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Woman drowns in Guadalupe

By Ron Maloney
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A 32-year-old Houston woman Sunday evening became this summer's first drowning victim in the Guadalupe River in Comal County, losing her life near the fourth River Road crossing.

Precinct 4 Justice of the Peace Jennifer Saunders pronounced Zahida Owais dead at the scene of the incident, which occurred in the undertow beneath the Kanz dam.

Canyon Lake Fire/EMS Chief Shawn Wherry reported firefighters were called to the scene around 8 p.m. Sunday to aid several victims who were reportedly in the water just downstream of the dam.

Kanz dam is located between White Water Sports and Rio Raft on the river's second horseshoe, which is accessed off FM 2673 in Sattler.

When firefighters arrived, Wherry said, they assembled a rescue team and began pulling
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undertow, beneath the surface of the water.

The two children pulled from the water were uninjured.

Wherry said firefighters reported to him the victim was part of a group of tubers — all of whom were wearing floatation devices.

“If they hadn’t been, it was likely we’d have had more drownings,” Wherry said.

Comal County Sheriff’s Lt. Mark Reynolds said the group of tubers put in at White Water Sports and floated a couple hundred yards down to — and over — the dam, a trip thousands of tubers make on any holiday weekend.

Deputies were working to determine what had happened, he said, although he noted there is hydraulic action commonly called an “undertow” at that spot.

Language barriers between local officials and members of the tubing party made it more difficult to understand precisely what had happened, he said.

“We’re understanding there were several children who were rescued from an island out there,” Reynolds said. “When the children had been rescued, EMS personnel saw a life jacket down in the undertow. They latched onto the jacket and pulled the deceased out of the water.”

No other information was available Monday.

“It’s unfortunate,” Reynolds said. “It’s just one of those unfortunate things that happen and nobody can really explain it.”

Eight people drowned in Canyon Lake or Comal County rivers in 2004.

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