Oak Hill, Strawberry, and Kyburz.

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