



Accident Database

Report ID# 3521

[Help](#)

2011-05-22

Date

John Przydatek

Victim

16

Victim Age

Huron River

River

Section

Dam near Milford, MI United States Michigan, US

Location

1,500 to 2,000 cfs

Gage

High

Water Level

N/A

River Difficulty

Caught in a Natural Hydraulic

Cause

Cause Code(s)

- Caught in Low Head Dam Hydraulic

Injury Type(s)

- Does not Apply

Factors

- One Boat Trip

Some Experience

Victim Experience Level

Private

Trip Type

Open Canoe

Boat Type

Group Info

Douglas Killingbeck

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status

Accident Description

The death of two canoeists and serious injury of one kayaker in two separate incidents near a dam along the Huron River in Milford. The first incident, which happened shortly before 1 p.m., claimed the life of 16-year-old John Przydatek of Harrison Township, who died after his canoe flipped in the rapidly swirling current near the dam, which is part of the village's wastewater treatment system. Milford resident Douglas Killingbeck, 48, described as an expert canoeist, was killed after leaping into the water in an attempt to save the teenager. He, too, was trapped below the surface by the strong turbulence and drowned.

Teen, rescuer drown at Huron River dam

Last Updated: May 23. 2011 10:37AM

Milford— The Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office has identified two people who drowned Saturday at the base of the Huron River dam. Police said turbulent water in the dam contributed to the drownings. John Przydatek, 16, of Harrison Township and Douglas Killingbeck, 48, of Milford were pronounced dead at the scene. The teen and a friend were in a rented canoe when it capsized in turbulent water about 1 p.m. Saturday, witnesses told police. The Milford man put on a life jacket and tried to rescue them with his canoe, but it also overturned, police said. Emergency responders pulled the man and teen both out but were unable to revive them. Another teen in the incident had minor injuries and was able to make it to shore, police said.

From The Detroit News:

<http://detnews.com/article/20110523/METRO02/105230387/Teen--rescuer-drown-at-Huron-River-dam#ixzz1NCrJtEzz>

Two drown in Milford's Huron River Dam

Published: Sunday, May 22, 2011

By DAVE PHILLIPS Of The Oakland Press Two men drowned Saturday afternoon in the Huron River Dam in Milford. A 16-year-old boy from Harrison Township was canoeing when his canoe overturned in the water, which police describe as "turbulent," around 12:55 p.m. Sensing that the boy was in danger, a 48-year-old Milford man went in to attempt to rescue him in a separate canoe, which also capsized. Emergency responders pulled both men from the water and began resuscitation efforts, but were unable to revive either person.

Witnesses told police that the teen and a 16-year-old friend were in a rented canoe that capsized when it neared the base of the dam. The other teen was able to make it to safety, suffering minor injuries. The man who attempted to rescue the teen was wearing a life jacket and entered the water in his own canoe, but his canoe also overturned in the water. The victims were taken to the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office. Their identities have not yet been released, pending the notification of family members. Contact staff writer Dave Phillips at 248-745-4631 or dave.phillips@oakpress.com. Follow him on Twitter @dave_phillips1. Milford drowning victims identified Published: Sunday, May 22, 2011 By DAVE PHILLIPS Of The Oakland Press Officials have released the names of two men who drowned in Milford on Saturday. Douglas Killingbeck, 48, of Milford, drowned while attempting to rescue John Przydatek, 16, of Harrison Township around 1 p.m. Saturday. Police said Przydatek had been in a rented canoe with another 16-year-old when the boat capsized in the Huron River Dam. Seeing the danger the teens were in, Killingbeck put on a life jacket, got in his personal canoe and attempted to rescue Przydatek, but his canoe also overturned. Emergency responders pulled both Przydatek and Killingbeck out of the turbulent waters, but resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful.

Two people drown in the Huron River in Milford

Posted: 05/21/2011

MILFORD, Mich. (WXYZ) - Family & friends are remembering two victims who lost their lives in the Huron River tragedy. An experienced canoeist, Doug Killingbeck, reacted quickly when he saw two young men capsize in their canoe on Saturday. He put on his life jacket and jumped into the raging water near the base of the dam. One teen survived, but the 48-year-old Milford man and 16-year-old John Przydatek from Harrison Township were pulled under by the strong current and died.

Przydatek was part of a camping trip with Knox Presbyterian Church. Przydatek's best friend was also in the canoe, he struggled but was able to make it safely to shore. The other teen in Przydatek's boat was able to make it to safety with minor

injuries. Both victims were taken to the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office. Funeral arrangements have not yet been finalized.

Contact staff writer Dave Phillips at 248-745-4631 or ordave.phillips@oakpress.com. Samaritan, teen drown in Milford

May. 23, 2011

Written by Elisha Anderson DETROIT FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

John Przydatek was 16. Doug Killingbeck was 48. Visitation for Doug Killingbeck will be 2-9 p.m. Tuesday at Lynch & Sons Funeral Home, 404 E. Liberty, Milford. A funeral service will begin at noon Wednesday at Christ Lutheran Church, 620 General Motors Road, Milford. Visitation will precede the service at 10:30 a.m. Burial will be in Milford Memorial Cemetery.

People who knew Doug Killingbeck say they aren't surprised he risked his life when he saw a teenager in trouble on the river. The 48-year-old tried to rescue John Przydatek, 16, of Harrison Township after the canoe the teen was in capsized Saturday near the base of the Huron River Dam in Milford. Both drowned in the choppy waters, the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office said Sunday. John's family was making funeral arrangements Sunday.

John was canoeing as part of a trip with Knox Presbyterian Church in Harrison Township, family spokesman Rob Ritts said. John was a junior at L'Anse Creuse High School, was on the wrestling team and liked camping. "He touched a lot of hearts for the little bit of time he had on this planet," Ritts said. Michael Przydatek, John's father, said his son was looking forward to getting his driver's license this summer and was an avid outdoorsman who had been to Alaska. A 16-year-old friend who was with John was cut and scraped, but was able to make it safely to shore, Milford Police Chief Tom Callahan said.

Killingbeck was described by family members and friends as a person who would help anyone. "He was without a doubt a selfless guy," his brother-in-law John Kilby said. Family members said he knew the dangers of the water and that he was taking a risk. Killingbeck wore a life jacket, but the force of the water stripped it off him, police said. "He knew what he was getting into before he did it," Kilby said. "I'm sure he probably envisioned: 'What if that was my kid?'" The devoted father of Brianna, 15, and Natalie, 12, enjoyed spending time with his family. Karen Killingbeck, his wife of 17 years, said her husband was a Christian and never missed his daughters' events, including dance, soccer, track, basketball and volleyball. "He held the whole family together," she said.

Killingbeck had been canoeing since he was 17. In the mid-1980s, he canoed the AuSable River Canoe Marathon as an amateur and placed fourth, his family said. "His passion was being out on the river on a canoe," Kilby said. In March, he participated in the Klondike Canoe Race in Oscoda with Ed Adams of Fenton, 77. "Doug always looked out for the other person," Adams said. Killingbeck loved the Huron River, and part of the reason the family moved to Milford was to be close to it. "He will always be a hero in our hearts," Karen Killingbeck said.

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Canoeing teen's drowning death in Huron River holds a lesson for others

ELISHA ANDERSON, STAFF WRITER
Detroit Free Press

May 26, 2011 ET

As they got closer to the base of the dam on the Huron River in Milford, Jeff Tautolo noticed the water was turning white. The 17-year-old had second thoughts about getting closer. But he and his best friend, John Przydatek, 16, continued until it was too late to turn back. The power of the water was more than they bargained for Saturday afternoon.

The teens, on a camping trip with a church group, just wanted to go near the base so one could touch the water coming over the dam with his oar. Signs warn of danger in the area, but Jeff said the waterfall didn't look dangerous. Soon, Jeff knew they were in trouble.

The canoe flipped. They started spinning with the boat like clothes in a dryer. "I'd try to stand, but I couldn't," he said. "I was thinking I was going to die." Jeff managed to stand on the canoe and reach for John, and the two touched. But Jeff fell off the canoe, lost contact with his friend and blacked out. Somehow, Jeff made it out of the river alive. But John didn't, and neither did an experienced canoeist who rushed to help.

Now, Jeff's family hopes what happened that day can be a lesson for others.

Milford considers new signs, fines to prevent drownings

Milford officials are evaluating possible changes around the Huron River dam, where two people drowned and another person nearly drowned Saturday.

"Everything is on the table. We haven't really ruled out anything," Village Manager Arthur Shufflebarger said. The dam's dangers are made clear on several signs warning of possible death that are posted around the area, but more measures are being discussed to deter people from entering the area, Shufflebarger said. Some of the possibilities include fining people who go beyond a certain area, adding a barrier or installing different signs.

On Saturday, John Przydatek, 16, of Harrison Township died after he was sucked into turbulent waters after getting too close to the base of the dam in a canoe. Doug Killingbeck, 48, of Milford tried to rescue him and also drowned.

In a separate incident Saturday, a 30-year-old kayaker from Commerce Township nearly drowned. He was pulled from the water by other kayakers and taken to a hospital. He has since been released. "It was a tragic series of events. One after another," Milford Police Sgt. Matt Brumm said. Police estimate that one drowning or near-drowning occurs annually near the dam.

Water's power surprised teens

Jeff Tautolo, 17, of Clinton Township, who was in the canoe with his friend John, said he would like to see added precautions, such as wire barricades, near the dam. "I think the wires would show how threatening it is," Jeff said. Jeff said he didn't realize how powerful the water at the base of the dam was until it was too late. The two L'Anse Creuse High School juniors -- along with two other friends -- broke off from other members of the church group while on a weekend camping trip. They headed toward the dam.

"I thought it would just spit us out right away," Jeff said. "Once we got close, it started sucking us in." The canoe tipped, and the teens were in the water, fighting for their lives. "It was a struggle just to get some air," he said. The turbulence pulled them down. Jeff tried to stand but couldn't. At one point, he got into a position where he thought he could help John and reached out for him, yelling, "John! John!" The two touched, but they couldn't hold on. The force of the water ripped the teens'

rented aluminum canoe in half, police said. Neither was wearing a life jacket. "I was thinking I was going to die," Jeff said. He blacked out and woke up in a place where he could get out. The 6-foot-5, 270-pound wrestler was so weak, he could barely stand. The strength of the current had ripped off his shorts.

Killingbeck, who was in the area, rushed in to help John. He knew the dangers, his family said. The water ripped off his life jacket. Police say Killingbeck's actions were heroic. "He gave the ultimate sacrifice of his life, trying to save someone that he didn't even know," Brumm said.

What others need to know

The recent rain increased the volume of water flowing through the dam, which caused the turbulence to increase drastically, Brumm said. Despite the dangerous area near the dam, other parts of the river in the Milford area are safe for novice canoeists and kayakers, and several thousand people use the river every year, said Alan Heavner, owner of Heavner Canoe and Kayak Rental in Milford. Jeff escaped his ordeal with a broken nose, swollen and cut face and bruises on his leg. He will be a pallbearer at John's funeral today. He met Killingbeck's family earlier this week and plans to work with them to promote boating safety. "I'm the lucky one," he said.

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