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Drowning

## UPDATE: Drowning victim located

By SARAH STRANDBERG,

Jul 24, 2013



Relatives of Eric Langland, 29, of Decorah, stayed close Sunday, July 21, 2013, to the site on the Upper Iowa River at Upper Dam where Langland apparently drowned. (SARAH STRANDBERG / Courier correspondent)

By SARAH STRANDBERG,

DECORAH, Iowa — Rescuers have found the body of a Decorah man who drowned on the Upper Iowa River Saturday.

The Decorah firefighters found the body of Eric M. Langland, 29, on the Upper Iowa River at 6:45 a.m. Wednesday.

Felton said Langland's body was found three-quarters of a mile downstream of the Upper Dam, where the drowning was reported Saturday night. Firefighters said Langland had been swimming with another man, went under the water and never resurfaced.

Felton suspects Langland got caught up in the powerful rolling dam waters and wasn't strong enough to pull himself out..

## **EARLIER STORY**

DECORAH, Iowa — Authorities on Monday released the name of man missing and presumed drowned in the Upper Iowa River.

Eric Langland, 29, of Decorah, apparently went into the water Saturday east of Decorah.

Upper Iowa Marine in Decorah on Monday installed sonar equipment on the Decorah Fire Department's flat-bottom boat to aid the search for Langland's body.

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Langland reportedly was swimming below Upper Dam when a man he was with saw him go under the water. The other man was not swimming.

The Decorah Law Enforcement Center received a 911 call from Langland's companion about 7:20 p.m. Saturday.

The Iowa State Patrol, Winneshiek County Sheriff's Office, Decorah police and fire departments, Waukon Fire Department, Winneshiek Medical Center and Iowa Department of Natural Resources sent representatives to the site.

According to Deputy Tim Felton rescuers used spotlights and boats to look for Langland. The search continued until about 11 p.m. but was called off because of darkness and the strong current.

The search resumed about 6 a.m. Sunday. According to Felton, firefighters kayaked below the dam to Bolson Bridge near the Allamakee County line.

Divers are not being used because the area is unsafe, according to Decorah Fire Chief Mike Ashbacher.

“... Because of the undertow, the current that comes off that dam is very unpredictable. We don't want to put any rescuers in danger to make them victims as well,” he said.

Even swimmers with a life vest lose buoyancy in the aerated water below the dam, and boat propellers don't function properly, Ashbacher added.

The area below the dam is popular for swimming but law enforcement officials discourage the practice. Besides the strong current, the area features concrete and rebar hazards.

Nevertheless, a well-worn path on the east bank shows where swimmers often jump into the river from rope swings. Felton said as soon as officials cut the ropes, a new one goes up.

The north and south access to the dam are closed until further notice.

