



NEWS RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT: PFA Public Information Officer | 970-658-5502 or PFAMedia@poudre-fire.org

Two People Rescued from “Mad Dog Rapid” on Poudre River

FORT COLLINS, CO – Just before 10:00 this morning, Poudre Fire Authority (PFA) units were dispatched to a swiftwater rescue on the Poudre River, about 1.5 miles up Highway 14 from the Picnic Rock Natural Area. The first unit was on scene by 10:10 a.m. and found two people on a raft that was partially overturned and pinned against a rock in what is known as Mad Dog Rapid; both were safely brought to shore by responders in PFA Boat 7.

There were originally five people in the raft when it became pinned against the rock, causing three to fall into the river. The three were able to safely make it to shore on their own. When units arrived, two people were stranded on the capsized raft, but stable. Two PFA swiftwater technicians swam across the river to help set up a rope system. The ropes are used to navigate PFA’s boat and responders to and from the patients, as well as make sure there is a reliable system to get everyone and everything back to shore. Both patients were safely assisted onto the PFA watercraft which was pulled to safety.

Responders ensured the patients were safe then moved on to the next task of retrieving the trapped raft. Using the PFA boat and a winch from one of the apparatus in conjunction with a rope system built by rescuers, responders returned to the pinned raft. They connected it to the system, dislodged it from the rock and rapid, and pulled it to shore as well.

PFA has a team of swiftwater technicians that are highly trained for incidents like this one. They train on rope systems, swimming through rapids, and using equipment such as body boards. In all incidents, communication between responders and the agencies involved is important. It can become more complex in the canyon where cell service is low and on a dynamic scene like a river rescue. The responders rely on well-practiced hand signals, whistles, and rescue techniques.

While it may seem early for a water rescue, the river is cold and moving fast. Thankfully, this rescue was successful, and all parties were safe, but it is an important reminder of the power and unpredictability of the river. PFA and several community organizations partner on the “Play It Safe on the Poudre” program which helps spread important safety information and public education. [Learn more here.](#)

Thank you to our partners who assisted today: Larimer County Emergency Services, City of Fort Collins Natural Area Rangers, Larimer County Dive Rescue Team, and a special thanks to off-duty UCHHealth Medic John Deas for his assistance.

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