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## Beware: Water's perilous

### Rescuers say river's fast, boats risky

**Monday, June 15, 1998**

BY **DANA DiFILIPPO**  
**The Cincinnati Enquirer**

Recent heavy rains have emergency crews issuing an urgent recommendation to boaters: Keep your crafts docked.

The Ohio River is about 10 feet higher than its normal 25.5-foot level -- and likely to rise if meteorologists' predictions of persisting precipitation hold true, said Capt. Dale Appel of Boone County Water Rescue.

The Licking River, Little Miami River and Great Miami River also are higher than normal, according to the National Weather Service.

More rain means faster currents as rainwater rushes from creeks and streams into the Ohio River, Capt. Appel said. Those currents sweep up tree limbs, garbage and other debris, further frustrating safe navigation.

"The river is a very unforgiving body of water," Capt. Appel said. "It'll take advantage of your mistakes, and that's something I think everyone needs to remember. Even the smallest mistake can put you in a life-threatening situation."

That's something two men discovered Saturday night when they went canoeing in the East Fork of the Little Miami River in Batavia. Their canoe overturned, and the men had to cling to trees until Batavia Fire and Rescue workers could save them.

The men were rescued only after U.S. Army Corps of Engineers workers cut water flow from the reservoir, which lowered the river's level about 2 feet and created an island, said Capt. Mike Smith of Batavia Fire and Rescue. Rescuers then boated to the island to retrieve the stranded men.

The men, whose identities weren't released, weren't injured. "Never underestimate water currents," Capt. Smith said. "You can never tell. Even if it doesn't look like it's moving fast, it can be. If you think it's too much, don't tempt it."

Boone County Water Rescue typically patrols the river during the weekends, but their boats remain moored and the rescuers on standby until the high waters recede, he said. Patrol officers have made six rescues in the past six weeks, he added.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Watercraft, also discourages boating when water runs high, debris abounds and currents are swift.

"Know before you go," said Jerry Ballard, a watercraft officer specialist. "There are a lot of things to think about before you step into a boat. Don't get yourself out there, and then determine that the conditions are beyond your skills or knowledge or expertise." Some boaters are heeding that warning.

At Mariner's Landing Marina in Saylor Park, fewer than 10 boats launched Sunday -- compared to 50 to 60 on a normal summer day, Harbor Master Jason Tonne said.

"We actually try to discourage people from going out, especially some of the newer boaters," Mr. Tonne said. "It can get really tricky with the current like this, especially when you get pockets of debris."

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