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- House & Home
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- Outdoor/Tracks&Trails
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Web posted Monday, December 1, 2003

Teen swept into lake, presumed dead

Search halted for college student washed off pier Saturday night

By ZAC ANDERSON
Staff writer

A Grand Haven man is missing and presumed dead after being washed off the Grand Haven pier late Saturday night.

Coast Guard crews from Grand Haven and Traverse City searched for Daniel Luke Reiss, 19, into the early morning hours Sunday.

The search was called off after four hours because weather conditions made survival unlikely after that length of time in the 47-degree water, Coast Guard spokesman Paul Roskowski said.

"There was no longer any chance for survival," Roszkowski said.



ALL WET: Kevin Howard and his daughter Annie Howard,

Reiss, a student at Grand Valley State University, was swept into the lake around 11 p.m. after he and a group of seven friends had gone to the pier specifically to jump over the breaking waves, said Grand Haven Public Safety

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both of Holland, walk along the north pier at Holland State Park in Holland on Sunday as a high wave comes across shore.

Sentinel/J.R. Valderas

Officer Tom Winegar.

From interviews with Reiss's friends, Winegar said it appears that the weather

conditions steadily escalated after the group made it to the pier. The waves became erratic, and Reiss was caught by an unusually strong blast of water, friends told police. The waves at the pier were between 6 and 15 feet Saturday night, Winegar said.

"A 15-foot wave on Lake Michigan is something to be respected," Winegar said.

Reiss's friends called 911 from their cellular phones but there was little hope. The friends told police Reiss was pulled under water shortly after falling in and struggling with the tempestuous lake.

It is not unusual for people to be swept off the pier -- a handful of incidents are reported in a typical year at West Michigan beaches -- but Winegar said most cases are in the summer when the water is warmer and chances of survival are much greater.



LOOK OUT: A group of beachgoers walk along the north pier at Holland State Park in Holland on Sunday as a high wave comes across shore.

Sentinel/J.R. Valderas

"This is just a very unfortunate accident and unfortunate timing on their part," Winegar said.

The search for Reiss's body will continue when the weather dies down, Winegar said.

At Holland State Park, Sunday groups of people steadily made their way to and from the breakwater. Large waves smashed against the break wall and sprayed water on those caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Adriana Canche, 19, of Holland



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ALL WET: Beach goers stand at the end of the north pier at Holland State Park in Holland on Sunday as high waves crash onto the pier.

Sentinel/J.R. Valderas

ventured onto the break wall with her sister but avoided the channel light platform, which is not protected by a rock barrier.

"It's scary to think about," Canche said. "It's sort of in the back of my mind though."

Surfer Chad Grupher, 28, of Holland said pier safety is important.

"You have to take the lake seriously," he said.

A safety sign is posted at the entrance to the Holland pier and there is a sign in Grand Haven as well, Winegar said.



The Holland sign reads: "Stay off the pier during high winds, or when waves are washing over."

Sentinel/J.R. Valderas SAFETY: Warning labels on north pier at the Holland State Park in Holland tell about the dangers of walking on the pier as a high wave comes splashing onto shore.

Sentinel/J.R. Valderas

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