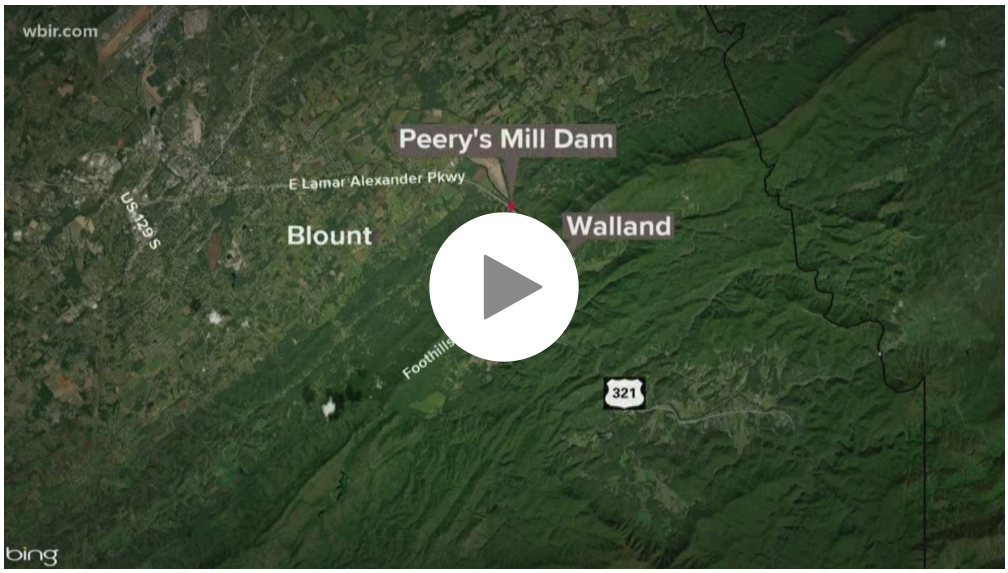
LOCAL NEWS

Maryville girl, 13, drowns at Walland dam

The child had been in water at the dam, which authorities warn can be treacherous because of the current created by the water flow over the dam.



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A 13-year-old girl drowned Wednesday afternoon at Peery's Mill Dam, a place that's proved hazardous to swimmers in the past.

The Blount County Sheriff's Office identified the child as Alexis Shirley of Maryville. She was declared dead early Thursday, according to authorities.

First responders were called to the scene shortly before 4 p.m. Wednesday. The dam is in Walland off East Lamar Alexander Parkway.

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Police and fire personnel found people performing CPR on the girl below the dam. They took her by ambulance to nearby Blount Memorial Hospital, and she was transferred to East Tennessee Children's Hospital, where she died.

Credit: WBIR

"Preliminary results of an autopsy this morning at the Knox County Regional Forensic Center revealed that Alexis Shirley died as a result of accidental drowning," according to a release from the Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Jim Berrong noted there are cautions posted at the dam about water dangers. Parents are supposed to watch children when they're in the water.

Above the dam, the water can be placid. Below the dam, churning water flow can create a current that sucks swimmers in and makes it hard for them to free themselves.

In May 2018, Ty C. Berry, 33, of Maryville, drowned at the mill dam.

In August 2018, responders rescued a 20-year-old man after he became trapped in the water. According to the Sheriff's Office, a member of the Blount Special Operations Response Team suffered an injury during the rescue.

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