

08-21-2020 Sivid Johnson – Detroit – OFF DUY – Attempted Rescue**Divers Recover Body Of Missing Detroit Fire Sergeant In Detroit River**

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2020/08/22/sivad-johnson-firefighter-drowning-body-detroit-belle-isle/3420105001/>

08-22-2020 [Meredith Spelbring](#) Detroit Free Press

The body of a Detroit Fire Department sergeant who went missing near Belle Isle was recovered Saturday morning in the Detroit River, according to Detroit Fire Department Director Dave Fornell.

Sgt. Sivad Johnson's body was recovered by Detroit Police Department and Detroit Fire Department divers, according to Michigan State Police.

His body was found not far offshore from Belle Isle, Fornell said.

Johnson, a 26-year veteran of the Detroit Fire Department, [went missing Friday night after reportedly trying to rescue two girls from drowning](#). Police were called to the park after reports of a 10-year-old girl who couldn't find her father.

About 30 to 45 minutes later, police learned the 10-year-old's father, Johnson, and several others had gone into the water to save the two girls from drowning, according to police. Police believe Johnson, 48, may have been dragged under by a rip current before anyone noticed, police said.

The two girls were safe and taken home by their parents. The 10-year-old girl was turned over to her grandfather, police said. The search for Johnson's body was called off Friday night due to darkness, but resumed Saturday morning.

Johnson, a Detroit native, came from a family of firefighters, including his father and brother, both retired firefighters, Fornell said. Johnson also volunteered with a heavy rescue company, not only putting out fires but also extracting people from cars and other accidents, Fornell said.

"The biggest thing was he jumped in the river there to rescue some kids he didn't even know. He was off duty and with his 10-year-old daughter."

Free Press staff writer Darcie Moran contributed to this report.



Hero Firefighter Dies After Plunging Into Detroit River To Save Three Girls Only To Be Dragged Under By Rip Currents In Front Of His Ten-Year-Old Daughter

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8658611/Hero-firefighter-dies-plunging-Detroit-River-save-three-girls-dragged-under.html>

24 August 2020 By [ROSS IBBETSON FOR MAILONLINE](#) and [AP](#)

- Fire Sgt. Sivad Johnson's body was hauled from the Detroit River on Saturday
- Johnson was walking with 10-year-old daughter near Belle Isle on Friday night
- The father and daughter heard screams for help from three young girls in water
- Johnson dived in to save the children along with a civilian and a nearby boat
- After the 45-minute rescue of the girls, Johnson failed to resurface

A firefighter has died after diving into rip currents to save three girls from the Detroit River, leaving his ten-year-old daughter desperately watching on from the shore.

Sergeant Sivad Johnson's body was hauled from the water on Saturday afternoon after a six-hour search.

Johnson, 48, was off-duty and walking with his daughter Friday night near the Detroit Yacht Club on Belle Isle when they heard three young girls screaming for help from the water.

Johnson, a 26-year veteran of the Detroit Fire Department, jumped in to help, while a civilian and a nearby boat also assisted.

'From the civilian, we talked to last night, there were a lot of rip currents and the sergeant went out into the water,' said Dave Fornell, deputy commissioner of the Detroit Fire Department.

'One girl was rescued by the civilian and the boat picked up the two other girls.'

After the nearly 45-minute-long rescue, Johnson's daughter realised he was missing and called 911, authorities said.



Fire Sgt. Sivad Johnson's body was hauled from the Detroit River on Saturday afternoon after a six-hour search, said Dave Fornell, deputy commissioner of the Detroit Fire Department

The search for Johnson was eventually called off due to darkness, but resumed Saturday morning.

'It is believed the father may have been dragged underwater by the rip-current and no one noticed,' Michigan State Police said of Johnson in a statement.

Despite being off-duty at the time, Johnson's heroic sacrifice will be labeled as a line-of-duty death, Fornell said.

'First responders are never off-duty,' state police said. 'He saw people that needed help and he didn't hesitate to jump in the water to save them.'

Johnson joined the ranks 26 years ago, following in his father's footsteps.

He was honoured with a plaque four years ago for saving the life of an unconscious man during a fire and a year later he was awarded the department's medal for valor.

In 2018, he spoke live on stage at a Moth Radio Hour, telling listeners of his experiences of life as a firefighter.

Johnson spoke about how he had once entered a burning home and trying to save an elderly lady who died.

'I know we can't save everybody, but we try,' Johnson said on the podcast.

Detroit Firefighter Sivad Johnson Remembered As Great Father, Artist, Storyteller

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2020/08/24/detroit-firefighter-sivad-johnson-obituary/3431163001/>

08-24-2020 [Chanel Stitt](#) Detroit Free Press

Sgt. Sivad Johnson is being remembered as a firefighter, a father, an artist and a storyteller.

He told a story about his experience as a Detroit firefighter in front of a live audience in 2018, which was titled "To Bravely Do or Bravely Die." That is exactly what he did Friday night.

Johnson died after trying to rescue two girls from drowning in the Detroit River Friday night, police said. His 10-year-old daughter dialed 911 after noticing that her father



© Shutterstock / Jesse Kumerth

Johnson, 48, was off-duty and walking with his 10-year-old daughter Friday night near the Detroit Yacht Club on Belle Isle when they heard three young girls screaming for help from the water (pictured: stock image of Belle Isle, Detroit)

didn't return from rescuing the girls. His body was recovered Saturday morning by the Detroit Police Department and Detroit Fire Department divers.

Frank and Patricia Watts have known Johnson for 25 years and said Johnson was like a son to them. The Wattses also remember Johnson as a great father, whose children adored him. Johnson applied for a job at Frank Watts' business called TDMK Silk Screening & Embroidery many years ago, where he would draw customer design requests.

"He and my wife handled all of the art," said Frank. "You create what the customer wants you to create and Sivad was excellent at drawing anything you wanted. Folks will come in and tell you they want a dog sitting on a couch with popcorn – and it's got to be real. Sivad was the man for that."

The Wattses' son and grandson were close to Johnson and they all worked as firefighters together. Johnson also gave motivational speeches at their son's mentorship organization.

"He was a person that was like a part of our family," said Patricia. "He came to the house frequently. He brought his daughters. We spent time together. You never saw him without a smile on his face."

The screen printing business closed in 2006, but Johnson never left the Wattses.

"He was with us for about maybe the first 10 years," said Frank. "He didn't need us. But he loved us. He was there and it was just amazing how he could do that work."

His last work of art that Johnson created for the Watts' was just three weeks ago. And Johnson was also known to tell compelling stories and offer good motivational speeches. He became part of a storytelling organization when The Moth asked him to speak live at an event in Flint.

"He shared a story – it's not really a happy story – about when he saved a woman from a fire who later died from smoke inhalation," said Patricia Wheeler, Michigan producer of The Moth. "Even though that story was a sad story, Sivad was able to make it a story of hope and a story of resilience."

More:Divers recover body of missing Detroit fire sergeant in Detroit River

The Moth is a storytelling organization that focuses on true stories, which are told in front of a live audience. Founded in New York City, The Moth hosts live shows all over the world. Many live shows and story slams are hosted in Ann Arbor and Detroit, in which Johnson regularly participated.

"Often, his stories talked about how even though we all have bad days and really bad things happen, we can use those bad days to influence our lives and to motivate us to continue to do better going forward," said Wheeler.

Wheeler said the last text message she received from Johnson said: "MAKE A GOOD DAY TODAY." She says it sums up every conversation that she's had with Johnson.

The storytelling organization is set to remember Johnson Sept. 1 during a virtual story slam dedicated to him. Wheeler will take time to speak about Johnson's impact during the event. Tickets are available to purchase on [The Moth's website](#). The Moth is also set to find a way to remember Johnson on their website.

"I didn't have much in common with him in a lot of ways, but he was a true artist in that he was able to show that we are all connected," Wheeler said. "Sivad touched me and touched every person who heard his story deeply. His message of making every day a good day is going to live on in all of us."

Johnson's funeral arrangements are pending.

Memorial Service Announced, Flags To Be Lowered For Detroit Firefighter Sivad Johnson

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2020/08/28/flags-lowered-for-detroit-firefighter-sivad-johnson/5662593002>

08-28-2020 [Chanel Stitt](#) Detroit Free Press

Sgt. Sivad Johnson continues to be honored by the community in different ways after his passing last week.

Johnson passed away after [he rescued two girls who were drowning Aug. 21 in the Detroit River](#), according to police. His 10-year-old daughter waited for her father to return, but soon had to dial 911 when she couldn't find him. Divers recovered Johnson's body from the river Aug. 22.

The memorial service for Johnson has been announced and will be held Monday at the Detroit Public Safety Headquarters, according to the Detroit Deputy Fire Commissioner Dave Fornell. The service will begin at noon and is invite-only. Details for a livestream will be available soon.

In addition, the Michigan and U.S. flags will be lowered in the state Capitol complex per Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's orders, according to a news release. Flags will be at half-staff on Saturday and will return to full-staff on Sunday.



Fire Squad 1 Remembers Their Own, Sgt. Sivad Johnson

<https://detroit.cbslocal.com/2020/08/28/fire-squad-1-remembers-their-own-sgt-sivad-johnson/>

August 28, 2020 By **Cryss Walker**

(CBS DETROIT) – It's been a somber week at Fire Engine 59. A place where many memories were made with Detroit Fire Sgt. Sivad Johnson.

"It's hard when you know you're running a rescue squad and you see a lot of death and destruction everyday. So we're used to that but not used to seeing one of our own," said Lt. John Szarafinski.

It's here with his squad one team where many laughs were shared and many hardships endured.

"I will always remember him saying, 'So what have we learned from this?' every situation, so we at a fire and something doesn't go exactly the way we want it's always when we come back 'What did you learn from that? What are we going to take from that? What are we going to do better next time?' said Michael Sandlin.



Sgt. Johnson's crew says he died just the way he lived, putting himself on the line to save another.

Last Friday while enjoying a day at Belle Isle beach with his 10-year-old daughter he heard a cry for help.

And although he wasn't on the clock he was certainly on the job.

He managed to rescue three girls from the strong current, but lost his life in the powerful water.

Members from the Detroit Fire Department say Sgt. Johnson leaves behind a legacy of bravery.

A true hero who will be sorely missed.

Detroit fire sergeant who died rescuing girls from drowning to be honored today

<https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/local/2020/08/30/detroit-fire-sergeant-who-died-rescuing-girls-from-drowning-honored-monday/>

08-30-2020

Sivad Johnson was with the Detroit Fire Department for more than 20 years.

Johnson was a 26-year veteran of the Detroit Fire Department's Fire Engine 59 and a recipient of the 2017 Medal of Valor.

Fire Companies throughout Michigan, across the nation and our neighbors in Canada, are encouraged to place rigs on the ramps at noon with lights on in tribute Johnson. Those participating are asked to share salutes and tributes on social media with the hashtag #SivadStrong.

Johnson died after rescuing young girls from [drowning in the Detroit River at Belle Isle](#).

Due to the pandemic, the celebration at Detroit Public Safety Headquarters will be invitation only, but the service will be live streamed.

Off-Duty Officer Dies In An Attempt To Save Three Girls From Drowning

<https://boreddaddy.com/off-duty-officer-dies-in-an-attempt-to-save-three-girls-from-drowning/>

His family's only consolation is that he died a hero. May he rest in peace.

Sep 12, 2021 By **Monica P**

A year has passed since Sergeant Sivad Johnson, 46, lost his life in an attempt to save three girls from drowning, and we still remember and honor his heroic act.

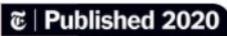
It was late August of 2020 when this off-duty firefighter was taking a trip to Belle Isle with his 10-year-old daughter. At one moment, they noticed three girls struggling to stay afloat and signaling for help. Johnson and another man jumped into Detroit River and managed to rescue one of the girls. The other two were saved by a nearby boat.

Crowd gathered around the girls to make sure they were okay, but then, Johnson's daughter noticed her father wasn't there. In all the chaos, he went missing.



The New York Times 
@nytimes

Sgt. Sivad Johnson, 49, a 26-year veteran of the Detroit Fire Department, died while trying to rescue 3 young girls from drowning. They were later safely brought ashore.

 Published 2020



Detroit Firefighter Dies Trying to Save Girls From Drowning (Published 2...
Sgt. Sivad Johnson, 49, a 26-year veteran of the Detroit Fire Department,
dived in to rescue the girls, who were later safely brought ashore.
nytimes.com

5:50 PM · Aug 23, 2020 

A search was initiated right away. Many people were involved in searching for Johnson, and that included officers, firefighters, and divers. Everyone was praying for a positive outcome. Unfortunately, Michigan state police later confirmed that Johnson drowned.

As reported by The New York Times, Johnson was part of the Detroit Fire Department for over 26 years.

He was a family man loved by many. "His friends, his colleagues, the people who worked for him said he was a mentor, he was a teacher. Many said he made their careers," Deputy fire commissioner Dave Fornell said.

A huge number of firefighters gathered to salute their brave co-worker as his body was brought to Detroit Receiving Hospital.

"I would say there was not a dry eye in the house," he said. "I've never seen as many firefighters as emotional as this. He was almost bigger than life. He just moved a lot of people."