

PRESSRELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Date: July 19, 2004

DROWNING - WASHINGTON PARK

July 18, 2004 saw the deaths of two individuals by drowning in the waters of Lake Michigan and Trail Creek, and the near drowning of a third individual.

At approximately 3:05 p.m., officers were dispatched to the lakefront near the Army Corps of Engineers construction site for a possible drowning. Upon arrival, police officers noted that search and rescue efforts had already been initiated by Michigan City lifeguards and other volunteers. They were searching the lake waters for Ezequiel Flores-Sanchez, Age 25, of Elkhart, Indiana. According to information obtained by officers, Ezequiel was swimming with friends when he became tired and began to struggle in the water. When an attempt was made by a friend to reach him, Sanchez was already under water and could not be located. His body was recovered after a 30-minute search by boaters and the U. S. Coast Guard. Sanchez was pronounced dead at St. Anthony Memorial Health Center Emergency Room a short time later.

At approximately 4:30 p.m., officers were dispatched to the lakefront near the Michigan City Senior Center for a possible drowning. Upon arrival Officer Andy Paul saw an adult male subject pulling someone out of the water. Lifeguards arrived and began C.P.R. The victim was identified as Juan Contreras, age 23, of Elkhart, Indiana. Emergency Medical personnel arrived and Contreras was transported to St. Anthony Memorial Health Center where he remains in critical condition as of Monday at 10:00 A. M.

At approximately 8:44 p.m., the U. S. Coast Guard was notified of a possible drowning in Trail Creek near Millennium Park, Michigan City.

Officers of the Michigan City Police Department responded as well. It was learned that Richard C. Johnson, age 20, of Edwards St. in Michigan City, had been climbing and swinging from a decorative lamp post that is located near the water's edge. As Johnson was swinging from the lamppost, the lamppost broke, and Johnson fell into the water of Trail Creek. Friends at the scene attempted to rescue Johnson, but Johnson panicked and disappeared from view. Officers learned that Johnson could not swim. Recovery of Johnson was made through a joint effort of the Michigan City Police and LaPorte County Sheriff's Underwater Search and Recovery Team's shortly before 10:00 p.m. Johnson was pronounced dead upon arrival at St. Anthony Memorial Health Center Emergency Room.

The Michigan City Police Department would like to take the opportunity to remind visitors to our lakefront to swim only in guarded beaches. The lake can offer many recreation options, however warning signs and lifeguard signal flags that warn of the danger from rip-currents and high waves should always be observed and heeded.

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