

To: Chief Jeffrey Gally, Shaler Twp. Police
From: Detective Richard Byers
Date: 9/17/2004
Re: Flood Water Rescues

On 9/17/04 Detective Richard Byers was working a double-out shift (8-4 and 4-12) and was the Officer In-Charge for the 4-12 shift. During this shift the heavy rains caused severe flooding conditions throughout the Township and an Emergency Command Center was set up at the Shaler Police Station. Detective Byers was responding to a call for a man trapped in a car near Glenshaw Crossing when an individual approached Detective Byers by vehicle and reported that the flooding in the Flats area was getting severe. He stated that 2 elderly women were trapped on the second floor of their homes on Linden St. and needed to be evacuated.

The following is the account of the boat rescues that took place in the Flats.

Detective Byers responded to the Maple Street area and observed that the streets in the southern portion of the Flats were flooded and any rescue attempts would need to be made by boat. I contacted the Shaler Police Command Center and requested rescue boats. I was informed by the Command Center that no rescue boats were available due to the multiple flooding locations. The Command Center reported that John Kosmack from Kleeber Brothers Marine Service may have a rescue boat available and he had been involved in other earlier rescue attempts. I was able to locate John Kosmack and Rick Leo at Kleeber Brothers. Both agreed to assist in the rescue of residents in the Flats area. Detective Byers, John Kosmack and Rick Leo proceeded to the Maple Street area where his boat was launched on Maple St. Detective David Benko also responded to assist in the rescues. Detective Byers accompanied John Kosmack in the boat to initiate the rescue of residents on Linden St. We were informed that an elderly woman with cancer was trapped on the second story of a residence located at 118 Linden St. We made contact with Mrs. [REDACTED] who was on the second floor of her residence. She stated that she was frightened and wanted to leave her residence. Entry could not be made through the doors due to the water level. It was determined that the best possible evacuation would be through a rear window located near the second floor stairway. I broke the

window with a flashlight and made entry through this window. The floodwaters were approx. 4 feet deep in the first floor area. Chairs were placed for Mrs. [REDACTED] to step on to exit through the window. Mrs. [REDACTED] was assisted through the window and into the boat. Mrs. [REDACTED] was upset about leaving her jewelry behind and requested that I go to the first floor bedroom, in the front of the residence, to retrieve a bag of jewelry from her jewelry box. I then went to the bedroom and retrieved her bag of jewelry. While climbing back through the broke window I cut my left hand on the broken glass. Mrs. [REDACTED] was then transported to Maple St. where Det Benko and Rick Leo were waiting to assist her out of the boat. Det Benko then transported Mrs. [REDACTED] to the Evacuation Center located at the Middle Road Fire Hall. John Kosmack and I then proceeded back down Linden St and located 6 people in the second story of a residence located at 101 Linden St. Only 3 of the people wanted to be evacuated. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were evacuated from the residence. All 3 exited the residence through a second story window and slid down the front porch awning and into the boat. They were transported back to the unloading area on Maple St. where they had a vehicle parked beyond the flooded area.

John and I proceeded back to 101 Linden St. and the 3 remaining occupants stated that they were going to stay for now but would leave if the water continued to rise. They stated that people in the yellow house on Willow St might be trapped. We continued to the yellow house located on Willow St. but apparently the residents had already evacuated. At this time, we observed someone signaling us with a candle from the 3rd floor of a house located at 1226 Willow St. The floodwater in this area was very treacherous. The fast moving floodwaters were approx 8 -10 feet deep with debris striking the house. Approach to the residence was made through the back yards in an attempt to stay away from the swift moving waters in front of the residence. John was able to pull the boat up to the south side of the house where a roof leads to a second floor window. Nathan Young called out from the window that he needed to have his mother and father evacuated. He stated that a tree had slammed into the north side of the residence and he was not sure if the house would stay intact. His parents, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] exited through a second story window and crawled down the roof towards the boat. The boat was approx. 2 feet below the edge of the roof. I held the boat next to the house by holding the gutter and the arrangements were for Mrs. [REDACTED] to place her arms around my neck and slide onto the boat. Mrs. [REDACTED] informed us that she was worried since she is unable swim. While attempting to get on, the boat was pushed away from the house

and into the current. Mrs. [REDACTED] then fell backwards and disappeared into the floodwaters. This Detective dove into the water right after her. I was wearing a life jacket but Mrs. [REDACTED] did not have time to put one on. I was able to locate Mrs. [REDACTED] several feet under the water before she was swept away. While maintaining a hold on the boat I was able to pull Mrs. [REDACTED] back to the surface, which resulted in injuries to my left chest and shoulder. Mrs. [REDACTED] went back under the water but was again brought back to the boat. We then instructed Mrs. [REDACTED] to hang onto the side of the boat and I wrapped my legs around her. Mrs. [REDACTED] is a fairly large woman and several attempts to get her into the boat were unsuccessful. It was at this time that John and I realized that we would not be able to get Mrs. [REDACTED] in the boat by ourselves and there were no safe locations where we could move the boat. We were all aware that if we let go of the boat we had limited chance of survival. The cold water and exhaustion were now becoming a problem. During this time Nathan Young had exited the residence and proceeded to the roof area. Arrangements were made for Nathan to jump onto the far side of the boat, which would keep the boat from flipping over. Nathan was able to successfully jump onto the boat. With John and Nathan pulling and me pushing, we are able to get Mrs. [REDACTED] onto the boat. After getting Mrs. [REDACTED] secured, John and Nathan were able to help pull me into the boat. We proceeded to the unloading location where more assistance was requested. Mrs. [REDACTED] suffered a cardiac event and was transported to UPMC Passavant by Shaler Area EMS. I was later transported by police car to the same hospital to be treated for injuries.

I would like to recommend to the Chief of Police that the following people be recognized for courageous and life saving acts during the rescues that took place in the Flats:

John Kosmack
Nathan Young
Rick Leo
Det. David Benko