

09-13-2008
Firefighter Dennis Rhoads
Argonia, Kansas
Swift Water Fatality

Rescuer Called a Hero in Death

http://www.kansascw.com/Global/story.asp?S=9005306&nav=menu676_1
Sep 13, 2008 by Megan Strader (SUMNER COUNTY, Kan.)

Hero is the word being used to describe Argonia native Dennis Rhodes. He didn't know how to swim and he didn't know the people who were trapped inside a raft on the Chikaskia River but he went into the water to save them anyway. "I'm on your team and I said let's go in and do it and I thought if somebody could it would have been him," explains Daren Drouhard.

 [Friend Describes Rescue Attempt](#)
 [Argonia Man Dies Trying to Save Boaters](#)

He watched as his best friend made the choice to wade out into the water. He was attempting to save 19 year olds, Miranda Brozovich, Rylee Doll, Jordan Fields, Wesley Gilbert and another juvenile who were stuck on the dam. Three rescue workers were also in the water after a failed rescue attempt.

"We brought him up here and this is where we did our CPR," Drouhard walked us through what happened on the banks of the river. For twenty minutes they tried to revive Rhodes, but the man, who friends jokingly called the rambo of Argonia, was no match for the dam that he had a hand in building. "I told him don't give up. We prayed, I said there's still a hair of hope, but it didn't happen." Dennis had one daughter who his family said meant the world to him. She lost a father and a town lost a man who was said to be friend to all. "He's the town hero."

Rhodes was wearing a life jacket when he went into the water. The people Rhodes was trying to save were not wearing life jackets but were pulled out safely.

Argonia firefighter dies making water rescue

<http://www.wellingtondailynews.com/news/x55307252/Argonia-firefighter-dies-making-water-rescue>

Sep 16, 2008 By Teresa Lee Wellington Daily News

Wellington, Kan. Raging flood waters claimed the life of an Argonia volunteer firefighter, Saturday night, after he attempted to save eight people, three of them emergency workers.

Dennis Rhodes, 47, of Argonia was killed when he decided to walk out into the Chikaskia River to the trapped victims. The rescue unit leader directed

Rhodes to remain out of the water and to not attempt an individual rescue, said Sumner County Emergency Management Director James Fair.

After entering the river, Rhodes lost his balance and was swept under the current until he was retrieved by emergency workers. Members of the rescue crew brought Rhodes back to shore — performing CPR and transporting him to an area hospital.



Rescuers work to pull five teens stranded in a raft on the Chikaskia River near Argonia. By KWCH

The tragic ending started at around 8 p.m., when Argonia Fire, Argonia EMS, the Sumner County Sheriff's Department and Sumner County Emergency Management were notified by Sumner County 911 dispatch of five people stuck on the Chikaskia just south of the City of Argonia after attempting to raft, Fair said.

Miranda Brozovich, Rylee Doll, Jordan Fields, Wesley Gilbert, all 19, and a minor female had put their raft into the river at the bridge on south Argonia Road and started floating eastward, Fair said. Problems occurred for the group after their raft went over a concrete diversion dam and became trapped in the undertow of the bottom side of the dam. None of the five were wearing life jackets, Fair said.

At 9:30 p.m., Wellington Fire/EMS made a first attempt at a rescue. Wellington Fire Chief John Lloyd said his crew did all they could to help the rafters and had a plan in place when they entered the water. But the plan failed and three emergency workers ended up in the river.

Lloyd said, the plan was to take a small boat out to the rafters and take them back to shore two at a time. The fire chief stands by the original plan saying the rafters caused the boat to capsize, sending two Wellington firefighters and a firefighter from Conway Springs into the fast-moving water. "They got life jackets to all of them and then got two in, and from what was reported by our crews the rest of them tried to get in the boat too," Lloyd said. "They had their plan set. They assisted what they needed to do before they even put the boat in...that's all you can do. It was nothing that was rushed into," Lloyd said. "They felt comfortable in what they planned to do and it is what it is and when you are dealing with swift water it is very dangerous."

The speed of the water in relation to the size of the boat and the number of people in it is what sent the crew sprawling, Lloyd said. Wichita Fire and Rescue was called out with an additional swift water rescue team who arrived

on scene at 11:30 p.m. At 12:45 a.m., Lloyd said all victims were safely out of the water and either transported to Harper Hospital or Sumner Regional Medical Center for observation.

Throughout the entire ordeal, no injuries were reported to anyone other than Rhodes who was later pronounced dead at Via Christi St. Francis. "It's tragic, absolutely tragic," said Lloyd. "It's very emotional for everyone concerned."

Conway Springs Fire, Conway Springs EMS, Mayfield Fire, Norwich EMS, and Harper County Emergency Management also assisted with the call. Rhodes is the second death related to the recent flooding. Robert N. Bennett, 64, of Sedgwick was found early Saturday by a grader operator who was inspecting barricades in the 1200 block of North West Street in Sedgwick. It is believed Bennett drove through deep water there with his Chevy Blazer.

Bennett was married to Carol Harris, originally of Wellington, according to her aunt Dorothy Troutman. The two met and got married, eventually moving to the Sedgwick area.

Man Dies After Chikaskia River Rescue

<http://www.kake.com/news/headlines/28357429.html>

Reporter: Abby Barnett mail Address: abby.barnett@kake.com

Around 8 o'clock Saturday night, a page went out to Argonia Volunteer Firefighters. Five young adults were stuck on a raft, trapped in the raging currents at the swollen Chikaskia River dam. They were not wearing life jackets.

Kevin Catlin was the first responder on the scene. He said he knew the situation was too much for their crews to handle on their own, so crews from Wellington were called and arrived a short time after.

Wellington Fire Fighters arrived and immediately put their boat in the water, but instead of things getting better, the situation continued to grow worse. The boat with three Wellington Fire Fighters capsized. Now eight people were trapped in the waters of the roaring river in need of rescue. We asked Wichita crews come down and assist us, and we greatly appreciate them," said Catlin.

Before they arrived, a former volunteer firefighter from Argonia braved the terrifying currents trying to save those in harm's way. The currents proved too strong. 47 year-old Dennis Rhoads was pulled from the strong waters and was taken to Via Christi St. Francis Regional Medical Center in Wichita where he died a short time later. You could call it heroism," said Catlin. "Our prayers go to the family and I'm sure the whole city is behind me on that one," he said.

A fund has been set up by the [Fire Department](#) to honor the life and memory of the town's fallen hero. For more information on this fund you can contact the Argonia Fire Department.

Firefighters like Kevin Catlin also want to remind the public to always wear a life jacket when on the water. If the waters are swollen and rapid, do not go in. It's just too dangerous, he says. "Not only are you putting your life in danger," he says, "But you're putting the lives of the rescue workers in danger as well."

The pictures below are courtesy of Craig Hacker, with permission from the Wichita Fire Department.



Rescuer Called a Hero in Death

<http://www.kwch.com/Global/story.asp?s=9005306>

Sep 15, 2008 by Megan Strader (SUMNER COUNTY, Kan.)

VIDEO :

<http://www.kwch.com/global/video/flash/popupplayer.asp?ClipID1=2912893&h1=Argonia%20Man%20Dies%20Trying%20to%20Save%20Boaters&vt1=v&at1=News&d1=81033&LaunchPageAdTag=Search%20Results&activePane=info&rnd=60723867>

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"I'm on your team and I said let's go in and do it and I thought if somebody could it would have been him," explains Daren Drouhard. He watched as his best friend made the choice to wade out into the water. He was attempting to save 19 year olds, Miranda Brozovich, Rylee Doll, Jordan Fields, Wesley Gilbert and another juvenile who were stuck on the dam. Three rescue workers were also in the water after a failed rescue attempt.

"We brought him up here and this is where we did our CPR," Drouhard walked us through what happened on the banks of the river. For twenty minutes they tried to revive Rhodes, but the man, who friends jokingly called the rambo of Argonia, was no match for the dam that he had a hand in building.

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9 people rescued from flooded Kan. river

<http://www.thekansan.com/news/x2090108825/9-people-rescued-from-flooded-Kan-river>

Sep 15, 2000 By The Associated Press

ARGONIA —

Five teenagers had to be rescued Saturday night when their raft capsized while traveling on the flooded Chikaskia River in southern Kansas. Three firefighters attempting to reach the three girls and two boys also needed help when their rescue boat also flipped into the water churned up by days of heavy rain in southern and central Kansas. A fourth person also fell in during the rescue attempt.

James Fair, emergency management coordinator for Sumner County, said all nine people were removed from the water by 12:30 a.m. Sunday, more than six hours after the teens had first set off in the raft to test the swollen river. KAKE-TV in Wichita reported one of the rescuers, described as a 43-year-old male civilian, was pulled out in "extremely critical condition" and taken to a Wichita hospital. It said the other three rescuers were with the Wellington Fire Department.

Fair said he couldn't confirm how badly the man was hurt. He said the teens became trapped near a dam two miles south of Argonia. Using a cell phone, they called police around 8:30 p.m.

Fair said a member of the rescue group was trained in hostage negotiations and used those skills to keep the teens calm, which he said saved their lives. He said the teens were taken to hospitals in Wellington and Harper for observation but appeared uninjured.



Public Submission #348

http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Accident_view-public-submission_reportid_348 .

Report Date:	2008-09-24
Accident Date:	2008-09-13
Reach #:	
Country:	
State:	Kansas
River:	Chikaskia River
Section:	
Location:	dam near Argonia River Park
Relevant Photos:	
Flow:	Medium
Gauge Reading:	
Difficulty:	
Victim Name(s):	
Boat Type:	Raft
Boat Manufacturer:	
Boat Model:	
Private/Commercial:	Private
Submitted by Witness?	N
Description:	Man dies after trying to save 8 (ON SEPT 13, 2008)

Single dad came to aid of overwhelmed rafters BY JOE RODRIGUEZ AND DANIEL MCCOY The Wichita Eagle A blow-up raft still sits trapped in the currents of a dam near the Argonia River Park. Dennis Rhodes died while trying to rescue the group of rafters and three Wellington firefighters who became trapped while trying to rescue them. A day after Dennis Rhodes lost his life in a rescue attempt on the Chikaskia River in Sumner County, family and friends said his selfless act typified the kind of man he was. Rhodes, a 47-year-old native of Argonia and former volunteer emergency worker, died Sunday from injuries he sustained during a rescue attempt late Saturday on the rain-swollen river, the city's mayor said. Mayor Alan Brundage said that Rhodes was injured while trying to rescue eight people - including three other rescue workers. The rescue had begun after five people, attempting to raft down the river, had become stuck at a dam near Argonia. "Dennis Rhodes, as far as I'm concerned, he's a hero," Brundage said. Rhodes' sister, Tammi Florentin, said her brother was doing what he had always done, trying to help. "We know he wanted to save those kids," she said. "Dennis was just that type of guy." Florentin said her brother was the single father of a 10-year-old girl. Daren Drouhard, a longtime family friend, said Rhodes had just recently returned from a trip to Florida with his daughter. "He went over and beyond his means to be a father for his daughter," Drouhard said. "He loved her dearly." Florentin said her brother had lived in Argonia his whole life and had become a fixture in the community. He was the owner of Rhodes Construction Co. "Everyone knew Dennis," she said. "He's our hometown hero. "I just remember him saying he was going to prove to this town that he was somebody, somebody special. I guess he did that." How it happened Emergency crews were dispatched to the river at about 8 p.m., said James Fair, emergency management director for Sumner County. He said that a raft used by five young adults on the rain-swollen river had capsized. One of them managed to call for help from a cell phone, Fair said, and none was wearing a life jacket. Drouhard said he and Rhodes live about a half-mile from the dam and went to the scene after learning of the rescue operation. He added that Rhodes Construction had collaborated with B&B Construction and community members, including himself, to build the dam last year. "Dennis and I knew that river inside and out because we helped build that dam," Druid said.

Brundage said that the five young people were from Wichita and were not familiar with the river, which he said authorities determined had waters rushing at more than 70 mph. "You don't float the river when it's that high," he said. Brundage said the youths' inflatable raft "didn't have a chance," and they ended up rushing toward a dam, about ¼ mile from where they got in. They were hanging onto the dam when rescue workers arrived. In the rescue attempt, the boat used by three workers -- who Brundage said were from Wellington -- also capsized. Rhodes then had other rescue workers tie a rope around him while he jumped in to help. Brundage said Rhodes was wearing a life jacket. "He's a big strong man; had eight people out there stranded. He decided that he would swim up," Brundage said. "He swam out toward the center of the river, and when he got to the dam, he popped up and they could see that they couldn't keep him from going over the dam," he said. Drouhard said Rhodes came up on the other side, disoriented and looking for his glasses, He then began walking back toward the dam when "the undercurrent took him off his feet and rolled him over and over." He was pulled out downstream from the dam, where Drouhard said he and other volunteers performed CPR until an emergency crew arrived about five minutes later. Rhodes was taken in critical condition to Via Christi Regional Medical Center, where he later died. Eventually, rescue crews from Sedgwick County were able to pull the eight people out of the water at about 1 a.m. Sunday, Brundage said. "Sedgwick County had a boat that was big enough, powerful enough... they could fight the current," Brundage said. "Speaking for the city, we want to do everything that we can do to recognize him (Rhodes) and his service, and his efforts to save those kids," Brundage said. Brundage said he later talked with the youths involved. "I know I was disappointed in them," he said. Reach Joe Rodriguez at 316-268-6644 or jrodriguez@wichitaeagle.com. Reach Daniel McCoy at 316-268-6233 or dmccoy@wichitaeagle.com

Text Attachments:	
Share Description?	Public
Author Name:	
Share Author Name?	Public

LODD: FIREFIGHTER KILLED DURING WATER RESCUE ATTEMPT IN KANSAS

[HTTP://WWW.FIREFIGHTERCLOSECALLS.COM/FULLSTORY.PHP?72105](http://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/fullstory.php?72105)

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

A firefighter was killed as responders were attempting to rescue teens stranded on Chikaskia river in Kansas. Raging flood waters claimed the life of an Argonia volunteer firefighter, Saturday night, after he attempted to save eight people, three of them emergency workers.



Dennis Rhodes, 47, of Argonia was killed when he decided to walk out into the Chikaskia River to the trapped victims. The rescue unit leader directed Rhodes to remain out of the water and to not attempt an individual rescue, said Sumner County Emergency Management Director James Fair.

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Conway Springs Fire, Conway Springs EMS, Mayfield Fire, Norwich EMS, and Harper County Emergency Management also assisted with the call.

Dennis Rhodes Remembered

<http://www.mpffu.org/docs/newsletter/winter2001.pdf>

By Sean Gunnery

Harper Woods Local 1188

The Harper Woods Fire Department held its eighth annual Benefit Dance on November 3, and raised \$7,500 through ticket sales and a silent auction, which included several items of sports memorabilia. In keeping with its tradition of making a local family in need the beneficiary of the fundraising efforts, the Harper Woods Firefighters Union Local 1188 turned to the family of Dennis Rhodes. His untimely death left the entire city stunned. Rhodes was active in the Harper Woods Little League and Harper Woods Dads' Club and had touched many lives in the city before he died of a heart ailment this past summer. He is survived by his wife, Kathy, and sons, Dennis and Steven. Above, firefighter Sean Gunnery presents the check for \$7,500 to Kathy Rhodes. We are an 18 man department. Over the last three years we have raised \$32,000 during this one night event. We take great pride in this, especially being



Russ Averill, FF/Paramedic with the Canton Firefighters Local 2289 showing his carving for this past Halloween's greetings from Local 2289 to all brothers and sisters.

such a small department.