

## Facts

*In 2005, 16 people drowned in Snohomish County. NONE were wearing PFD's.*

*The Snohomish County Sheriff's Dive / Rescue Unit responds to an average 18-20 calls per year.*

*Snohomish County Search and Rescue and Dive /Rescue require their members to wear PFD's and river helmets when near moving water.*

*Snohomish County Search and Rescue is staffed by volunteers who train constantly to respond to water and mountain emergencies.*

*The Dive / Rescue Unit is staffed by 10 full time deputy sheriffs who train 24 days per year in diving search and rescue and recovery skills.*



"Pride in Service to Our Community"



**R. R. "Rick" Bart, Sheriff**

**Snohomish County Sheriff's Office  
3000 Rockefeller Ave MS 606  
Everett WA 98201**

**Phone: 425-388-3393  
EMERGENCY DIAL 911  
[www.l.co.snohomish.wa.us/  
departments/sheriff](http://www.l.co.snohomish.wa.us/departments/sheriff)**

# Snohomish County Sheriff's Office

## River Safety and Awareness

*Beautiful but  
Deadly*



Sunset Falls, N Fork Skykomish River

# Staying Safe, Staying Alive

Snohomish County is home to some of the most beautiful rivers and mountains in the Pacific Northwest. The Sauk, Stillaguamish, Pilchuck, Skykomish, Sultan, and Snohomish Rivers have created canyons and flatlands. They present vast recreational opportunities—fishing, kayaking, rafting, and other activities.

Rivers can be dangerous. With each high water, flood, or summer melt, trees, branches, and debris are moved around in the river, creating snags and strainers. A person caught in a snag (single tree or root ball) or strainer (multiple trees and branches) will be pinned by the force of the river current. River channels may change with the season, becoming more powerful in some areas.

Each year people drown in Snohomish County Rivers. Many do not realize they are in a dangerous area—some do not perceive the danger of a “quiet” river.

## Knowing River Dangers

Moving water presents many dangers, some hidden.

**Current**—even a mild current is extremely powerful. The force of moving water can pin a person’s leg against a rock in mid stream, leaving them stranded.

**Snags**—these are single trees or root balls in the river.

**Strainers**—a strainer is just that—trees, branches, and debris that has current moving through them. The water can pass through, but large objects, people, cannot. A raft, kayak, or person will be pinned against the strainer and stay there.

## Safety at the Rivers

**Always wear a PFD on the river.** Never go near moving water without one.

**Wear a river helmet.**

River banks and rocks are usually slippery. A fall can knock you unconscious and pre-

vent you from being able to save yourself from a one way trip downstream.

Snohomish County Code Requires PFD’s and helmets on any watercraft on the Skykomish from the area of Big Eddy to the river’s source. You can be cited for violating this code. (SCC 10.32)

**Don’t go into a river without training and knowledge.** Seek out river professionals, guides who can show you how to use the river safely. Knowledgeable guides can point out dangerous areas.

## Dangerous Waters

Some portions of Snohomish County Rivers are so dangerous they should be avoided. For example, the Skykomish River above Sunset Falls, and its tributaries are extremely dangerous, with huge waterfalls and rapids. These falls have been **fatal** to anyone caught in them.

