

Dive team pulls man from pickup submerged in Columbia River

by Cheryl McDermott

A 55-year old Gresham man was recovered from the Columbia River 26 minutes after his pickup veered off NE Marine Drive and sank quickly in 17-feet of swiftly moving water, officials reported. Initially the man was not breathing but advanced life support techniques used by paramedics reestablished a pulse and the victim was transported to the hospital where he is in reportedly critical condition.

Rescuers from various agencies work to recover the man who drove off the highway into the Columbia River (above). The man's pickup is later pulled from the river (below). MCSO photos — “Although rare, in cold water drowning there exists a possibility of resuscitation,” Multnomah County Sheriff’s public information officer Lt. Jason Gates wrote in a news release.

According to witnesses, the man, whose identity was not released, was driving a 2002 Ford Ranger west on NE Marine Drive when he suddenly veered right, left the road, and drove into the Columbia River about one-half mile west of the Glenn Jackson Bridge. This stretch of road is straight and level, and there was nothing to indicate that the driver was attempting to avoid anything in his path.

Cyclists on a nearby bike path and motorists following the man called 911 and reported that as the pickup sank quickly, the man unsuccessfully struggled to get out through the rear window, Gates said.

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Dive Rescue Team responded to the call at 10:10 a.m., arriving only six minutes later from the 42nd Street boat ramp where they had been conducting a training exercise. Portland Fire and Port of Portland Rescue personnel also arrived on scene quickly.

Rescuers located the man who was found about half way out of the pickup's rear window, a task made difficult in 17-feet of swiftly moving 61-degree water with only one foot of visibility, the lieutenant wrote.

He was brought to shore and when checked, had no pulse and was not breathing. Paramedics utilized various ALS (advanced life support) techniques and were able to establish a pulse, and the patient was transported to Emanuel Hospital where he remains in reportedly critical condition.

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