

First Aid Preparedness Fatality File

A 44-year-old male police officer drowns while attempting to rescue a citizen from a submerging vehicle in the Cumberland River. On the day of the incident, the victim and two other police officers responded to a call at 4:30 am of a person in a vehicle at the end of the boat ramp located inside Peeler Park threatening to drive into the river.

The victim approached the driver's side of the car, and another police officer approached the passenger side of the car still parked at the water's edge. At some point during their conversation with the driver of the car, the car started moving toward the water, and either the victim stumbled or the momentum of the car took him into the water.

The other officer noticed the victim was struggling and jumped into the water to help him, but was unsuccessful. The ambient air temperature on this day in February was 40 degrees and the river currents were strong.

It is possible the cold water, strong river current, and the uniform including a Kevlar vest, utility belt and winter jacket, all saturated with water, may have been too much weight for the victim to overcome.