

Drowning Highlights River Risks: [FINAL Edition]

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

Rescue swimmers from Howard's fire department were unable to spot [Dionicio Martinez] on the surface of the water. A Maryland state trooper in a helicopter tried using an infrared camera but also saw nothing, [Karen Bathras] said. Divers from Carroll, Baltimore and Howard counties searched an area of the Patapsco about 200 yards long and 100 yards wide, and 20 feet deep in places. They found Martinez's body at 6:34 p.m.

FULL TEXT

The drowning death of a 20-year-old man this week near the Union Dam in Patapsco Valley State Park in Ellicott City underscores the dangers of swimming in rivers and other open areas, local authorities said.

The victim, Dionicio Martinez of Glen Burnie, was swimming with friends late Sunday afternoon at the dam on the Patapsco River. Martinez jumped into the water on the south side of the dam and when he came up, he was struggling to stay above water, said Elise Armacost, spokeswoman for the Baltimore County Fire Department.

His friends tried to call 911 on their cell phone but couldn't get a signal, said Lt. Karen Bathras of the Howard County Fire Department. A nearby camper then ran to a campsite phone and called police at 5:02 p.m.

Rescue swimmers from Howard's fire department were unable to spot Martinez on the surface of the water. A Maryland state trooper in a helicopter tried using an infrared camera but also saw nothing, Bathras said. Divers from Carroll, Baltimore and Howard counties searched an area of the Patapsco about 200 yards long and 100 yards wide, and 20 feet deep in places. They found Martinez's body at 6:34 p.m.

Police had little information about Martinez but said they were contacting his family in Mexico.

Howard officials had no figures available immediately about how many people have drowned this summer, but for Baltimore County Fire Department workers, Martinez was the fourth victim they had seen in two weeks. All the other drownings had occurred in swimming pools, county fire officials said.

Nevertheless, Armacost said rivers and other open water areas carry special risks for swimmers, who face fluctuating depths and temperatures as well as hidden rocks and trees. The recent rain has also made rivers faster, she said.

"Everyone wants to have fun in the summer, but water can be dangerous. People need to remember that," she said.

DETAILS

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