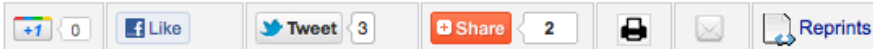


Officers rescue man and his dog from lake

BY LEEANN SHELTON Staff Reporter February 18, 2012 2:22PM



Chicago Police Lt. Robert Stasch, Left and P.O. Marine Unit, Eddie Echevarria, helped rescue a citizen that fell into Lake Michigan near Belmont Harbor. February 18, 2012 | Scott Stewart-Sun-Times

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Four police officers braved biting cold water and crashing waves to rescue a man and his dog who fell into Belmont Harbor on the North Side Saturday afternoon.

The man was walking his dog near the lake about 1 p.m. when the dog jumped into the water for an unknown reason, police News Affairs Ofcr. Robert Perez said. When the dog could not get out, his owner, a 28-year-old man, jumped in after him, and his fiancée called 911.

The first to arrive on the scene, Town Hall District Police Ofcr. Elizabeth Joyce found the man clinging to a corrugated metal break wall, bobbing up and down in the turbulent, 32-degree lake.

ARTICLE EXTRAS



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She didn't waste time. She lay on her stomach, grabbed him and held his head above water, wave after wave, even though the man weighed nearly 200 pounds in his waterlogged clothes, according to police. Arriving minutes later, Town Hall District Lt. Robert Stasch and Sgt. Bill Neja, along with Police Marine Unit Ofcr. Eddie

Echevarria, helped pull the man out and carry him to a waiting ambulance.

During the rescue, the waves breaking against the wall sprayed frigid water 8 to 10 feet into the air, soaking the rescuers, according to Echevarria. "It's like a washing machine effect, and that was hindering the rescue," he said. Both he and Stasch were still sporting wet clothes nearly two hours later as they recounted the rescue at the Town Hall District Station.

The victim, who spent about 5 to 10 minutes in the water, suffered mild hypothermia, officials said. He was taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center in good condition.

In water that cold, Echevarria said, "you start getting numbness, feeling's gone and you're just trying to cling on to something." Police also rescued the man's small white Scottish terrier pup, which was uninjured, and went home with the man's fiancée bundled up in blankets.

"I can't say enough for how well [Ofcr. Joyce] did her job," said Stasch. "My hands were in that water for three or four minutes at most, and I'm still freezing."

Contributing: James Scalzitti