

# Accident Database

**Report ID# 474**

Help

1997-05-26
Date
Unknown
Victim
56
Victim Age
Blacklick Cr.
River
near Johnstown, PA
Section
United States Pennsylvania, US
Location
Gage
High
Water Level
III
River Difficulty
Flush Drowning
Cause

Injury Type(s)

– Does not Apply

Factors

– Cold Water

– One Boat Trip

Some Experience

Victim Experience Level

Private

Trip Type

Open Canoe

Boat Type

Group Info

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status

## Accident Description

On May 26, 1997 there was a fatal accident on Blacklick Creek, a Class III whitewater stream located north of Johnstown, PA. The river was running high after recent rains when two men, both experienced paddlers wearing life vests and helmets, attempted the run in an open canoe. They broached and flipped on a mid-stream rock, which threw them into the water. Since they were entering a calm section, they held onto their canoe. They were discussing what to do next when their boat hit a rock very hard. Both men were pummeled with such force that they had their helmets ripped off! One man made it to shore and began looking for his 56-year-old uncle. After a brief search he found him floating unconscious in the water. The survivor, a former EMT, pulled his uncle to shore and began CPR. It was, unfortunately, ineffective.

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Fish Commission 1997 accident recap

ANALYSIS:

1. (Walbridge)A one boat trip leaves no margin for error. American Whitewater’s minimum recommended party size is four people or two craft, whichever is more.
2. (PFC) Hypothermia may have played a role in this accident

The Fish Commission also reported another canoeing fatality that did not make previous AW accident reports. The incident occurred on Blacklick Creek, a class III whitewater stream located north of Johnstown, Pa., on May 26th. The river was running high due to recent rains when two men, both experienced paddlers wearing life vests and helmets, broached and flipped their canoe against a mid-stream rock. The two held onto their boat and were discussing what to do next when they hit a second rock. They were pummeled



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