

07-13-2014 Sioux Falls SD – Jeffery A Thumma – Vol PSD – Training – *Maybe Heart*

Training Turns Into Water Rescue At Family Park

<http://www.keloland.com/news/article/news/training-turns-into-water-rescue-at-family-park>

July 11, 2014 Brady Mallory

Sioux Falls, SD * A Minnehaha County volunteer emergency diver is in the hospital after underwater training turned into a rescue.

Someone reported a drowning Thursday evening at Family Park, on the northwest side of Sioux Falls, just before 8 p.m. Though nobody technically drowned, the Minnehaha County Emergency Manager says it was a serious situation.

The volunteer diver, a man who is 43, is listed in stable condition and is sedated.

Eleven divers with the Minnehaha County Dive team and Sioux Falls Fire Rescue were in the middle of rescue training with dummies in the water at Family Park.



Jeffrey A. Thumma

"One of them developed a, some sort of problem," Minnehaha County Emergency Manager Lynn DeYoung said.

DeYoung said the diver was underwater for about two minutes before the others found and rescued him. At this point, investigators don't know what happened or if the man was without oxygen at any time. However, the man, who was tethered to the other divers, pulled on the rope four times to signal he was in trouble.

"He also made a comment over our, we have a com system, which is a direct link from the surface to the diver, and he indicated he had some difficulty," DeYoung said.

When they brought him to the surface, he was unresponsive. The Sioux Falls Police Department is investigating and checking his equipment for any clues.

"Could've been anything wide-ranging from, as you said, a medical condition to equipment malfunction to being hung up on a stump. All of those are probabilities," DeYoung said.

DeYoung has a simple request.

"We would just ask you that you keep your thoughts in for this person as there are many having a difficult time with this," DeYoung said.

The man has been with this group for four years, and DeYoung says he's an experienced diver.

"This person is a volunteer, and it is difficult for the, excuse me, the other volunteers that are here and the staff," DeYoung said.

DeYoung isn't releasing the diver's name because he is still notifying family. The water plays a big role in why this situation is a bit vague right now. Divers described it as pitch black and also say there is a lot of debris down there.

DeYoung did not say what type of injuries this man has or give any details on his recovery.

Diver Rescued During Training Exercise

<http://www.keloland.com/news/article/news/diver-rescued-during-training-exercise>

July 11, 2014 Brady Mallory reports:



Sioux Falls, SD * Minnehaha County Emergency Management officials said a diver is in the hospital after being pulled from the water on Thursday.

The 43-year-old man is in stable condition, but will be sedated for the next 24 hours. Emergency Manager Lynn DeYoung said the volunteer was part of a training exercise with a team of 11 divers.

They were practicing rescues with dummies at Family Park. Though DeYoung would not go into detail about what exactly happened, he said the diver, "developed some sort of problem," while under water. The diver tugged on the rope, letting the others know something was wrong. DeYoung said he was under water for about two minutes, however he did not say if he was without oxygen. Right now they are trying to figure out what exactly happened.

DeYoung said the diver's family is still being notified, so his name is not being released. We will have more details tonight on KELOLAND News.

Police investigate diving incident at Family Park

<http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/crime/2014/07/11/police-investigate-diving-incident-family-park/12548537/>

July 11, 2014 Mark Walker

A training exercise for the Minnehaha County diver team ended with a water rescue Thursday night when one of its members became trapped underwater.

The 43-year-old man informed his team of 11 divers that he was having some trouble at 7:57 p.m. by tugging on the safety rope four-times.

"He also made a comment over our com system and indicated there were some difficulties," said Lynn DeYoung, Minnehaha County emergency manager.

An emergency rescue diver standing on the shore followed the man's safety rope and located him in the "pitch-black," debris-filled waters of Family Park and loaded him into a boat. The depth of the man's dive is unknown at this time.



He was unresponsive, DeYoung said, so CPR was started until an ambulance arrived.

The diver remained in a Sioux Falls hospital Friday. DeYoung said he could not speak on the diver's condition.

"A diving incident of this magnitude hasn't happen in the 40 years Minnehaha County has maintained a dive and rescue team," DeYoung said.

The diver, whose name is not being released, has been with the Minnehaha County dive team since September 2010.

About three times a month, year-round, members of the dive team travel across the region for training. DeYoung said he didn't know if the team had ever trained at Family Park and said that night the divers described the water as "pitch-black."

"You add in complete darkness and things that are not there, then it can cause a difficult situation," DeYoung said.

All of the man's diving equipment was turned over to the Sioux Falls Police Department, which is investigating the cause of the incident, DeYoung said. A review of all the diving equipment and procedures will take place.

"This person is a volunteer, and it is difficult for the other volunteers that are here and the staff," a teary-eyed DeYoung said, "so we ask that you keep your thoughts and prayers with this person."

Sioux Falls diver dies

<http://www.1490korn.com/blog.aspx?page=10&Month=7&year=2014>

Monday, July 14, 2014

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a Sioux Falls diver injured in a training exercise has died.

43-year-old Jeff Alan Thumma died Sunday night from injuries sustained during a diving drill at Family Park. Thumma was a volunteer with the Minnehaha County Dive Team.

Eleven divers with the Minnehaha County Dive team and Sioux Falls Fire Rescue were rescue training with dummies in the water at Family Park on Thursday. Officials say Thumma pulled on a rope four times to indicate he was experiencing a problem.

Thumma was underwater for about two minutes before he was found.

Sioux Falls Police are investigating the incident.

UPDATE: Diver Has Passed From Injuries Sustained in Thursday Accident

<http://b1027.com/update-diver-has-passed-from-injuries-sustained-in-thursday-accident/>
July 14, 2014 By [Results Radio Townsquare Media](#)

UPDATE: A volunteer member of the Minnehaha County Dive Team has passed away from injuries sustained in a training accident at Family Park in Sioux Falls Thursday evening.

The emergency call came in just before 8:00 pm that a diver went in the lake and didn't come back up. He was under water for approximately two minutes.



Minnehaha County Emergency Manager Lynn DeYoung says 43-year-old Jeff Alan Thumma of Sioux Falls died Sunday night. DeYoung says Thumma was a volunteer with the Emergency Management dive team.

DeYoung says Thumma lived in Sioux Falls but his parents live in the Oklahoma City area.

Family Park is located near 12th Street and Tea Ellis Road in western Sioux Falls. Sioux Falls Police are investigating the incident.

Gene Hetland Contributed to This Report

Diver Dies After Training Incident On Thursday

http://unoecumenical3.rssing.com/chan-3485825/all_p456.html

07/14/14

The diver who had to be rescued from Family Park last week has died. Authorities say Jeff Alan Thumma of Sioux Falls died in a hospital just before midnight Sunday night.

Officials say his family in Sioux Falls and Oklahoma City are now planning a funeral.

Ever since they began 40 years ago, the Minnehaha County Emergency Management Dive Team has never had an incident like the one they dealt with Thursday night. Emergency Manager Lynn DeYoung said, we never had an injury of this magnitude, obviously in the environment that they're in there's cuts, scrapes and those types of things but nothing resulting in even a hospitalization. Late Sunday, DeYoung says they lost one of their own.

DeYoung said, It's tough for those guys, a roller coaster full of emotions that comes and goes. On Thursday night, officials say while underwater Thumma pulled on his safety rope four times. A diver on shore followed that safety rope and got to him in less than two minutes. Thumma was unresponsive when he was pulled from the water.

CPR was performed until an ambulance arrived. He was taken to the Avera Heart Hospital in Sioux Falls and later died. Officials say they still don't know what went wrong. Thumma was an experienced diver. Combined with his willingness to help the community, they say he was the crème of the crop.

DeYoung said, It's a tragic event, both for us, the community and the family and it doesn't happen, it shouldn't happen but there are accidents and we are going to get down and figure out what happened

Minnehaha County Diver Remembered

<http://www.keloland.com/news/article/news/minnehaha-county-diver-remembered>

July 14, 2014 Don Jorgensen

Sioux Falls, SD

The member of the Minnehaha County Dive Team who was pulled from the waters of Family Park in Sioux Falls has died. 43-year-old Jeff Thumma had to be rescued during a training exercise last Thursday. While investigators are still trying to figure out what went wrong, the diving community is taking the news especially hard.

Officials say Thumma pulled on the rope four times during the training Thursday signaling there was a problem, but authorities are still trying to figure out what exactly went wrong.

Doug Brockhouse, a senior leader for the team, was also diving that day. He can't talk about the investigation, but does say Thumma was a quiet man who was well liked.

"It's a tragic situation; Jeff was a really loved member of the team. Jeff was always someone we could depend on," Brockhouse said.

The Minnehaha County Emergency Management Dive Team consists of 12 certified divers who train monthly to stay proficient for river and lake rescues.

"Many of our divers start out as recreational divers and once they get 20, 30, or 40 dives under their belt, which doesn't sound like a lot, but it is because of the complexity, we then look at those individuals that are in our community. They are the good ones, the cream of the crop," Minnehaha County Emergency Manager Lynn DeYoung said.

Though they are all volunteers, Thumma spent a lot of time honing his diving skills.

"He probably had 150 to 300 dives. That was one of the most junior people we had on board, but he had a lot of diver experience," Brockhouse said.

Many in the diving community are struggling with the loss of a friend and colleague who volunteered his time to help others.

"It's a tragic event both for us and the community and family. It doesn't happen, it shouldn't happen, but there are accidents and we are going to get down and figure out what happened," DeYoung said.

Officials hunt for answers after diver dies

<http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/crime/2014/07/14/dive-team-member-dies/12628819/>

July 15, 2014 David Montgomery

It happened in seconds.

Jeff Thumma, training underneath a Sioux Falls lake, told members of Minnehaha County dive team waiting at the surface that he had a problem. Then he tugged on his tether line, four sharp tugs — the sign of an emergency.

But even as an extra diver plunged in to retrieve Thumma, the stream of bubbles stopped rising to the surface from where he floated, 15 feet below the surface.

"That means he's not breathing," said Pete Gannon, CEO of Dive Rescue International, a company that trains around 60 percent of public safety dive teams in the U.S.

It took just two minutes for the rescue diver to reach Thumma and get him to the surface — a "quite quick" time, Gannon said — but it was too late. After spending several days on life support, Thumma died Sunday evening in Sioux Falls.

Exactly how Thumma, a trained diver with more than 150 dives on his track record, came to die in a Thursday training accident may not be known for several weeks. But the 43-year-old Citibank employee and dive team volunteer's death has resonated both here in Sioux Falls and around the country.

"Any time you lose somebody that you're that close with, it's tough," said Doug Brockhouse, who served with Thumma on the county's dive team. "When you're down there diving, you put your life in the other divers' hands. An awful lot of trust goes on down there, and when you lose one of those people, that hurts."

Thumma had made many friends on the dive team with his intelligence and passion.



"Jeff was a very energetic young man," Brockhouse said. "He brought a lot of smiles to people's faces on our dive team."

Brockhouse said Thumma knew how to speak several languages and was always observing more experienced members of the dive team to learn from what they did — though he was hardly a novice himself.

"He was always willing to go grab the extra piece of equipment and make sure you had what you need," Brockhouse said.

Thumma had joined the dive team in 2010 and racked up around 40 dives with the volunteer squad in the past four years.

None of those dives were in the Family Park lake where Thumma's accident occurred, but most were in similar situations — cold water with little or no visibility.

"The majority of the time you can't see anything," Gannon said, about rescue diving in general. "It's a pleasure if you can see two feet."

In Thursday's exercise, dive team members were practicing a standard search pattern. Thumma floated about 15 feet down, at the center of a search area. Another dive team member, tied to Thumma with a rope, swam in slowly expanding circles around him, searching the bottom.

Thumma had been under water for about 12 minutes before running into trouble. He dove with a full oxygen tank that should have lasted an hour and a half at his depth.

He was linked to the surface with the tether, and with a comm unit wired into his suit. He used that to alert the surface shortly before his emergency pulls on the rope.

When the rescue diver got Thumma to the surface, he was unresponsive, and was rushed to the hospital.

Officials kept Thumma's identity and condition secret for the next several days, as he lay on life support and his family rushed to Sioux Falls.

"The family is from out of town. We just needed an opportunity to talk to them and work that over," said Lynn DeYoung, Minnehaha County's emergency manager.

"Based on their request, we held off (on releasing Thumma's name) until after they knew what the final outcome would be."

Thumma's death was the first in the four-decade history of Minnehaha County's dive team, and it's still unclear what happened.

Nationally, many of the deaths and near-deaths associated with public safety dive teams are caused by medical issues.

"It's not one thing. It's many things," said Gannon. "Sometimes lack of training. Sometimes diver error. Sometimes entanglement. And a lot of times lately it's medical. (A diver) has a heart attack under water, or a seizure under water." DeYoung said the dive team can't rule anything out yet.

"Like a lot of accidents, there's a lot of small things that by themselves wouldn't cause a problem, but you add three or four things together and it may cause a problem," he said.

One reason medical issues may be the biggest cause of death for dive teams nationwide is because training — like the one Minnehaha County's team was doing last week — have reduced other, more preventable accidents.

"Unfortunately, most divers die in training, because that's probably what we do the most of," Gannon said. "It's dangerous training. There's no way to not do it. Lack of training also kills divers."

In a typical year, two to three public safety divers will die every year in diving accidents, Gannon said. There's another seven to 10 "near-misses."

It's not a coincidence, though, that medical issues sometimes emerge when divers are deep under water.

"The type of diving we do is really stressful," Gannon said. "That's why there's medical problems. Guy's heart rate gets going high, his blood pressure gets going

high. There's a lot of things that can happen. And most of the time, we're out there looking for a body. That adds to the stress, too."

DeYoung said the Minnehaha County dive team doesn't require physicals from its members.

"We simply ask them are they in good physical condition. They check that off," he said. "Diving's a pretty demanding thing. We know if they're certified already to dive that they most likely passed that with their physicians already."

The Sioux Falls Police Department is leading the investigation of Thumma's death. But it will likely require analysis of Thumma's blood to determine exactly how and why he died.

"There's certain things to look for that would tell us if it's a diving injury or if it's a medical problem," Gannon said. "There's not much we can do at this point until we know the autopsy."

Now the Minnehaha County dive team has to deal with the aftermath of their friend and colleague's death.

"It's not something that's going to go away quickly for that team," Gannon said. "That team's going to hurt for a long time."

Brockhouse said the team will likely ease back into the water — but knows they need to stay ready if an emergency happens.

"We'll get the entire team back, and we'll pool dive, and essentially do some mental checkoffs about pool diving," Brockhouse said. "(Then) we'll be back in the water."

Jeffrey Thumma

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/argusleader/obituary.aspx?pid=171739967>

1971 - 2014 Obituary [Condolences Flowers](#)

Jeffrey A. Thumma, 43, died Sunday, July 13, 2014 at the Avera Heart Hospital from medical complications following a dive training incident in Sioux Falls, SD. Memorial Services will be held at 1:00 pm Friday, July 18, 2014 at Central Baptist Church, 3102 W. Ralph Rogers Road.

Jeffrey Alan Thumma, son of Gregory and Carol (Phillips) Thumma, was born January 16, 1971, at Plattsburg Air Force Base in Plattsburg, NY. Jeff grew up in a military family, they moved to several localities including Arizona, The United Kingdom, and North Dakota. He attained his Eagle Scout Award in 1988.



Jeff graduated from Minot (ND) High School in 1989. He continued his education graduating from Minot State College in 1993. He moved to Sioux Falls, SD in 1995.

He attended North American Baptist Seminary where he earned his Master's in Divinity. He interned in a Chaplaincy program and assisted several churches in the area, mainly in Beresford, SD. He concurrently had begun working with CitiBank in the Student Loan division, moved into Fraud Protection, and then Credit Operations where he has worked since.

In 2007, he worked part-time at the YMCA teaching children swimming lessons from beginners to advance swimming skills. In 2010, Jeff applied to the Minnehaha County Emergency Management Dive Team. This group trains rigorously in many different diving situations. Jeff was very proud to be a member of this elite team, having over 150 dives to his record.

Jeff felt education was important and was a lifelong learner. He was currently taking classes for Intelligence Studies with the American Military University. He also was fluent in five languages.

He had attended Central Baptist Church, and belonged to several bible study classes and singles groups. Jeff was well versed in the Old Testament of the Bible. While in Seminary he had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land.

Grateful for having shared his life are his parents, Greg and Carol Thumma, Choctaw, OK; a brother, Corey Thumma, Olathe, KS; two grandmothers, Laura Lee Thumma, Tipton, IA, and Ardis Phillips, Edina, MN; and a host of other relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his three grandfathers, Glenn Thumma, Donald Phillips, and Jack Phillips.

Memorials may take the form of donation to the Minnehaha County Emergency Management/Dive Team, 608 Sigler Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104.

Heart condition could have contributed to diver's death

<http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/crime/2014/09/17/heart-condition-contributed-divers-death/15797509/>

September 17, 2014 Mark Walker

A Minnehaha County diver who drowned during a July training exercise died from a lack of oxygen to the brain that could have been complicated by a heart condition, according to the county coroner.

A death certificate released Wednesday morning says Jeff Thumma's primary cause of death was "cerebral anoxia due to uncertain etiology while diving" and "atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease."

His death has been declared accidental.

Thumma, an experienced, volunteer diver, was taking part in a Minnehaha County dive team training July 10 at Family Park in western Sioux Falls. While underwater, Thumma tugged at a safety rope four times to signal an emergency.

It only took about two minutes for rescuers to pull Thumma from the water, but he was unresponsive and died after several days on life support.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens said Thumma's diving equipment fully functional at the time of the incident. Clemens said the gear was sent off Diving Technologies in Sunrise, Florida for an extensive expert analysis.



"We searched high and far to find out if there was something we could have prevented," Minnehaha County Emergency manager Lynn DeYoung said. "There was something that caused this, but no one knows exactly what happened."

It was the first time in the 40 years the Minnehaha County Dive team has been maintained that a diver has died. About three times a month, year-round, members of the dive team travel across the region for training.

Death of diver during training ruled accidental

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/death-of-diver-during-training-ruled-accidental/article_c72adf96-ef83-538d-8b7c-839302391e4e.html

Sep 18, 2014 [Associated Press](#)

SIoux FALLS | The death of a Minnehaha County dive team member during a training exercise has been ruled accidental.

The Argus Leader reports (<http://argusne.ws/1uWrtkb>) the death certificate for 43-year-old Jeff Thumma states he died from a lack of oxygen to the brain that could have been complicated by a heart condition.

Thumma was an experienced diver. He was taking part in a training exercise July 10 at a Sioux Falls park when he tugged at a safety rope four times to signal an emergency. It took only about two minutes for rescuers to pull Thumma from the water, but he was unresponsive and died after several days on life support.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens says Thumma's diving equipment was tested and found to be fully functional at the time of the incident.