

06-22-2006 Wellington TWP – Allan Buz Anderson – FF PSD - Flood Attempted Rescue

Allan H. Anderson Jr.
Rescue Diver
Wellington Fire District
Ohio
Age: 47
Year of Death: 2006



Allan "Buz" Anderson

Submitted by his Wife

Allan 'Buz' Anderson Jr. 47 was a member of the Wellington Fire District's Dive Rescue team for four years and was a trained swift water rescue diver with fifteen years experience. He was a member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie # 2051 for 10 years. He was an active Black River Fullbacker for 8 years. He was an avid scuba diver, enjoyed bowling and attending his sons sporting events. His last family event was spent at the NASCAR Race in Michigan with his father, Al and two sons, Jarred and Jacob, a family tradition in June 2006.

He always made time for his extended family and was an outstanding influence on many, many young people who gathered at his house. He always took the time to explain things to the young people, when others would just brush them off, he would sit and explain everything in detail until they complete understood.

Buz was married to his wife Julie for 16 years and had four children, Joseph, Joshua, Jarred and Jacob. He is also survived by his parents Al and Cathy Anderson, sisters, Sharon, Caryn, and Ellan.

At 1:18 pm, on June 22, 2006, the Wellington Fire District responded to a 911 call for a water rescue, in Wellington Township. The department's Dive Rescue members responded to the call, with initial reports of two juveniles, in the water. The initial attempt to save the juveniles, who had attempted to drive their vehicle through the ROAD CLOSED barricades and rushing water, was unsuccessful. During a second attempt to reach the juveniles, Diver Allan 'Buz' Anderson, Jr. entered the water, attached to a safety line. Water conditions rapidly deteriorated and he was overcome by the water current. At that point, the diver was extricated by rescue personnel using his attached safety line. He was transported by Life flight to Cleveland Metro Hospital. Resuscitation efforts at the hospital were unsuccessful.

Your presence we miss, your memory we treasure, loving you always, forgetting you never.

RESCUER DIES IN FLOOD

<http://www.chroniclet.com/Daily%20Pages/062306Head11.html>

June 23, 2006 **Cindy Leise The Chronicle-Telegram**

- >**Fire department rescue diver went into the water to save teens**
- >**Wellington boy and girl pulled from floodwaters on Pitts Road**
- >**Emergency crews perform CPR on victim for more than an hour**

WELLINGTON TWP. — Emergency workers looked on in horror Thursday afternoon as a rescue diver sank beneath floodwaters of the Black River as he tried to help two teenagers who had been swept away and were clinging to a tree.

Allan "Buz" Anderson, a diver with 15 years experience who was certified for swift water rescues, was pronounced dead late Thursday afternoon at MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland. The Cuyahoga County coroner's office did not have the cause of his death as of late Thursday.

Wellington firefighters and ambulance personnel performed CPR on Anderson for more than an hour after pulling him from the water. He was then flown by helicopter to Cleveland.

Anderson was part of a rescue crew that responded to a call shortly after 1 p.m. about two people trapped in a vehicle as the Black River overflowed Pitts Road just north of state Route 18, a spokesman for the Wellington Fire District said.



Jason Miller / Chronicle

Before he died in the floodwaters, Allan "Buz" Anderson moves toward two teens who were stranded after abandoning their stalled vehicle

Chet Aden, 17, was in his 1987 Jeep Cherokee with his girlfriend, Ashley Jordan, 16, when he drove into the flooded area past a sign warning that the road was closed, officials said. The teens were swept into trees while trying to wade to safety.

Anderson, with a tether secured to his back, waded into the water to try to reach the teens. Other rescuers held onto the rope as he ventured into the water. A short time later he went under, emerged and went under a second time. The other rescuers quickly pulled him out of the water and began performing CPR.

Almost at the same time a ranger from Findley State Park rescued the teens with a boat.

Chet, shivering and wrapped in a blanket, told a Chronicle-Telegram reporter after his rescue that he had tried to tell the other rescuers the diver was in trouble. He said they may not have heard him yelling, "He needs help now."

"I said, 'Don't pull on the rope, but they didn't hear me,'" he said. Fire Chief Robert Walker said it was not yet known what went wrong or whether any mistakes occurred in the effort to pull Anderson from the water.

"Until we sort this out, I can't answer those questions," Walker said. "All we know is that he wanted to be taken out."

Chet said he could see Anderson and it was obvious he was in trouble. "He grabbed the branch," Chet said. "I kept telling him to hold on. He kept coming up to get air."

Chet said he prayed for the diver after being rescued.

Anderson's death hit hard for Sandy Aden, Chet's mother.

"This is a small town and we know all these EMTs and firemen and it's terrible," said Aden, who runs Cecil's Diner in the village of Wellington. "They are great people."

Sandy Aden said she and her husband lectured Chet.

"He knows what he did was wrong," Aden said. "He's really upset."

"My husband and I are very, very grateful to the diver who wanted to save my son," she said. "I don't know why it happened and what went wrong, but it's terrible."

Her son had already crossed the flooded bridge once that day and apparently thought he could do it again after picking up his girlfriend, who lives on Pitts Road.

Chet said he stayed calm himself for Ashley's sake. He said she had begun crying.

"'They're right here,' I told her. 'They're not going to give up until they get us,'" Chet said.

State Trooper Myron Board said the two teens might have been safe if they had just waited in the vehicle.

He said he hoped people would learn not to take a chance in high water.

“Especially the juveniles,” Board said. “If they see the road closure signs, they’ve got to obey them and not think they can make it.”

The county engineer’s office posted “High Water” or “Road Closed” signs throughout the southern part of the county in flooded areas.

County Emergency Management Director Tom Kelley, who helped close portions of state Route 18 earlier in the day, was shocked at the rising water.

“It’s probably eight or 10 inches over the road,” Kelley said.

The southern part of the county had the most rain Wednesday night and Thursday morning with five inches falling in Rochester while just 2.1 inches fell in Elyria.

Firefighter drowns in Ohio flash flood

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SEVERE_WEATHER?SITE=NCASH&SECTION=US&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

Jun 23,2006 by THOMAS J. SHEERAN Associated Press Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Crews were fanning out across Ohio early Friday to assess damage from a series of storms that flipped airplanes, toppled tractor-trailers and killed a firefighter who tried to rescue two teens from a flash flood.

The slow-moving systems had mostly settled, but they left at least 155,000 people without power late Thursday, and flood and storm watches remained in effect for most of the state.

Near the village of Wellington, about 40 miles southwest of Cleveland, Al Anderson Jr., 47, drowned as he tried to reach the teens, whose Jeep had gotten stuck, authorities said. The teens were rescued by boat.

A tornado touched down around 5:30 p.m. Thursday near Winesburg in northeast Ohio's Holmes County, severely damaging two houses and several barns, said Mark Adams, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Cleveland. The roof of one business was blown a half-mile away, he said.

Intense winds felled trees and knocked out power in the Stark County village of Brewster, Adams said. Weather service staff were expected to examine the scene to verify it was a tornado, he said.

Near Logan in southeast Ohio, nine people, seven of them law enforcement officers, were injured Thursday afternoon when lightning struck a shelter during a charity run, according to the State Highway Patrol.

Ohio University officer Nathan Van Oort was in intensive care at Ohio State University Medical Center in Columbus with critical injuries, according to the patrol and Paige Ludwig, a spokeswoman for the Ohio Special Olympics, the race organizer.

In northeast Ohio, single-engine planes parked on the tarmac at the Allen County Airport were turned upside-down by gusts up to 80 mph, said Brentley Lothamer, a weather service meteorologist in Indiana.

Norwalk, about halfway between Cleveland and Toledo, was one of the hardest-hit areas. Seven inches of rain forced the city's reservoir to overflow and split the city in two. The water nearly covered cars and playground equipment in low-lying areas. Mayor Sue Lesch called the flooding the worst since a dam break in 1969.

Associated Press Writer James Hannah in Dayton contributed to this report.

Ohio Department Mourns Loss of Veteran

[HTTP://WWW.FIREHOUSE.COM/NEWS/10505362/OHIO-DEPARTMENT-MOURNS-LOSS-OF-VETERAN](http://www.firehouse.com/news/10505362/ohio-department-mourns-loss-of-veteran)

JUNE 23, 2006 BETTE PEARCE

WELLINGTON -- Why did Allan "Buz" Anderson die?

The 32 members of the Wellington Fire Department were searching for the answer in seclusion Thursday night while trying to deal with the emotional trauma and grief of losing one of their own earlier in the day.

The 47-year-old Anderson, a veteran swift water rescue technician and diver, died Thursday afternoon while trying to rescue two teenagers clinging to a tree in the swollen waters of a tributary of the Black River, about a half mile north on Pitts Road.

Terry Mazzone of the Lorain-Medina Rural Electric Cooperative stood in for his friend Chief Robert Walker at a news conference Thursday night to talk about the day's events.

"The chief and the whole team are too upset to be here tonight," Mazzone said. "They are together, talking about the events of the day, going over what happened, why it happened; they're grieving and lending each other emotional support."

What the firefighters do know at this point is that Anderson entered the water twice in an attempt to reach the stranded teens and something went terribly wrong on his second attempt.

Anderson first entered the water from an inflatable boat brought in by the Wellington department. He secured a lifeline, but the current proved too swift for the lightweight boat and it, along with Anderson, was brought out of the water.

The department called the Findley State Park, which brought a powerboat to the swollen stream and eventually rescued the teens. But it was too late for Anderson.

Anderson had entered the water a second time, again with a safety line, but disappeared under the water. He emerged briefly before slipping under a second time.

"Water conditions rapidly deteriorated and he was overcome by the water's current," Mazzone said. "At that point, he was pulled to shore by department personnel using his attached safety line."



The exact cause of Anderson's death has yet to be determined. "We're awaiting a coroner's report," Mazzone said.

The teens were in the water for 35 minutes before being rescued by the Findley State Park boat. Mazzone said he didn't know how long Anderson was in the water before he was pulled out.

Firefighters from the area gathered at the firehouse in Wellington on Thursday night to offer their condolences and support.

Volunteers from the Oberlin Fire District remained at the Wellington station, ready to respond to any calls in place of their Wellington comrades.

"They'll be here for as long as they're needed. This has been a bad day for everybody," said Elyria Assistant Fire Chief Robert Dempsey, who was among firefighters from around the area at the Wellington station Thursday night.

Mazzone said Anderson and his wife, Julia, had four children. He did not know their ages or where Anderson was employed.

"Details are still sketchy. I'm sorry I don't know a lot myself at this point. Everyone is still very upset," Mazzone said.

Anderson had been a swift water rescue technician and rescue diver with the Wellington department for four years, but had about 15 years of experience, Mazzone said.

Anderson's death was the first fatality for the small volunteer department in 30 years and only the third in its 125 year history, Mazzone said.

"In fact," he said, "we were planning to celebrate the department's history next month. I don't think we will now."

Obituary

Allan H. Anderson Jr., 47, volunteer firefighter Allan Howard "Buzz" Anderson Jr., 47, died Thursday, June 22, 2006, while trying to rescue two teenagers in flood waters on Pitts Road in Wellington. He was a 1977 graduate of Wellington High School and worked as a press operator for Tape Inc. in Wellington for 17 years. He was a member of the Wellington Eagles #2051 and the Buckeye Area Divers Club. He served as a volunteer firefighter and on the Rescue Dive Team. He enjoyed roller skating, boating, bowling, NASCAR, and spending time with family and friends. Survivors include his wife, Julie (nee Werdebaugh) Anderson; his father, Allan H. Anderson Sr., and his mother, Catherine Anderson, both of Nova; sons Joseph A., Joshua A., Jarred A. and Jacob A., all of Wellington; a grandchild; sisters Sharon McKenzie of Wellington, Caryn Riggs of Columbus, Ellan Seese of Sullivan; and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral Information

Friends may call 1 to 3 and 5 to 8 p.m. Monday in the Wellington High School auditorium.

Services are 1 p.m. Tuesday at the Wellington High School auditorium, with Chaplain Ron Bryant and the Rev. William Hughes officiating. Burial will be in Greenwood Cemetery.

A memorial fund has been set up at Farmers Savings Bank, P.O. Box 438, Wellington, OH 44090. T.G. Cowling Funeral Home, Wellington, is handling arrangements.

Ohio Firefighter LODD-Attempting Rescue

<http://www.firefighterclosecalls.net/news/fullstory/newsid/80294>

Friday, June 23, 2006 It is with regret that we advise you of the LODD of a Wellington (Ohio) Firefighter while rescuing some teenagers stranded in a car. The teens were forced to climb into nearby trees after their SUV became flooded in the high water of the Wellington Reservoir. Area firefighters and a dive team were dispatched to the scene, and a boat was sent out to rescue the teens. However, the boat was caught in some nearby trees. One of the firefighters became

overcome by the current and other firefighters had to pull him from the water. Other firefighters tried to revive him, and he was taken to an area hospital, where he later died. The rescuers were able to eventually reach the teens and bring them to safety. They were not hurt. We will post additional details on our home page as they become available. Our deepest sympathy goes out to all affected by this tragic loss. Take care-BE CAREFUL. BillyG The Secret List 6-22-06
www.FireFighterCloseCalls.com



<https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/firefighter-fatalities/fatalityData/detail?fatalityId=3294>

Allan Anderson, Jr.

Firefighter Anderson was attempting to rescue two teenagers stranded when their SUV became flooded in the high water of the Wellington Reserve. Area firefighters and a dive team were dispatched to the scene and a boat was sent out to rescue the teens. The boat became entangled in nearby trees. Firefighter/rescue diver Anderson was overcome by the current. He was pulled to shore and CPR was performed. He was taken to an area hospital where he later died.

Department Information

Wellington Fire District

202 Kelly Street
Wellington, Ohio 44090
Chief: Robert Walker

Allan Anderson Jr. was honored on the [**National Fallen Firefighters Memorial**](#) in Emmetsburg, Maryland.

Age:	47
Rank:	Firefighter/Rescue Diver
Classification:	Volunteer

Incident Date:	Jun 22, 2006 13:18
Date of Death:	Jun 22, 2006
Cause of Death:	Other
Nature of Death:	Drowning
Activity Type:	Other
Emergency Duty:	Yes
Duty Type:	On-Scene Non-Fire

Cause of firefighter's floodwater death to be investigated

http://www.wkyc.com/news/news_article.aspx?storyid=53886

6/23/2006 Updated:6/24/2006

WELLINGTON -- Details emerged Friday about the death of a firefighter who was trying to rescue two young people stranded by high waters after Thursday's storm.

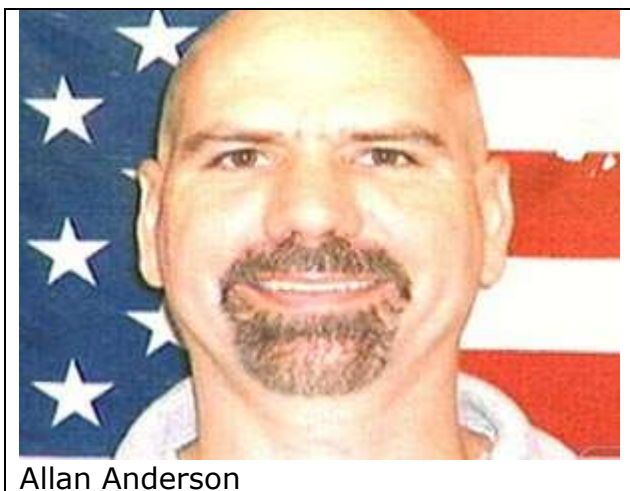
Allan "Buz" Anderson loved the water so much that four years ago he became a volunteer diver for the Wellington Fire Department.

"Yesterday, he was doing what he was qualified to do, prepared to do, and loved doing," Fire Chief Bob Walker said.

But despite hours of swift-water training, the raging currents that turned a country road in Wellington into a river overwhelmed Anderson and his dive team as they tried to rescue two teens caught in the torrent.

The teenagers were later saved.

Scott Shumaker shot amateur video of the dramatic rescue -- and the horrifying death. He said it appeared the team was unable to communicate with each other in the chaos.



Allan Anderson

© 2006

WKYC-TV

Anderson left behind a wife and four children.

An investigation into what went wrong is planned.

Friends, co-workers recall late firefighter as a hero

http://www.morningjournal.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=16831833&BRD=1699&PAG=461&dept_id=46371&rfi=6

06/24/2006 [JENNIFER BRACKEN](#) , Morning Journal Writer

WELLINGTON -- Allan "Buz" Anderson died doing what he loved to do.

Five years ago, he joined the Wellington Fire District dive team to use his hobby and talent as a diver to help rescue people. He died Thursday trying to rescue two teenagers who got caught in flood waters on Pitt Road just north of SR 18.

Anderson, 47, died a hero.

Wellington was quiet yesterday as the remnants of the storm's flood water receded and dried. As city workers moved road closed signs off the side of several roads, the Wellington Fire District mourned the loss of one of its brothers.

"The fire departments have great support in the townships," said Terry Mazzone, spokesman for the Wellington Fire District. "They are like family. Most of the guys aren't here today. Everyone has been mourning in their own way."

Several firefighters and the fire chief met with Anderson's family yesterday to discuss memorial services. Family members outside a relative's home said they were not ready to discuss the tragedy. His wife, Julie, was too distraught to talk about it.

Longtime friend Forrest Mohrman said Anderson loved the water and was "well-versed" in technical diving.

Mohrman and his wife, Barbara, met Anderson roller-skating at Country Skate Land in the mid-1980s, the same place Anderson met Julie. Anderson and Mohrman decided to take up scuba diving, which sparked their love for the water.

They dove in Lake Erie, Lake Huron, and looked for shipwrecks in the Thousand Islands, at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. The last dive they went on was 180 feet into Lake Huron, Mohrman said.

Mohrman wasn't surprised when Anderson, who was trained in Elyria at Underwater Dive Center, decided to take his skill of diving to the next level.

"His father and grandfather were firefighters for the Wellington Fire Department," he said. "He was the kind of guy who would put his life on the line for someone else at any time. He was very, very comfortable being in the water. He did his damndest to save those kids."

Mohrman said Thursday wasn't the first time Anderson had been drug underwater in an accident. Several years ago, the two men were water-skiing side by side when Anderson got caught in Mohrman's rope.

"I dropped my rope and it wrapped around his legs," Mohrman recalled. "It carried him underwater for about 30 yards, but he was able to hold his breath."

Thursday's tragedy presented Anderson with too many other factors -- fatigue from saving several other people from the flood waters and the swift current -- for him to merely hold his breath.

"He was a textbook diver," Mohrman said. "If it was in the book he would do it. He volunteered to go. He would not have gotten in the water if he wasn't sure he could handle it."

Several firefighters at the Wellington Fire District had a difficult time accepting Anderson's death.

"He was a super, super guy and a fun person to be around," said Lt. Troy Pitts, who was at the scene of Thursday's accident. "He may have died a hero, but he's gone. It's tough to think about."

Lt. Bill Brown of the Wellington Fire District said there are not many who are willing to put their lives in harm's way for a complete stranger.

"He's a hero without a doubt," Brown said.

A hero, and, according to Mohrman, a hard worker.

While working with the Wellington Fire District, Anderson continued to work at Tape Inc. full time. Mohrman, who is also the president of the company, recruited Anderson in 1987 to work for his facility.

"He was my right-hand man," Mohrman said. "He was a very skilled worker and will be hard to replace."

Employees at Tape Inc. are working with the Wellington Fire District to create a memorial in honor of Anderson's heroism.

"Everyone at this plant had the utmost respect for him," Mohrman said. "He had a positive attitude about life. He was the kind of guy you couldn't dislike. He always had a smile on his face."

Anderson has four children -- Joe, Gerald, Josh (Julie's from a previous marriage) and Jacob. Julie's first husband was killed in a motorcycle accident on SR 58 when the children were young, Mohrman said. Julie and Allan had Jacob together.

"He was an excellent father," Mohrman said. "He always took the time to stop and smell the roses with his kids. He took the time to be a good father."

Mohrman said Anderson, in addition to being a skilled diver, was an accomplished mechanic and painter. He enjoyed restoring historic cars. Anderson was born and raised in Wellington and graduated from Wellington High School.

Park Ranger David Johnston, who drove the boat that ultimately rescued the two teenagers Thursday, said he respects the work Anderson did to try and save the kids.

"We're all family," he said of all the assisting agencies. "I didn't know him, but he put his life on the line, like we all did. You have to respect that."

Firefighter Dies Rescuing Teens From Water

<http://www.firefightingnews.com/firefighter-dies-rescuing-teens-from-water/>
June 25th, 2006|

At 1:18 pm, on June 22, 2006, the Wellington Fire District responded to a 911 call for a water rescue, in Wellington Township. The department's Dive Rescue members responded to the call, with initial reports of two juveniles, in the water. The initial attempt to save the juveniles, who had attempted to drive their vehicle through the road closed barricades and rushing water, was unsuccessful. During a second attempt to reach the juveniles, Diver Allan "Buz" Anderson, Jr. entered the water, attached to a safety line.



Water conditions rapidly deteriorated and he was overcome by the water current.

At that point, the diver was extricated by rescue personnel using his attached safety line.

While Anderson was being removed, additional personnel successfully reached the two victims and removed them safely from the water.

After Anderson was removed from the water, medical care was initiated by fire and EMS personnel. He was eventually transported by Lifeflight to Cleveland Metro Hospital. Resuscitation efforts at the hospital were unsuccessful.

All "Buz" Anderson was 47 years old. He served on the Wellington Fire District's Dive Rescue team for four years and was a trained swift water rescue diver with fifteen years experience. Buz was married to his wife Julie for 20 years and had four children.

This is the third Line of Duty death for the Wellington Fire District in its 125 year history and first in thirty years. The firefighters and Board of Trustees of the Wellington Fire District extend their sincere sympathy to the Anderson family and want it known that their brother died a hero.

A memorial fund has been established for the family at:

The Farmers Savings Bank
502 South Main Street
PO Box 438
Wellington, Ohio 44090
The Allan "Buz" Anderson, Jr. Memorial Fund, #210621369

Funeral and visitation services are as follows:

Visitation: Monday, June 26, 2006
1pm-3pm, 5pm-8pm
Wellington High School
629 North Main Street
Wellington, Ohio

Full Honor Service: Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Funeral honors man who gave his life for others

ALLAN 'BUZ' ANDERSON - REMEMBERING A HERO

<http://www.chroniclet.com/Daily%20Pages/062806Head6.html>

June 28, 2006 **Bette Pearce The Chronicle-Telegram**

As the town clock struck 3, Allan "Buz" Anderson passed the Wellington fire station at Kelly and Main streets, where he spent four years as a member of the dive team, for the last time.

Anderson drowned Thursday while trying to rescue two teens from a swollen stream.

Officials estimated more than 1,000 people crammed into the Wellington High School gymnasium to accommodate friends, family members and firefighters who came from across the state to pay their respects. The service was closed to the press at the request of the family, authorities said.

Residents came out of their homes and businesses and lined Main Street for several blocks to join in paying tribute to their fallen hero.

The funeral procession, led by Wellington Police and a 1961 vintage fire truck carrying Anderson's casket, included about 90 vehicles from 71 fire and EMS departments, about 40 civilian vehicles, and 10 police and sheriff's cruisers.

The long procession took about a half-hour to travel about two blocks.

"He was absolutely a good person," said Carl Witbeck, who waited on the Town Hall lawn for almost an hour to pay his respects. "I knew his dad real well, and he told me his son did what he loved to do. I just wanted to come down here to pay my respects."

Bill Dunwoodie of New London said he is a retired North Olmsted firefighter. "I've been to funerals for other departments but fortunately never for my own. I just felt I had to come here to pay my respects," Dunwoodie said.

Pat Young and several other women gathered in a cluster of lawn chairs under a shade tree on the Town Hall lawn.

The women said they wanted to pay their respects to Anderson before heading to the Lorain County Fairgrounds, where they were would be assisting at a post-funeral luncheon.



Chuck Hummel/ Chronicle Photos
First Responders from across the state paid final respects for Allan "Bus" Anderson Tuesday at Greenwood Cemetery in Wellington



Chuck Hummel/ Chronicle Photos
A vintage 1961 Seagrave Pumper carries Anderson's casket into Greenwood Cemetery

The catered luncheon was provided by fire department members. The women, members of the Eagles and American Legion auxiliaries, provided the desserts and were to help serve.

"They told us to prepare for 800 to 1,000 people," Young said.

Dave Nash, a former Wellington councilman, said he knew Anderson's parents.

"It's such a terrible, terrible thing. I didn't know Buz, but I know a lot of guys in the department. It's just such a damn shame."

Nash said he also thought about the emotional burden the teens Anderson tried to save must be carrying. The Jeep the pair were riding in was swept away in a heavy current as they attempted to cross an inundated Pitts Road.

The 17-year-old boy and his girlfriend, 16, abandoned the vehicle and held onto tree branches as Anderson attempted to reach them but apparently lost his footing in the swift current and drowned.

"They're just kids. They made a wrong decision. When I was young, I've driven through water when I shouldn't have. Kids that age just don't realize, or always have good judgment. When I think back, I suppose I was just very lucky," Nash said.

Jennifer Rowland brought her two daughters, Chlo'e, 10, and Ava, 7, with her to watch the funeral procession.

"I know the family very well and visited with them Sunday. It's really heart-breaking, but they seem to be doing well — as well as they can — and they're not holding anyone responsible for what happened," Rowland said. "I'm sure those kids never realized when they started through that water that this is the way it would end."

Rowland said she was concerned the incident would be harder for the teens to deal with as they grow older.

"They have a lifetime to go through, and as they get older, this will probably burn them even more," she said.

But Anderson above all others would have forgiven the children for their lapse in judgment, she said.

"He obviously had a very big heart for other people to do what he did."

State report finds several flaws in fatal rescue try

<http://www.chroniclet.com/news/2007/06/14/State-report-finds-several-flaws-in-fatal-rescue-try.html>

June 14, 2007 Cindy Leise

WELLINGTON TWP. — The Wellington Fire Department should have used an inflatable boat to rescue two teens clinging to trees in the swollen Black River last June rather than allowing rescue diver Allan "Buz" Anderson Jr. to enter the raging water, a report by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources concluded. Anderson, 47, attached by a lifeline, drowned on his second attempt to reach the two teens, who were stranded after abandoning their SUV on flooded Pitts Road.

James T. Gorman, an ODNR investigator called the situation: "A dangerous site taken to the extreme."

"The last thing that any rescuer should want to do; whether a fast water rescuer, pool or beach lifeguard, or a diver, is to go into the water unless nothing else is available," Gorman wrote. "I still can't believe that anyone thought they could swim against that current that day.

"I can only surmise that Al went back to a technique that he felt he knew best, and had the most experience with; get in the water."

ODNR's Division of Watercraft generally investigates fatalities and critical incidents in which boats are involved. In this case, the report was prepared at the request of Wellington Fire Chief Robert Walker, who provided a copy to The Chronicle.

Walker said Anderson died a hero, and he trusted him on that day to make the right decision about entering the water.

"He was trying to save two children's lives," Walker said Wednesday. "He did the best job he could."

Gorman's 26-page report criticized several decisions made by department personnel that day.

For example, he said firefighters were hampered by the lack of a motor for their inflatable raft, but they could have sent Anderson, the most experienced rescuer, over to the teens by tethering the boat and turning it loose in the water.

"I don't know why the boat rescue wasn't tried first; even if the motor wasn't running," Gorman's report stated.

Walker said the motor of the department's boat was damaged shortly before the flood, and no boat with a motor was available until a park ranger from Findley State Park arrived. Anderson already was in the water at that time, and the two Wellington firefighters who hopped into that boat and tried to rescue the teens ended up on a "hair-raising ride," Gorman wrote.

They brought the boat back to shore, and the ranger successfully rescued the teens in an effort that was “nothing short of miraculous,” Gorman wrote.

The report also said that the fire department didn’t have any backup plans, noting that firefighters had not figured out what they would do if the ranger’s boat had capsized, and there were no life preservers in the boat for the teens to put on for the ride back across the water.

Anderson was in the water during the first failed boat rescue and the second successful pass. But sometime between the two, the two teens — Chet Aden and Ashley Jordan — started yelling, telling firefighters that Anderson was in trouble, according to the report.

Gorman’s report also said that the firefighters didn’t use the right equipment — pulleys and other devices — to bring Anderson back to shore. He was tethered around a utility pole, and that in itself posed a danger because had the pole broken, Anderson would have been swept away, he said.

“The amount of friction around the pole had to be tremendous,” Gorman wrote.

Walker said the fire department has used the criticism from the report to improve.

Since Anderson’s death, the fire department has established a mutual aid pact with the Elyria water rescue team, it has purchased additional equipment and has a second boat. Also, 10 firefighters — as compared with the previous four — are trained for water rescues.

The department also has assigned Lt. Troy Pitts to prepare assessments of likely flood sites so firefighters will know what they are in for when they report to a rescue call, he said.

In addition, permanent signs, which are folded down when not needed, warn motorists of flooding on Pitts Road, Hawley and Cemetery roads and Jones Road, east of state Route 58. Devices showing the water levels have been installed on Pitts and Jones roads, the chief said.

Walker said despite the criticism, Gorman’s report did back up some of the department’s efforts on the day Anderson died.

Gorman wrote that firefighters acted correctly when they first tried to rescue the teens using “throw bags” with 60 to 70 feet of line. When the lines didn’t reach the teens, the rescuers’ next effort was to secure themselves to shore with lines manned by other rescue workers in hopes of getting them close enough for the throw bags to reach the teens.

But dense foliage and the turbulent water forced them back without ever reaching the teens. That's when Anderson suited up to enter the water.

Carrying a rescue board and two lifejackets, Anderson lost his footing when he got to the road where he encountered "much more water force in a shallower area," according to the report.

A rescue line was attached to the left side of his chest on a sliding device, which was not the optimal arrangement, Gorman wrote.

"Many people in water rescue insist the line be attached to the back ONLY," Gorman's report stated. "This position allows the rescuer to face downstream and allows any water to pass over the back of the head rather than onto the face."

Gorman also said there were some unexplained issues involving Anderson's death, including a tear in the chest area of his life jacket, which only would have occurred if he'd been pulled in a feet-first position. None of the video shot of the firefighters' efforts that day show Anderson being pulled in that manner, Gorman wrote.

Report Details Ohio Firefighter's Drowning

[HTTP://WWW.FIREHOUSE.COM/NEWS/10496976/REPORT-DETAILS-OHIO-FIREFIGHTERS-DROWNING](http://www.firehouse.com/news/10496976/report-details-ohio-firefighters-drowning)

JUN 15, 2007 BY NEWSNET5.COM

WELLINGTON, Ohio --

A firefighter who drowned in a swollen river while trying to reach two stranded teenagers should not have attempted the rescue without a boat, a state investigator determined.

A new report was released this week concerning the drowning of a Lorain County firefighter who was trying to rescue the teens from raging waters last summer.

The report said the Wellington Fire Department should have used an inflatable boat to rescue the two teens from the floodwaters rather than allowing rescue diver Al "Buz" Anderson Jr. to enter the water.

Anderson, who was attached to a lifeline, drowned last year while trying to reach the teens.

Anderson, 47, a volunteer firefighter and a certified swift-water rescuer, was overcome by the current of the Black River. A park ranger in a boat saved the teens, who were stranded last June after abandoning their sport utility vehicle on a flooded road.

The report was done by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

It said the department did not have plans for a water rescue in that area of Wellington Township. Initial rescuers were overconfident in their abilities to handle the current and should not have gone into the water without backup, the report said.

Firefighters were hampered by their inflatable raft's lack of a motor, but they could have tethered the boat while it was in the water, the report said.

"I don't know why the boat rescue wasn't tried first," investigator James Gorman wrote in the report, which said rescuers should have entered the water without a boat only as a last resort.

The motor on the department's boat was damaged shortly before the river flooded, Wellington fire Chief Bob Walker said.

"It's not an excuse, but a fact," he said. "We have learned from this tragedy."

Walker asked the state to investigate the rescue attempt. The department will use the report to improve procedures, including training more firefighters in swift-water rescues and signing a mutual-aid agreement with the city of Elyria for water rescues, he said.

The Bryan Times Newspaper

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=799&dat=20070615&id=1YNaAAAIBAJ&sjid=yEkDAAAIBAJ&pg=4224,4550646&hl=en>

June 15, 2007

Rescue deemed dangerous

WELLINGTON, Ohio (AP) — A firefighter who drowned in a swollen river while trying to reach two stranded teenagers should not have attempted the rescue without a boat, a state investigator determined.

Instead of allowing Al "Buz" Anderson Jr. to enter the water connected to a safety line, rescuers should have used an inflatable boat to try to reach the teenagers who were clinging to trees, said James Gorman, an investigator for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Anderson, 47, a volunteer firefighter and a certified swift-water rescuer, was overcome by the current of the Black River. A park ranger in a boat saved the teens, who were stranded last

June after abandoning their sport utility vehicle on a flooded road.

Gorman's report said the department did not have plans for a water rescue in that area of Wellington Township, about 40 miles southwest of Cleveland. Initial rescuers were overconfident in their abilities to handle the current and should not have gone into the water without backup, the report said.

Firefighters were hampered by their inflatable raft's lack of a motor, but they could have tethered the boat while it was in the water, the report said.

The motor on the department's boat was damaged shortly before the river flooded, Wellington fire Chief Bob Walker said.

Investigators: Drowned Firefighter Shouldn't Have Attempted Dangerous Rescue

<http://www.cleveland19.com/story/6663975/investigators-drowned-firefighter-shouldnt-have-attempted-dangerous-rescue>

WELLINGTON, Ohio (AP) - A firefighter who drowned in a swollen river while trying to reach two stranded teenagers should not have attempted the rescue without a boat, a state investigator determined.

Instead of allowing Al "Buz" Anderson Jr. to enter the water connected to a safety line, rescuers should have used an inflatable boat to try to reach the teenagers who were clinging to trees, said James Gorman, an investigator for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Anderson, 47, a volunteer firefighter and a certified swift-water rescuer, was overcome by the current of the Black River. A park ranger in a boat saved the teens, who were stranded last June after abandoning their sport utility vehicle on a flooded road.

Gorman's report said the department did not have plans for a water rescue in that area of Wellington Township, about 40 miles southwest of Cleveland. Initial rescuers were overconfident in their abilities to handle the current and should not have gone into the water without backup, the report said.

Firefighters were hampered by their inflatable raft's lack of a motor, but they could have tethered the boat while it was in the water, the report said.

"I don't know why the boat rescue wasn't tried first," Gorman wrote in the report, which said rescuers should have entered the water without a boat only as a last resort.

The motor on the department's boat was damaged shortly before the river flooded, Wellington fire Chief Bob Walker said.

"It's not an excuse, but a fact," he said. "We have learned from this tragedy."

Walker asked the state to investigate the rescue attempt. The department will use the report to improve procedures, including training more firefighters in swift-water rescues and signing a mutual-aid agreement with the city of Elyria for water rescues, he said.

Report Details Ohio Firefighter's Drowning

<http://cms.firehouse.com/content/article/article.jsp?id=55110§ionId=46>
06-15-2007 Story by [newsnet5.com](http://www.newsnet5.com)

WELLINGTON, Ohio – A firefighter who drowned in a swollen river while trying to reach two stranded teenagers should not have attempted the rescue without a boat, a state investigator determined.

A new report was released this week concerning the drowning of a Lorain County firefighter who was trying to rescue the teens from raging waters last summer.

The report said the Wellington Fire Department should have used an inflatable boat to rescue the two teens from the floodwaters rather than allowing rescue diver Al "Buz" Anderson Jr. to enter the water.

Anderson, who was attached to a lifeline, drowned last year while trying to reach the teens.

Anderson, 47, a volunteer firefighter and a certified swift-water rescuer, was overcome by the current of the Black River. A park ranger in a boat saved the teens, who were stranded last June after abandoning their sport utility vehicle on a flooded road.

The report was done by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

It said the department did not have plans for a water rescue in that area of Wellington Township. Initial rescuers were overconfident in their abilities to handle the current and should not have gone into the water without backup, the report said.

Firefighters were hampered by their inflatable raft's lack of a motor, but they could have tethered the boat while it was in the water, the report said. "I don't know why the boat rescue wasn't tried first," investigator James Gorman wrote in the report, which said rescuers should have entered the water without a boat only as a last resort.

The motor on the department's boat was damaged shortly before the river flooded, Wellington fire Chief Bob Walker said. "It's not an excuse, but a fact," he said. "We have learned from this tragedy."

Walker asked the state to investigate the rescue attempt. The department will use the report to improve procedures, including training more firefighters in swift-water rescues and signing a mutual-aid agreement with the city of Elyria for water rescues, he said.

Flooded roads dangerous for drivers; Wellington fire chief remembers first responder's death

<http://www.newsnet5.com/news/local-news/oh-lorain/flooded-roads-dangerous-for-drivers-wellington-fire-chief-remembers-first-responders-death>

WELLINGTON, Ohio - Heavy rain throughout northeast Ohio is prompting first responders to remind motorists not to drive through water while a state senator is attempting to pass a law that would fine careless drivers for venturing through flooded areas.

"Turn around and find another route," said Wellington Fire Chief Mike Weatherbee.

It's a warning that always hits close to home for Elyria resident Julie Farley.

"He was a fun-loving guy. He would help anyone and he just enjoyed life," said Farley, who spoke fondly about her husband Allan "Buz" Anderson. Anderson was also a Wellington firefighter and diver.

The 47-year-old's life was cut short seven years ago when he responded to a call that two teens were stranded on a flooded stretch of Pitts Road between Peck Wadsworth and Route 18 in Wellington.

"They got swept away, and they were clinging to things so they got called out to rescue them," Farley said.

When Anderson arrived, the teens were holding onto a tree with four feet of water below them.

But no one realized just how bad the conditions were in the area. The force of the water was so powerful that it pulled Anderson under and he drowned. The teens survived.

But under Ohio Sen. Tim Schaffer's (R-Lancaster) new bill, drivers would have to pay up if they ignore warning signs, pull into flooded roadways and emergency responders have to rescue them. The Senator introduced the bill in April. It had its first hearing before the Ohio Senate's Transportation Committee earlier this month.

"People are fooled by the forces of water and the impact it has on vehicles," Weatherbee said.

What angers Weatherbee the most is that his friend and colleague may still be here today had the teens just turned around and not ventured through the water.

"People, when they see water moving, they don't understand how fast the water is moving," he added.

What's also dangerous is what's underneath the water.

"The road could be washed away," he said.

Farley has since remarried, but the pain of losing her husband is still raw.

"[The teens] made a wrong decision," she said.

But she said it wasn't a struggle to forgive the two because Anderson would have easily done the same.

Emotions shouldn't drive Ohio legislation

<http://watchdog.org/124472/emotion-ohio-legislation/>

January 20, 2014 By Maggie Thurber | for Ohio Watchdog



FLOOD RESCUE: An Ohio bill outlawing driving into a flooded area has a twist: a monetary sanction that would go to the rescuer of trapped motorists.

On June 22, 2006, **Allen Anderson Jr.**, a veteran swift water rescue technician with the **Wellington Fire District**, attempted to rescue two kids clinging to a tree in "violent, rushing, swift water" that had flowed over a road from a tributary of the **Black River**.

During his second attempt, Anderson indicated he was in distress and firefighters assisted him to shore. He was unresponsive and later declared dead. The teens were rescued by others.

The life of rescue personnel is always one of risk, but does such a tragedy, too often repeated, require a new law?

Apparently so, according to proponent testimony this week in the **Ohio House**.

Senate Bill 106 would prohibit the operation of a motor vehicle on any location that is temporarily covered by a rise in water level. It would also impose a sanction of up to \$2,000 for the cost of the rescue of any person who violates the law — and that sanction would be paid to the person's rescuer.

Wellington Fire Chief **Glenn Wetherbee** testified at the hearing.

"If passed, Senate Bill 106 will act as a deterrent for motorists choosing to ignore road closed signage," he said. "Choosing to ignore high water and road closure signs should also be viewed as willful or wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property."

"If passed, Senate Bill 106 will help comfort the family of our fallen Firefighter Allan 'Buz' Anderson Jr. and ensure them that the efforts and sacrifice he made for his community was not done so in vain," Wetherbee added.

It's a nice gesture, but can \$2,000 really comfort a family who has lost a loved one? Will money really tell a community that a firefighter's efforts and sacrifice were not in vain?

Common sense should tell a motorist that driving on a flooded road is a really bad idea.

True, common sense seems to be lacking these days, but does anyone think a motorist will venture onto a flooded road expecting to be carried away? Usually, it's because they didn't see the danger, or thought the water wasn't as high as it turned out to be.

So maybe a law prohibiting someone from driving through high water or imposing a fine for ignoring road closure signs is needed.

But should a rescuer be reimbursed for the cost of the rescue?

The definition of a rescuer includes "a state agency, political subdivision, firefighting agency, private fire company, or emergency medical service organization," so it's not like the money is going to a single person. These entities already receive funding for doing their job; that's what tax dollars pay for.

If a rescuer is to be paid for a flooded-street rescue, what about someone who is rescued from a fire? Or a car accident? Or from jumping off a bridge? What about acts of stupidity?

Where does it stop? Should every emergency response result in a fee for the service to the individuals receiving assistance?

At what point does a rescue become a personal thing as opposed to a benefit your tax dollars cover because it is a service needed in a community?

And what about civil suits? Does the creation of a statutory monetary sanction mean the family of a rescuer cannot sue an individual who needed to be rescued, especially when the need for rescue was based upon an action that probably never should have occurred?

These are the questions that should have been asked at the hearing, but weren't. What politician is going to risk sounding so heartless as to use logic and reason when a fire chief is testifying about the death of one of his own?

The bill will probably pass. The [Senate](#) approved it unanimously.

And that's too bad. Legislation should be based upon logic and reason actual need — not emotions.

Five safety forces heroes 'gone but not forgotten' in Wellington ceremony

<http://thewellingtonenterprise.com/news/2793/five-safety-forces-heroes-gone-but-not-forgotten-in-wellington-ceremony>

12-21-2015 BY **Catherine Gabe / WELLINGTON ENTERPRISE**



Cathy and Allan Anderson stand in front of the Wellington Safety Forces Memorial, which bears the name of their son, who died June 22, 2006, in the line of duty.



Wellington police march to place a memorial wreath.



**A moment of silence is observed after a memorial wreath is placed at the Wellington Safety Forces memorial, honoring those fallen in the line of duty.
Photos by Catherine Gabe | Wellington Enterprise**

As the sun set last Wednesday, a solemn and short ceremony took place to remember Wellington heroes who died in the line of duty.

"They are gone but not forgotten," said police chief Tim Barfield after the ceremony.

Standing quietly to the side were Allan and Cathy Anderson.

"We come here whenever there is anything to do with it," said Cathy, whose son Allan Jr., a Wellington firefighter, drowned while rescuing two teenagers June 22, 2006.

A five-inch rainfall created flash flood conditions on a branch of the Black River when the teens got into high water after having driven around a road closure sign.

Anderson was an experienced diver with swift water experience.

"It's very touching and brings back a lot of memories," said Cathy. "I'm glad Wellington takes time to honor the fallen. Today people take so many lives for granted and Wellington has so many special heroes."

"We're proud of all of 'em," her husband Allan, a retired Wellington firefighter said.

"We need to honor all the fallen, not just my son. They all deserve it."



"Gone but not forgotten" is how fallen members of Wellington safety forces were remembered in a special ceremony last Wednesday night.



Cathy and Allan Anderson Sr. say the holidays are an especially tough time of year as they remember their son, Allan Jr., who died rescuing others.

The Rev. Brian Burke of the First Congregational United Church of Christ offered a prayer and said safety forces provide a tremendous service, much like military, and so should be honored when they die in the line of duty.

"This is important stuff," Barfield said. "We never want to forget because people gave their lives to defend this town. At Christmas time you want to remember the families and let them know we have never forgotten them."

Fire chief Mike Wetherbee said holidays are supposed to be happy, but unfortunate circumstances come along.

"We have shared in the grief with them...it definitely was like losing part of the family," he said, remembering Anderson's death.

It was just last December that Ohio Gov. John Kasich signed the Allan Anderson Jr. law into effect, making harsher penalties for going around "Road Closed" signs and getting stranded in high water.

"It's a good time to let them know we think of them regardless of the time of year," Wetherbee said.