

Police: Electrified canal could have killed more

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BLACKFOOT, Idaho -- Three people from Idaho were electrocuted in an irrigation ditch -- a woman after apparently trying to rescue a dog and two men who went into the water in an attempt to rescue her. Three other people who tried to pull out the bodies were at least shocked.

Bingham County officials found the bodies in the water Thursday about three miles northwest of Blackfoot.

Sheriff's Capt. Mark Crowley said 31-year-old Jacquelyn Poulson was reported missing at about 9:30 p.m. when she didn't return from a search for the family dog.

Two Blackfoot men, 41-year-old Michael Lance Hicks and 49-year-old Preston Keith Tarpley, apparently went in the water to rescue Poulson and also were electrocuted.

Crowley says an irrigation pump in the area had shorted out.

Local canal experts explained to KTVB that water can become electrified if an electrical device gets water inside or malfunctions. They say it is virtually impossible to know if water is electrified by sight or sound.



Photo: KTVB

Bingham County Sheriff Dave Johnson tells the Post Register in a story published Saturday it's amazing only three people died Thursday in water electrified by an irrigation pump that malfunctioned.

One of those shocked in the water (though survived) was 26-year-old Kyle Tarpley, Poulson's fiance. Preston Keith Tarpley was Kyle Tarpley's father.

Poulson was an assistant track and field coach at Idaho State University.

Poulson was an assistant track coach at her alma mater, Idaho State University. She's credited with recruiting stand-out athletes for the school.

This year she has a recruiting class that is beyond belief. We have more than 15 new kids on the team. Jackie was responsible for that. And just to celebrate ... she's the epitome of a class athlete, of a great experience at the collegiate level and a life level, ISU Head Track Coach Dave Nielsen said.

Nielsen considers Poulson to be like a daughter to him, and he says her legacy at the school will live on past this tragedy.

I think that it will certainly live on. Just a great example of how to be an athlete, how to continue through a career, how to make a transition from being a competitive athlete at an elite level to being a coach, to being a caring person. Jackie's wonderful, Nielsen said.

On Friday, Idaho State University released a statement in remembrance of Poulson.

The release appears in entirety here:

The Idaho State Athletic Department is mourning the loss of assistant track and field coach Jackie Poulson who was tragically killed Thursday night. Poulson has been a member of the Idaho State family for over 12 years where she attended school and competed as a track and field student-athlete before becoming a coach.

She was the pride of our program, Idaho State track and field coach Dave Nielsen said. She was like daughter to me. This is so untimely and tragic that I just don't know what else to say.

Poulson was going into her ninth year as an assistant coach where she assisted coach Dave Nielsen in training multi-event athletes. Poulson was a two-time All-American and Big Sky champion in the heptathlon. She also served as the recruiting coordinator for the track and field team. She holds the Idaho State University records in the 400-meter hurdles and coached All-American Cassie Merkley who broke Poulson's heptathlon record during the 2008 season.

She was a participant in the Olympic Trials in 2004 and has competed in the Netherlands, Puerto Rico and Italy. She also competed in the 2008 Olympic Trials taking eighth in the heptathlon with 5,741 points. Poulson scored a career-high 5,538 points in the heptathlon while at ISU and has scored a personal best of 5,804 points in post-collegiate competition.

Poulson is from American Falls, where she attended American Falls High School. She earned her bachelor's degree in mass communication from Idaho State University in 2003. She was working on her master's in health education and getting her teacher's certificate. Jackie Poulson influenced the lives of so many of our student-athletes in such a positive manner, Idaho State Director of Athletics Jeff Tingey said. She was a true Bengal and an example to us all.