

NEWS

Woman feared drowned

By **DAILY LOCAL** | dailylocal@dailylocal.com

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Rescue crews arrived at the Black Rock Dam shortly before 2 p.m. and started to search for the 36-year-old woman, whose identity was being withheld by police.

“There was a male, a female and a dog in a boat above the dam,” said Upper Providence Police Cpl. Robert Ward. “The dog jumped in, and the female jumped in after the dog. Apparently, she couldn’t get back to the boat.”

The man in the boat, identified only as the victim’s boyfriend, threw an orange flotation device to the woman, who was not wearing a life vest, rescuers said. The woman grabbed the flotation device just before she was carried over the dam.

“She was last seen going over the dam,” Ward said.

Rescue teams gathered at Lock 60 in Mont Clare and at the Black Rock Dam and continued their search throughout the afternoon and into the evening. Volunteers scoured the river banks as several rescue boats trolled the river and the Penn Star One helicopter from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania hovered above the area, volunteering several hours to the search effort.

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“We had the heavy divers in, but the water under the dam is too turbulent, so they’re pulling out,” Ward said.

Oaks Fire Company Deputy Chief Joe Locasale was coordinating the effort from Lock 60.

“We have crews searching the banks on both sides of the river from Black Rock to the Route 29 bridge,” Locasale said.

As the afternoon hours faded, rescuers continued to arrive and relieve exhausted volunteers from Mont Clare, Oaks, Spring-Ford and Phoenixville departments. Using dive units and thermal cameras, Locasale planned a search of a logjam at the head of a small dirt island below the dam. Similar islands dot the river throughout its length, all potential snagging points for a drowning victim.

Locasale said the flotation device should have been enough to support the woman. Still diminished by the drought, the river level was below normal, and the current was not unusually strong, according to Locasale. But there was a large amount of debris in the river and, as of Sunday night, still no sign of the woman.

“She surfaced once with the dog,” Locasale said. “That was the last time she was seen.”

The dog swam ashore and survived, rescuers said.

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