

## Young Worker Drowns After Kayak Overturns in River Rapids

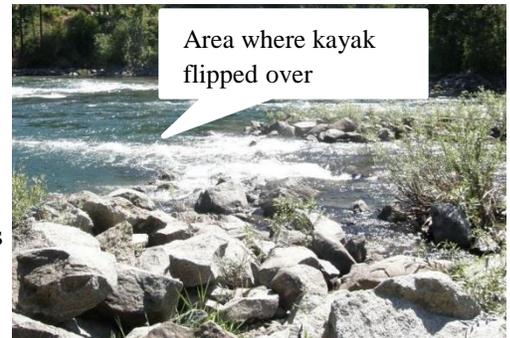
**Industry:** Water Recreation

**Task:** Paddling Kayak in River

**Release Date:** July 30, 2013

**Occupation:** Shop Attendant

In August of 2011, a 24-year-old tubing rental company employee drowned after his kayak flipped over in river rapids. The victim was paddling upstream to direct rental customers to the take-out location. After passing through one set of rapids the kayak overturned. The victim and the kayak were swept downstream in swift water with a temperature of 54 degrees. He was last seen attempting to swim towards the shore while hanging onto the kayak. The victim was not wearing a life jacket or other personal flotation device (PFD). The victim's body was found the next day about one-mile from the take-out location.



The employee had been hired as a shop attendant three weeks before the incident.

His normal job duties included inflating the inner tubes used by customers and running tubes and gear from the take-out point to the trailer. The victim had no previous experience kayaking and had only used the kayak three times prior to incident. The employer provided the victim an orientation to the kayak when hired. The employer did not have a written accident prevention program or any policies regarding the use of personal flotation devices. Although the employer had personal flotation devices available for employees, he did not require them to be worn.

### Employer Requirements

- Develop a written accident prevention program that is tailored to the needs of your particular workplace or operation and to the types of hazards involved. See WAC 296-800-14005.
- Conduct and document a hazard assessment to determine what personal protection equipment (PPE) must be used. Implement and enforce PPE use to protect employees from identified hazards associated with their job duties. See WAC 296-800-160.
- Provide and make sure employees wear personal flotation devices (PFD) when they work in areas where the danger of drowning exists. See WAC 296-800-16070(1).
- Develop and enforce safety and health training programs that are effective in practice. See WAC 296-800-14020.

### Recommendations

- To safely operate kayaks, canoes, or other recreational boating devices, employers should ensure employees:
  - Have been trained
  - Have demonstrated necessary skills
  - Can perform a self-rescue

### Resources

- Top 10 Safety Tips for paddling from the American Canoe Association:  
[http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=top\\_10](http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=top_10)
- Free workplace safety and health consultations are available from L&I at:  
<http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics/Assistance/Consultation/>

### Need More information?

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