

# BAKERSFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT

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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

\* For Immediate Release \* For Immediate Release \* For Immediate Release \* For Immediate Release \*

### **Bakersfield FIRE Department (BFD) issues 2<sup>nd</sup> local and statewide metro area “Precautionary Alert” regarding the Kern River.**

BAKERSFIELD, CA. – Bakersfield Fire Department (BFD) has now conducted over thirty (30) swift and still water rescues this year, including multiple rescue boat and rescue swimmer deployments in the Kern River. Please note the following message from BFD Fire Chief Douglas R. Greener:

“The Bakersfield Fire Department has responded to 30+ water-related rescues already this year, with the majority of those incidents involving the Kern River. In fact, this has been a record setting deployment and rescue year for the BFD Swift Water Rescue Team, and the season is still early, with sustained heat waves now in progress.

The Kern River is hazardous for those not properly trained in special water navigation techniques or not accompanied by trained river guides. The Kern River is currently flowing at over 3,300 cubic feet per second (CFS) which produces enough force to pin kayaks, inflatables, tubes, and swimmers under water indefinitely. The sections of



of the Kern River flowing through metro Bakersfield may look calm and inviting, but the force is shockingly, unexpectedly powerful and can overcome the strongest swimmers. The death toll on the Kern River now stands at roughly 290 since 1968, with at least eleven (11) new confirmed deaths, and three (3) still missing and now presumed drowned in 2017.

The Fire Department is concerned for the safety of our local residents, but also concerned for the safety of out-of-area visitors to our city that are unaware of the hazards associated with the Kern

For more information please visit: [www.BakersfieldFire.us](http://www.BakersfieldFire.us) or contact the  
BFD Community Services Office @ 661-326-3688 or 661-706-3688.

River. Although the BFD maintains the only Cal-OES certified Type 2 Swift Water Rescue Team in Kern County, we're also concerned for the safety of our Firefighters and for the safety of other public safety agency and volunteer rescue unit members as well. Swift water rescues are very high-risk operations for everyone involved.

The BFD has produced a Kern River Public Safety Announcement (PSA) and is deploying Swift Water Rescue Patrols on targeted dates to assist with potentially higher activity around the river during the warmer weather periods. This will not make entering the river less dangerous and Fire Department presence should be construed as a clear and tacit warning to not enter the river.

Due to recent deaths on the Kern River of non-locals from the Los Angeles area, on behalf of the Bakersfield Fire Department I am issuing a SECOND precautionary alert both locally and to major metro news outlets to the north and south of Bakersfield in the hopes that the following information will be shared:

## **WARNING: DO NOT ENTER THE KERN RIVER!**

- **Do not enter the river unless with a trained river guide**
- **Do not enter the river without personal flotation device**
- **Do not enter the river under the influence of alcohol**
- **Do not enter the river under the influence of drugs**
- **Do not enter the river to attempt rescue – call 9-1-1**
- **Do not enter local canals or water conveyances**
- **Do not enter local lakes without designated swimming**
- **Do not swim in public areas without lifeguards**
- **Do not enter the Kern River!**

## **STAY OUT, STAY ALIVE! STAY DRY, DON'T DIE!**

Please assist the BFD in getting out this reinforced message regarding the Kern River and water safety in the Bakersfield area in general. For more information, please visit: [www.BakersfieldFire.us](http://www.BakersfieldFire.us) and on Facebook [www.facebook.com/BakersfieldFire](https://www.facebook.com/BakersfieldFire), Twitter [www.twitter.com/BKFCityfire](https://www.twitter.com/BKFCityfire), and Instagram [www.instagram.com/bakersfield.fire.department](https://www.instagram.com/bakersfield.fire.department)."

~ Douglas R. Greener, Fire Chief