



Campus Cops Corner

-Public Safety Tips for the PPCC Community-

Public Safety Newsletter

Recent headlines regarding flash floods and our local heavy rains have reminded me that the single greatest incident of lost lives in our state history was not the Columbine High School tragedy, nor was it the Ludlow Massacre, or even an airplane crash. It was the 1976 Big Thompson Canyon flash flood, near Estes Park, which claimed 144 lives. The 35 year anniversary of that event will be marked on July 31.

Please take a few moments to read about some of the “lessons learned” and how to take precautions against becoming a victim.

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FLASH FLOODS

We're at 6000 feet and thousands of miles from the oceans. As a semi-arid state, we might receive 14-19 inches of water a year. Other than snow and rain, no water flows “into” our state. How then could it be that we're so susceptible to flash flooding?

Experts tell us that there are generally three conditions which accompany flash floods. Rugged terrain which channels water, sudden deluges of rain, and an environment which cannot readily absorb all of the moisture. In the Big Thompson Flood of 1976, people were celebrating Colorado's Centennial Anniversary by camping in the canyon. As is common in Colorado, a late afternoon thunderstorm moved over the area. The storm cloud was enormous, but unlike other storms, it didn't move and stayed over the canyon. Meteorologists estimated the area received 10-14 inches of rain in four hours! As the nearby Big Thompson River overflowed, it washed out large sections of roadway. After dark, a wall of water estimated to be 20' high roared down the canyon washing away hundreds of cars and homes.

Some of the people camping knew something was wrong and sought shelter in their vehicles and / or tried to drive down and out of the canyon. The water, however, was also rushing down the canyon. One hundred forty-four persons (144) are known to have drowned, many of them trapped in their cars. There were numerous reports of occupants being seen in cars as floated down the canyon. For those of you who are interested, the Fort Collins Coloradoan newspaper has an excellent presentation on-line at (www.coloradoan.com/news/thompson). Please cut n' paste into your browser.

In the years that have passed, one piece of advice has withstood the test of time, “In Case of Flash Flood, **Climb to Safety.**” This means that you must park your car, get out, **GET WET.** and climb to safety. It's counterintuitive, I know.



Important Numbers & websites:

- 24-7 Emergency Number: 502-2911
- Emergency Alert Sign Up: www.ppcc.edu/alert
- Crime Stoppers
634-STOP (7867)
- Anonymous Reporting
www.SAFE2TELL.org

1-877-542-7233