

Yellow Breeches Creek Incident - Executive Summary

Search for missing 10 year old kayaker

August 10th 2024 to August 14th 2024

On Saturday August 10th just prior to 5pm, emergency responders from Fairview Township Fire Department, Fairview Township Police, Fairview Township EMS, and mutual aid partners from both Cumberland and York Counties, the vast majority of whom are volunteer, responded to the 1000 block of Limekiln Rd and the 1700 block of Sheepford Rd in Lower Allen Township Cumberland County for a reported missing kayaker on the Yellow Breeches Creek. It was initially reported that a 10 year old was kayaking with a group, hit a tree and went under the water. Crews spent the next 3 hours extensively and exhaustively searching the immediate area and areas downstream for the missing kayaker. When nothing was found and darkness had overcome the area, the search was called off and was set to resume the next day, August 11th.

The next morning, and each morning following from Sunday August 11th to Wednesday August 14th, emergency responders, emergency management personnel, and mutual aid partners from across 2 states, 8 counties, and totalling approximately 250-300 people assisted in the search. Crews worked from 8am to sometimes 10pm each day using available resources, technology, equipment and personnel, mostly volunteers, to continue the search for the missing 10 year old.

A unified command structure was established early in the incident and continued to be employed for the duration of the search. Leaders of the incident command team included **Eric Hawkins**, fire chief of Fairview Township Fire Department, **Jarrett Boyles**, Lieutenant of the Fairview Township Police Department, and **Brandon Freistat**, Emergency Management Coordinator for Fairview Township, with support from **Tim Dehoff** and **Mike Bennage**, Sergeants of the Fairview Township Police Department. These individuals provided guidance, decision making, organization, and fantastic leadership to the large number of responders present each and every day.

Over the course of the incident, crews searched by land with personnel and K-9's, in the air with drones, and in the water with boats, divers, underwater rovers and cameras. Crews began digging through an approximately 200 ft long by 50 ft wide debris pile of trees, sticks, logs, and other debris that had washed down the creek. After an exhaustive search, as the incident was preparing to deploy for the 5th day, on August 14th at approximately 745am, crews found the body of the missing kayaker. The body was then turned over to the York County Coroner's Office and the investigation turned over to the PA Fish and Boat Commission.

On Monday August 19th a Critical Incident Stress Management Team responded to assist members of any organization that participated in the incident with recovering from such a traumatic event that took place over such a long duration of time. On Wednesday August 21st all participants were invited to attend an After Action Review to provide an overview for all responders and discuss any lessons learned, and provide best practices for future incidents of this type or scale.