

Facts

- Every year, several people drown in Snohomish County rivers, lakes and creeks.
- The Snohomish County Sheriff's Technical Water Rescue team responds to an average 18-20 calls per year.
- Snohomish County Search and Rescue and Technical Water Rescue team require their members to wear life jackets and river helmets when near moving water.
- Snohomish County Search and Rescue is staffed by volunteers who train constantly to respond to water and mountain emergencies.
- The Technical Water Rescue team is staffed by 10 full time deputy sheriffs who train 24 days per year in diving search and rescue and recovery skills.

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Snohomish County
Sheriff's Office
Sheriff John Lovick



Beautiful but Deadly River Safety and Awareness




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Staying Safe, Staying Alive



Snohomish County is home to some of the most beautiful rivers and mountains in the Pacific Northwest. The Sauk, Stillaguamish, Pilchuck, Skykomish, Sultan, and Snohomish rivers have created canyons and flatlands. They present vast recreational opportunities – fishing, kayaking, rafting, and other activities.

Rivers can be dangerous. With each high water, flood, or summer melt, trees, branches, and debris are moved around in the river, creating snags and strainers. A person caught in a snag (single tree or root ball) or strainer (multiple trees and branches) will be pinned by the force of the river current. River channels may change with the season, becoming more powerful in some areas.

Each year people drown in Snohomish County rivers. Many do not realize they are in a dangerous area – some do not perceive the danger of a “quiet” river.

Please take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the information in this brochure. Use it as a start to keeping yourself and your loved ones safe near the rivers.

Knowing River Dangers

- **Moving water** presents many dangers, some hidden.
- **Currents** – even a mild current is extremely powerful. The force of moving water can pin a person’s leg against a rock in mid stream, leaving them stranded.
- **Snags** – these are single trees or root balls in the river.
- **Strainers** – a strainer is just that – trees, branches, and debris that has current moving through them. The water can pass through, but large objects, people, cannot. A raft, kayak, or person will be pinned against the strainer and stay there.



Dangerous Waters

- Some sections of Snohomish County rivers are so dangerous they should be avoided. Boulder Drop and Sunset Falls on the Skykomish River – and their tributaries – are extremely dangerous due to huge waterfalls and rapids. These falls have been fatal to anyone caught in them.

Safety at the Rivers

- Always wear a life jacket on the river. Never go near moving water without one.
- Wear a river helmet. River banks and rocks are usually slippery. A fall can knock you unconscious and prevent you from being able to save yourself from a one way trip downstream. *(You can buy the above safety items at your local sporting goods stores.)*
- Consider bringing a whistle. If you are in trouble, it could help alert nearby people.
- Snohomish County Code Requires life jackets and helmets on any watercraft on the Skykomish from the area of Big Eddy to the river’s source. You can be cited for violating this code. (SCC 10.32)
- Don’t go into a river without training and knowledge. Seek out river professionals, guides who can show you how to use the river safely. Knowledgeable guides can point out dangerous areas.

