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Two water related deaths in 24 hours on Blue River

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In less than 24 hours, there were two tragedies on the Blue River.



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Mary Ruth Higdon





Indiana Conservation Officer Jim Hash

MILLTOWN, IN (WAVE) – Two people drown in the same water and it happened in less than 24 hours. The first happened Tuesday night, the second Wednesday afternoon, both in the Blue River in Harrison County.

Mary Ruth Higdon has lived in Milltown near the Blue River all her life. "It's always been some place for people to come and swim and fish and canoe," she said.

In this summer heat, those are the activities that are on people's minds, but there are risks.

"Any amount of water, no matter how tranquil it seems to be, it can be very, very dangerous," said Indiana Conservation Officer Jim Hash.

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In less than 24 hours, there were two tragedies on the Blue River. Tuesday night, Alissa Knight, 15, was swimming near this low head dam.

"As she attempted to swim back, she was overcome by the current in the river and was washed over the dam," said Hash.

Knight's body was recovered about a half mile down stream. "It doesn't really matter what type of skill level or what strength of swimmer you are because whenever you have conditions such as these, because of recent rains that have raised the water level, then you get a situation where even the best of swimmers can get overcome," said Hash.

The next day, William Chappell, 69, and his wife, Shirley of Boonville were canoeing with their grandson and his girlfriend when their boat hit a log underwater.

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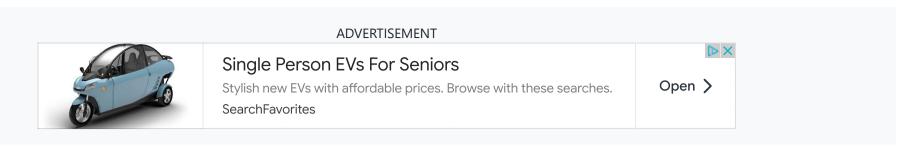
"There canoe capsized and one victim made it to shore and the other victim actually got trapped underneath the canoe and the log and had to be pulled out of the water by another member of the party," said Hash.

William and Shirley Chappell were taken to University Hospital, but hours later Mr. Chappell passed away.

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Chappell was wearing a life jacket, but he was trapped under water for at least a minute.

Two fun days in the water that have taken a deadly turn. "It's just sad," said Higdon.



According to conservation officers, you can swim in the Blue River at your own risk, but there is a sign that warns you not to swim near the dam.

Officers can't stress enough the importance of wearing life jackets and paying attention to changing water levels.

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