

Man drowns after trying to surf spillway off of Kings River

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Water Rescue teams with both the Kings and Tulare County Sheriff's Offices searched for the man's body

Photo credit: Kings County Sheriff's Office

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KINGS COUNTY, Calif. (FOX26) — UPDATE 6:12 PM June 15, 2019:

The Kings County Sheriff's Office has identified a man who drowned while trying to surf in a canal off of the Kings River Saturday.

Deputies say 31-year-old Jose Gomez was with a cousin when he tried to ride an inflatable raft on the spillway of the Empire Weir area.

The cousin told investigators that while Gomez was trying to get on the raft, he lost balance and fell into the water, disappearing from sight.

The cousin told deputies he tried to search for Gomez, but had trouble in the fast-moving water, and called the Sheriff's Department just under half an hour later.

Gomez was not wearing a life vest. He'd tried to tie a fasten a rope to a nearby pole and tie the other end around himself, but that did not help to keep him safe.

It was about two hours before the Kings County Water Rescue Unit were sent to search for Gomez. The Kings County Sheriff's Office got the initial call that he'd fallen into the

water at 12:55 AM Saturday, but the Water Units with Kings and Tulare Counties weren't sent out until 2:55 AM.

Around 12:30 PM, the Kings County Sheriff's Office drone found Gomez's body about an eighth of a mile Southeast of where he'd fallen in.

The Kings County Sheriff's Office says that it has found the body of the man who drowned in a canal off of the Kings River on Saturday.

At around 1 a.m. on Saturday, a man went to a spillway in the area of Highway 41 and Lincoln Ave to try and surf.

Officers say that he tied a rope around himself and tied the other end to a rail near the spillway, so that he could pull himself out of the water if needed.

He then hopped onto a raft that was in the water and began trying to surf in the spillway.

The water was moving so fast that it ripped the raft from underneath him, sending him into the water.

Rescue teams from the Tulare Co. Sheriff's Office joined Kings County deputies in the search.

Deputies also had the Tulare Lake Canal District shut off water flow in the area temporarily as they searched.

Officers found him in the water 1,800 feet away from where he went into the water.