

# NORTH SHORE FIRE/RESCUE

## Media Release

July 4, 2021

For Immediate Release:

*Whitefish Bay, WI:* This evening at approximately 10:11p.m, the Bayside Communications Center received a 9-1-1 call from a female who reported she and a friend were stranded on paddle boards somewhere on Lake Michigan. Based on the cell phone “ping”, the dispatcher determined their location to be approximately the 5000 block of North Lake Drive and dispatched a “Water Rescue” response: including units from both North Shore Fire/Rescue and the Milwaukee Fire Department’s boat and dive teams. Additionally, Whitefish Bay Police were sent to the scene simultaneously to assist with locating the individuals.

The dispatcher remained in phone contact with one of the two individuals as much as possible; however, the cell service was spotty, and the connection was extremely unreliable. Attempts were made to get the individuals to identify any landmarks or to “call out”, however both were unsuccessful. The victims reported that one of them had lost their paddle and they were continuously being pulled back out from shore despite their attempts to paddle in. Numerous resources from the United States Coast Guard and the Milwaukee Fire Department were also sent on the initial dispatch to respond via the waters of Lake Michigan. The individuals identified that they could see fire and law enforcement search lights from the shore and the dispatcher requested that the subjects utilize their phone flashlights to assist public safety personnel in identifying their location.

A drone was requested from the Glendale Police Department and their officers were dispatched to the scene. Shortly after the arrival of the drone, a forward-looking infrared (FLIR) device from the Whitefish Bay Police Department was able to spot what they believed to be a potential light from one of the stranded paddleboarders’ cell phones. About that same time, the Glendale drone was able to get a visual and hover over the location of the victims. Coordinates for the drone were provided to the boats on the water. Luckily, a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) boat containing two Wardens happened to also be in the area and heard the initial dispatch on a local law-enforcement radio frequency. The DNR boat along with the Milwaukee Fire Department’s Boat (Trident) were able to use the coordinates and the visual of the drone to make the rescue on the water. Ultimately, the DNR boat brought the stranded individuals close to shore where they were met by North Shore Fire/Rescue EMS personnel. Neither of the stranded paddleboarders were injured and they declined a medical evaluation. Neither of the individuals had a personal floatation device on or available when they were rescued.

This call truly exemplified a multi-agency, multi-jurisdiction coordinated response and resulted in a very happy ending. The technology available via the City of Glendale Police Department’s drone was pivotal in being able to quickly identify the exact location and provide a continuous visual in complete darkness even though the subjects were more than a quarter mile offshore.

North Shore Fire/Rescue was assisted on scene by the Milwaukee Fire Department, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the City of Glendale Police Department, the Whitefish Bay Police Department and the United States Coast Guard. The dispatchers who worked to keep the subjects calm and

maintained contact should also be commended. For more information regarding this incident, please contact Battalion Chief Dan Tyk, at 414-357-0113 ext. 1513 or [dtyk@nsfire.org](mailto:dtyk@nsfire.org).

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