

COUNTY OF OAKLAND  
**OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF**

**MICHAEL J. BOUCHARD**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Stormy Night Threatens Disaster but Thankfully Doesn't Deliver**

**OAKLAND COUNTY, Mich. – Aug. 28, 2024** – For members of the Oakland County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team, Tuesday evening had every indication it was going to be a long and challenging night filled with the potential for devastating news.

The fears of the SSRT, as the team is known, were understandable, considering their personal experience. So far this year, there have been 11 drownings in Oakland County lakes. In 2023, there were three drownings the entire year and four in 2022.

On Tuesday, a fast-moving severe storm hit Oakland County shortly before 5:30 p.m., carrying with it high winds, lightning and heavy rain, apparently catching many boaters by surprise. The calls for help came quickly into the Sheriff's Office Emergency Operations Center:

- 5:27 p.m. – Walled Lake: Capsized vessels, caller report victims stranded in water.
- 5:29 p.m. – Walled Lake: A second capsized vessel, caller reports additional victims in the water.
- 5:39 p.m. – White Lake Township, Tull Lake: Possible drowning, caller reports boat adrift with life vests and personal items floating nearby.
- 6:08 p.m. – West Bloomfield Township, Walnut Lake: Near drowning. Wife fears 61-year-old husband is in the water
- 6:22 p.m. – Cass Lake: Boating accident – capsized rowboat. Personal items were seen floating nearby.
- 6:59 p.m. – Walled Lake: Missing kayaker. A person reported the kayaker was on the lake and did not return.

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Six emergency calls within 90 minutes on four different lake and all requiring an immediate response, was unprecedented, Sheriff Michael Bouchard said.

“The night had a violent storm that had the potential of inflicting serious injuries or death in addition to property damage,” Bouchard said. “From our call takers to the first responders, our team handled seamlessly the massive number of calls for service in amazing fashion.”

With the help from the Southeast Michigan Dive Group strike teams from the Lapeer County Sheriff's Office, Livingston County Dive Team and the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, each reported incident was handled. Four rescue boats were deployed as were multiple divers and SONAR equipment was used.

The outcomes could not have been better for the rescuers.

- 5:27 p.m. incident: SSRT deployed rescue boat and safely recovered 34-year-old Milan man and a 36-year-old Dundee man and towed their boats to a safe location.
- 5:29 p.m. incident: 66-year-old man was rescued from the water and his boat was towed to the shore.
- 5:39 p.m. incident: SSRT responded and determined no one was in the water and the boat had gone adrift from a nearby dock.
- 6:08 p.m. incident: West Bloomfield Township police and fire were on the scene and reported near drowning and later advised SSRT it was not needed. SSRT investigated and determined the 61-year-old male was never in the water.
- 6:22 p.m. incident: SSRT determined no one was in the water and all occupants were accounted for. The boat towed to shore.
- 6:59 p.m. incident: SSRT investigated and determined the kayaker, a 61-year-old Novi woman, was unaccounted for. A short time later she returned to the shore and told searchers she took shelter underneath a dock on the lake.

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Bouchard said the results could not have been better for the team and the boaters.

"I am extremely proud of our team and our partners' efforts that I believe prevented injury or death in the midst of this storm," Bouchard said.

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