

# Kayak goes over dam in Tri-Cities, man missing and presumed dead

Jun 6, 2006

*The Associated Press*

KENNEWICK, Wash. – Two men in a kayak went over a dam on the Yakima River between Richland and Kennewick, and one was missing and presumed drowned, Benton County sheriff's deputies said.

Gary Dean Kirk, 46, of Kennewick, reportedly surfaced a couple of times about 30 feet downstream from the Wanawish Dam, also known as Horn Rapids Dam, along State Route 240 before a witness lost sight of him Saturday afternoon, witnesses said.

Cody Lee Hughes, 20, of Kennewick, who had been with Kirk in the two-person kayak, was rescued after swimming toward shore through the rapid current and clinging clung to a snag near a maple tree in about four feet of water about 30 feet into the river, according to a news release issued by sheriff's Capt. Charles Kissler.

As of Monday evening no trace of Kirk had been found in a search using ground parties, personal watercraft, inflatable boats and a sheriff's airplane, deputies said. More aerial searching is planned, Cpl. Brian White said.

Kirk's 19-year-old daughter Janelle was being comforted by friends at home, while his 18-year-old son Aaron joined in the search.

Signs posted along the river warn boaters to stay out of the area, and the kayak contained life jackets but neither Hughes nor Kirk was wearing one, White said.

"The information that I received from (Hughes) was that (Kirk) said he had gone over the dam before, so they were trying to go over the dam intentionally without wearing life jackets," he said.

Lowhead dams like the Wanawish can be deceptively dangerous because boats and other objects that go over the drop can be caught in currents that force them under water, said Scott Pattison, a spokesman for Columbia Basin Dive Rescue.

Kirk and Hughes were swept beyond the boil line but were pitched out of the kayak in the turbulence, he said.