



Fresno County Sheriff's Department
Richard Pierce, Sheriff **April 6, 2005**
News Release

Sergeant Kathy Curtice
(559) 488-3924
Kathy.Dooley@fresnosheriff.org

Fresno County Sheriff's Department Continues Search for Missing Fisherman

The Fresno County Sheriff's Department today has released the name of a fisherman missing in the San Joaquin River since Monday morning. Sgt. Kathy Curtice reported that Jack Markert, 60, of Clovis, has been missing in the river since his aluminum fishing boat was swamped by water Monday morning. Markert had just launched the boat with a friend when rough waters caused them to lose control of the vessel. The boat took on water and sank about 400 yards from where the vessel had been launched. Markert's friend was able to swim to shore and called authorities. The Fresno County Sheriff's Department helicopter, dive team and Boating Unit have been searching for Markert since Monday. Markert's accident on the San Joaquin River is the second boating related accident of 2005.

The first water related fatality of the year occurred on March 4, 2005 at Pine Flat Lake when an aluminum fishing vessel capsized and two fishermen were thrown into the water. Higher than average temperatures and an abundance of water have contributed to an early season increase in recreational water activities over last year. The first water related accident of 2004 did not occur until May, when a man drowned in Millerton Lake after having fallen overboard while fishing on Mother's Day.

California State Department of Boating and Waterway statistics indicate that more than 80 % of boating related deaths are from drowning-many of which might not have happened if the victims had worn life jackets. The Fresno County Sheriff's Department stresses the fact that life jackets are to be considered lifesaving aids and not substitutes for good swimming ability. A whistle attached to each life jacket is also useful for signaling help or getting attention. Due to the increased water levels this year, recreational water users are encouraged to ascertain water levels and conditions prior to

launching vessels into County waterways this year. Water levels in the San Joaquin River change from day to day as melting snow pack causes varying amounts of water to be released from Millerton Lake. Information on water levels of the San Joaquin River can be obtained by contacting the Bureau of Reclamation at 822-2211.

The Sheriff's Department Boating Enforcement Unit has begun preparations for an early water season this year, as heavy rainfall and melting snow pack from the Sierras have begun to fill water reserves throughout the County. It is expected that most Fresno County waterways will be filled close to their capacity this summer, and the Sheriff's Department Boating Unit will be working full time during the summer months conducting safety inspections and law enforcement activities upon the County's waterways.

The Fresno County Sheriff's Department would like to take the opportunity at this time to remind the public to follow applicable laws while upon the water and to make sure that required safety items are always on board any vessel prior to launching. The Sheriff's Department is working to provide as much water safety training prior to this summer as possible. Members of community organizations may contact Boating Enforcement Unit Sgt. Kathy Curtice at 488-3924 for more information on water and boating safety presentations.