

07-23-2002 Poland – Piotr W. – FF – Low Head Dam Rescue Training**The tragic consequences of the exercises of the State Fire Service**

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x18irse>

23 July 2002 (Dunajec, Nowy Targ,)

The accident happened on July 23, 2002 on the threshold of Biały Dunajec during exercises led by Rafał Czerwiński. The firefighters were to practice a rescue operation after the canoeists knocked over there a week earlier. The classes were recorded by a television team.

Instead of maneuvers, the cameraman recorded a dramatic fight for the life of one of the firefighters. Piotr W. died in the hospital after being caught in a whirlpool under the threshold for 17 minutes under the water.

His colleagues from the vessel tried to pull him out using a flat-bottomed motorboat, which was poorly steered and also went underwater.

Four more rescuers fell into the water.

One of them was difficult to get out thanks to the fact that he was clinging to the boat. Finally, a fireman tied to a rope and secured from the shore also tied Piotr W. to the boat, and then the unconscious fireman was pulled ashore.

Tragedies On The Dunajec In Court And Prosecutor's Office

<https://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/1,35798,983051.html>

August 21, 2002 | Cuba

Captain Rafał Czerwiński - who was conducting the unfortunate exercises of firefighters on the Dunajec at the end of July - will no longer command rescue operations. And the court resumed the trip from two years ago, during which three people drowned.

The prosecutor's office in Nowy Targ and the court are dealing with two tragedies that happened in the same section of the Dunajec River. One a month ago and the other two years ago.

On July 23, firefighters from the Fire and Rescue Unit of the Fire Brigade in Nowy Targ practiced rescue operations on the Dunajec River. The rescuers chose the most difficult place to learn, the concrete threshold where the waters of the White and Czarny Dunajec meet. There are rapid eddies here, which killed three Polish canoeists two years ago.

Just a day earlier, a canoe with two Czech women capsized here, and were hospitalized with serious injuries.

There is no question of Piotr W.

<http://24tp.pl/?mod=news&strona=1&kat=7&id=197&str=2005-01-14>

The Nowotarski court waved his hand. It will not indicate guilty of the death of Piotr W., a firefighter who died as a result of an accident which occurred during exercises on the White Dunajec in July 2002.

Conditional dismissal ended the trial against Rafał Czerwiński, the commander of the Cancer Rescue and Fire Fighting Unit. The case was suspended for a period of two years of trial.

The court did not prove fault. However, if the commander in the next two years committed a similar offense, the case would return to the starting point - the wire would begin, which would eventually end with acquittal or conviction.

- Since the parties have reached an agreement, the court also decided not to scramble the wounds from the past - judge Bożena Dąbek justified.

Each of us realizes that a full hearing for the next year and a half - two years of scratching the wounds - comments Czerwiński.

The fact that we agreed together that it makes no sense to do so was also respected by the prosecutor's office, although she did not have to respect such a decision.

The accident occurred on July 23, 2002, on the threshold of the White Dunajec during exercises, led by Rafał Czerwiński. Firefighters were supposed to practice the rescue operation after a week earlier there had been a fall in canoeing. Classes were recorded by a television crew.

Instead of maneuvers, the cameraman perpetuated a dramatic fight for the life of one of the firefighters. Piotr W. died in the hospital after being sucked in by the whirlwind under the threshold he spent 17 minutes under water.

Colleagues from the unit tried to pull him out, using a flat-bottomed motorboat, which also went under the water poorly.

Four other rescuers entered the water.

One of it was difficult to get out because he was clutching the boat. Finally, the fireman tied to the rope and secured from the shore also attached Piotr W. to the boat, after which the unconscious fireman was pulled ashore.

After the accident, the commander was charged with mis-leading the action, which would lead to the death of the fireman.

Initially, he was transferred to the unit in Rabka, however, the Supreme Administrative Court admitted that the commander should be at least equivalent position and Czerwiński returned to Nowy Targ.

However, he was not allowed to take the position, because he was suspended by the commander.

After the suspension, on October 16, the commander reported to the unit to return to his duties. First, however, he had to take advantage of outstanding holidays for 2002 and 2003, when he was suspended by the commander. On January 22, she will return to work.

Józef Figura

Foto | Archive of TP 1. During the preparation of the equipment, one of the firefighters affects the retraction behind the artificial threshold. He loses strength there and cannot get out alone. (Analysis: Jacek Starzyński)

2. Piotr W. loses consciousness. Now the seconds decide if he will survive this accident. (Analysis: Jacek Starzyński)



<http://kajak.org.pl/wiedza/bezpieczenstwo/dunajec2002/>

It was supposed to be an exercise...

Note: I note that the analysis of the accident I developed based on a 90-second video in TVP News from July 23, 2002 and photos from the film documenting the entire action.

In my opinion, this is sufficient material to point out and describe the errors that appear on it in the organization of exercises and in carrying out the entire rescue operation.

I address the site primarily to canoeists - I think that many people can help them become aware of the dangers they pose on the artificial river (and some natural) thresholds. I also think that it can be useful for members of the emergency services (SP, WOPR, GOPR, TOPR), who in their operations may come across such an accident and should avoid these mistakes.

I believe that all interested persons should study materials describing rescue techniques used in such places by canoeists - they are the result of many years of experience not only Polish - they have been developed as the output of the entire environment dealing with swimming on difficult rivers.

Probably not all of the techniques presented there can be used by professional emergency services, but their knowledge certainly will not hurt anyone. Links to these materials are at the bottom of the page.

Thank you to Tygodnik Podhalański for sharing photos used on this site.

Jacek Starzyński , August 2002.

Dunajec, Nowy Targ, July 23, 2002.

What's happening	Photo	Mistakes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the same place where the accident of Czech canoeists happened the day before, the Fire Brigade decided to carry out exercises to check the behavior of the new boat. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Above all, it was necessary to think 1000 times whether to conduct exercises in such a strong appeal at all. Apparently, the people in charge of the action had no idea of the danger exposing people participating in the exercises.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Even while preparing the equipment, one of the firefighters affects the retreat behind the artificial threshold. He loses strength there and apparently cannot get out alone. <p>In the first version of the site I wrote (because it seemed to me after seeing the snapshots in Wiadomości TVP) that the fireman was pretending to be a victim.</p> <p>However, it turns out that it was different - in my opinion worse. The unarmed access to the appeal clearly shows that the participants of the event were not aware of the threat.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The person influencing the cessation of the artificial threshold should be maximally secured. <p>Here we can see that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the lifeguard does not have a vest (the best would be the rescue one); - the lifeguard is not insured with a rope (the rope should be tied to a special chest belt, which is equipped with specialized vests); - do not drag the safety rope across the river, which should be done before starting the exercise. <p>An unencolled entry to</p>

		<p>the appeal in a situation where the equipment was not yet ready indicates that the action has not been prepared and that the threat has not been realized.</p>
<p>● A motorboat with a steersman and two rescuers sets out to rescue. The motorboat is pulled down by a stop under the threshold. There, she is caught rescuing, but now the motorboat is practically impossible to maneuver, because in the rare (strongly aerated) water of the appeal the screw is very ineffective, and the return current, pulling the threshold is very strong.</p>		<p>● Wrong and poorly used equipment - if you have already decided to use such a boat (because they are equipped with SP), it was necessary to insure it with a strong rope tied to the beak and kept on the bank by several people (you could also use the cars to pull the motor boat out of appeal).</p> <p>The helmsman of the motorboat does not have a helmet - it could have ended tragically, after the tip of the moped. The rescuers do not have vests. An additional three potential victims received an appeal.</p>
<p>● Motorboat takes on water and turns over. In the appeal, we already have, instead of one, four people who need help. Let's pay attention to the rescuer in the upper right corner of the picture, who is trying desperately to leave the dismissal.</p>		<p>● Violation of the cardinal principle: "above all not to make the situation worse" .</p> <p>Now we have 4 people to save - instead of one.</p> <p>In addition, gaps in training - a misunderstanding of</p>

		<p>the phenomenon of retraction - even in the lifters the rescuer has no chance to break out of the strong return current. The pictures show that the water level at the ends of the appeal (on the right edge of the photo) is a few inches higher than at the very threshold. These few centimeters at a distance of 4-5 meters gives you a few, or maybe a dozen or so percent of slope, which is as much as a fast mountain river - does it make sense to swim the Dunajec against the current?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The victim loses consciousness. Now, literally, seconds decide if he will survive this accident. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apparently, there was no organization of a rescue operation and there was a mess on the shore. Without a single, competent and determined management, fast action is impossible. The victims of the accident are being drawn too long.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The other rescuers, and now the victims are also losing strength and fighting for their lives. They can no longer support the face of a friend over the water. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EQUIPMENT!!! If the victim had a life vest on him, that could keep his face above the surface of the water. Without a vest, there is virtually no chance - with a face immersed in water, it cannot breathe. Hypoxia of the brain continues.

● It is a mess and the incompetence of the rescuers is clearly visible. We see people without helmets and in improperly worn vests, wading without belaying in water above the threshold: hence they will not help effectively, and can easily become the next victims.



● Ignorance of the appropriate rescue techniques: in the present situation the only sensible solution was to appeal to the rescuer of the insured with a rope (the so-called man-frog), who could quickly reach the victims (above all unconscious) and bring them ashore.

● After more than fifteen minutes, the inert body of the most injured man succeeds. This was done after using a technique known colloquially as "man-frog": he jumped into a vest and a lifeguard with a lifeline.

● An accident should not take place. The organization of exercises in such a dangerous dismissal, by people who had neither experience nor theoretical knowledge, exposed inexperienced, poorly trained (in the field of rescue on mountain rivers) SP rescuers to immense danger.

Balances:

Ratownik Piotr W. stayed in the water for several minutes, he was extracted with a stopped breath and heart action. After resuscitation team operations heart and breathing was restored, but the victim did not regain consciousness. On August 30, Piotr W. died in a hospital in Nowy Targ.

Attention canoeists!

In this case, the victim was a rescuer well-trained to swim. He was not saved by the fact that he was wearing a foam (suit) for diving, he had fins on his feet, and a mask and a pipe. Despite this equipment, he was unable to get out of the appeal. A person who falls into such a place after kayaking falls down has a much smaller chance.

Think 1000 times before you decide to go through the artificial threshold!

References :

- [Film AVI \(16.1 MB\) from Wiadomości TVP1 23.07.2002](#)
- [more texts about artificial thresholds](#)
- [How to save yourself in this situation? By canoe safely, page 31](#)
- [discussion on the case and this site at www.strazak.pl \(not aktuanly link\)](#)

PSP Exercises That Turned Into a Nightmare

77



NikeR @ 2014-10-30, 21:24

Hi. This is how I recently remembered about an event that we analyzed at the WOPR rescuers training and decided to find this material. I have not found the full version of the recording (it is certainly the instructor who taught me, but it is empty on the internet), but it has survived from the News.

To the heart of the matter.

In July 2002, it was decided to organize exercises for firefighters, as a result of the rescue operation carried out earlier. What went wrong? The water currents near the dam were too big. After approaching the dam, the fireman started to draw underwater (mistake one of many - no kapok). He struggled a few minutes before he was helped. But with what! On the boat!

A salutary boat, with others without kapok.

Of course, the boat also sank, so in the water was already 4 types. Somehow they managed to get out there later by throwing a rope in their direction, and it was enough to do it at the beginning ... Well. They seem to have pulled out, and another dirt in the rescue of those years is coming to light. Namely - BLS. Look at what this "lifeguard" is doing. Where I was taught RKO "standing", I do not have the concept, but not to take an example. At the end of the report you have the information that Piotr W. is recovering. Unfortunately, he died a few days later. What's sadder is the fact that his brother participated in the rescue of Piotr W. (who gives an interview in the full version of the material).

You must believe me that watching full material is not the most pleasant thing. You look 6 minutes when someone tries to catch a breath being pulled under the water.

Full analysis of the recording available here -

> <http://kajak.org.pl/wiedza/bezpieczenstwo/dunajec2002/>