

Man Drowns Rescuing Son from Cold Columbia River

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Recovery divers pulled the body of a Clatskanie man out of the Wallace Slough on the Columbia River northwest of Clatskanie today after the man had dived into the water from a fishing vessel to rescue his son who had fallen in.

Brant Hicks, 35, Clatskanie was pronounced dead at the scene after his body was recovered from the water six hours after witnesses said he dove in to rescue his 2-year-old son, who had fallen in. Hicks was able to rescue the boy and get him back into the boat, but subsequently failed to stay above the water. He was not wearing a personal floatation device, but the boy was.

The young child was transported to St. John Hospital showing signs of hypothermia. He was later released and reported to be okay. The water temperature at the time was between 46 and 47 degrees fahrenheit.

The Columbia County Sheriff's Office responded by boat at 11:15 a.m. to the Wallace Island area on the Columbia River after receiving a call through Dispatch of a man overboard. The caller, Larry Hurula of Clatskanie, was aboard the boat from which Hicks dove in to rescue his son. Hurula is Hicks' father-in-law. Also on the boat were Hicks' niece and nephew -- a 9-year-old boy and a 10-year-old girl.

The Sheriff's office received additional help from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Oregon State Police, and the Clatskanie Police and Fire departments. The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office dive team arrived at 4 p.m. and searched the water for approximately 90 minutes before locating the body in 16 feet of water. Hicks' body was found approximately 30 feet down river from where he had last been seen.

"Our hearts go out to this family in their loss," said Sheriff Jeff Dickerson. "We are grateful for the help of our partners, especially the Multnomah County Sheriff's dive team, for all their assistance in bringing some closure to this tragic event."