

Apex Fire Department Sees Swell in Water Rescues

It was a busy holiday for water rescue teams. Four local agencies responded to five emergencies between July 3-5.

The Town of Apex Fire Department joined the North Chatham FD, South Orange Rescue Squad and Raleigh Heloquatic team to rescue distressed river and lake-goers on the Haw River. These agencies all have personnel trained in swift and/or flat water rescue.

Twenty-four Apex firefighters are trained swift water technicians, and 14 of those are public safety divers. Formed in 2004, the team covers all of Wake County and is deployable as a state resource.

Even though the town has resources to rescue in the water, Apex Fire Chief Mark Haraway says they'd rather never have to use them.

"The Haw River is great for recreation, but can be extremely dangerous when flooded," warns Haraway. "Inexperienced paddlers may not realize that the river has rated, classified rapids."

Haraway urges paddlers to be familiar with hazards associated with any river they choose to navigate by researching them on websites like www.americanwhitewater.org.

"Always wear a personal flotation device," he says. "File a plan with a friend or loved one, letting them know where you'll be and when to expect you back."