

Debbie Galeazzi

From: TTheisen@nmfire.org on behalf of AAuxier@nmfire.org
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2014 3:46 PM
To: DKaufert@ci.neenah.wi.us; Don Merkes; \$Aldermen%NEENAH@ci.neenah.wi.us; Kevin Benner; Jim Englebert; James Taylor; Rebecca Nichols; Mark Langdon; Michael Keehan; Daniel Zelinski; Stan Sevenich
Cc: staff@nmfire.org
Subject: NMFR Dive Call on 8-25-14
Attachments: Dive Press Release.doc

Good Afternoon Mayor Kaufert, Mayor Merkes and members of the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils, As you may know, NMFR received a call to help locate a six year old boy at Riverside Park yesterday. Our Dive Team members searched and eventually did recover the child.

Through the process of establishing our Dive Team there have been questions about what difference our own Dive Team can make. Within 15 minutes of our Department's arrival at this incident, we were able to have on duty divers down at the park, suited up and in the water starting their search. In the meantime, we contacted off duty divers, who were able to respond quickly to help assist our on-duty divers. Immediately after starting our search pattern, the Shift Commander contacted Winnebago County Sheriffs Department for assistance and assembly of their dive team. As you know, they have the jurisdiction of the water way in our area.

While our firefighters do not want attention drawn to them, as they would rather have the support go to the family members, I am asking for everyone's understanding on how stressful some of the calls our firefighters experience. A dive call is stressful as there are a lot of unknowns when they jump into the water. However, when it involves a young child it is something no one wants to ever experience. During the call, we did have issues with some boaters not keeping their distance from our dive operations. I've attached a copy of AC Sipin's press release regarding the problems encountered. In addition to the issues with boaters, the water conditions had near zero visibility, there were numerous entanglement hazards (bicycles, rocks, tree branches, park benches, etc. in the water) and the area had lots of weeds.

They have all worked really hard to prepare for these types of incidents and all of their hard work has paid off as yesterday's operation went really well given all of the challenges they faced. I have a tremendous amount of pride, and respect, for what they did yesterday. Our firefighters natural instinct to watch out for each other, especially during calls, is amazing, and I'm grateful none of our personnel were injured during this operation.

While the outcome is a tragedy, and not what we wanted, we were able to make a difference for this family in that a quick recovery helps prevent the tragic effects of being in the water for a long period of time. This incident reaffirms, our Department's belief, that we provide a valuable service to the citizens we serve in both of our communities.

I would to thank all of you for your continued support of our Department and our efforts of establishing, and maintaining, our dive team service.

(See attached file: Dive Press Release.doc)

Al Auxier
Fire Chief
Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue
auxier@nmfire.org
(920)886-6203, office
(920)209-9509, cell



Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue

Fire Department Press Release

Date: August 27, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mike Sipin, Assistant Chief
Telephone: (920) 886-6220
msipin@nmfire.org

What: Boating Operations and Dive-Rescue Incidents

When: Tuesday, August 26, 2014

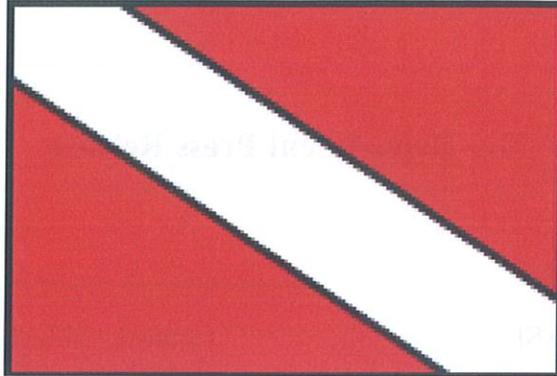
Where: Riverside Park, Neenah

Details: Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue's Dive Team assisted with the search of a young boy who tragically drowned at Neenah's Riverside Park. During the search operations, several boats were navigating very close to the search area. A dive flag was deployed but had drifted back towards the shoreline. NMFR also deployed an inflatable boat with personnel to act as a warning for incoming and outgoing boaters. During this time, several boaters failed to heed warnings of an emergency operation being conducted in the channel area.

These actions create very dangerous conditions for rescue divers. They can be seriously injured or killed from a boat traversing through the area. In this specific case, no divers were struck, but on two occasions, divers had to be recalled to the surface and a second diver was told to submerge to the bottom and lay flat until the boat had passed. This caused a temporary halt to search operations on two occasions. This occurred after dive tenders made verbal contact with the boaters advising them of the dive rescue operation.

Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue, along with our partner dive rescue teams in the Lake Winnebago area (Winnebago County Sheriff's Office, Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Office, Oshkosh Fire Department, Calumet County Dive Team) encourage boaters to be aware of dive or water rescue emergencies that are occurring in the area where you intend to conduct your recreational boating. When notices are issued and/or safety zones established, please refrain from traveling through or close to these areas to help ensure safety of responders working in an otherwise dangerous operation.

Remember, Wisconsin State Statutes require a minimum 100' distance to be maintained from a Diver Down Flag (see below).



###