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Tuesday, July 03, 2001

Search on in river drowning

Authorities looking for man's body in Licking

By **Stephenie Steitzer**
Enquirer Contributor

COVINGTON — Rescue crews spent Monday afternoon looking for the body of a homeless man who apparently tried to swim in the Licking River and drowned.

"He got in it on his own, kept going, kept going, next thing you know, he stopped and went down," said Chris Gregg, who described the man as a 6-foot-6-inch white male in his early 40s wearing jeans, a dark shirt and shoes.

The man disappeared under the water at nearly the same spot Michael P. Haney, 24, of Newport drowned May 17 while swimming after fishing with friends.

Police and water rescue units scanned the river beginning about 6 p.m., and the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office sent a helicopter to help search.

A command post was set up under the Fourth Street Bridge.

Sgt. Rob Ervin of the Covington police said the man apparently slid down on the Covington side and was unable to climb back up, then attempted to swim to the other side.

The man seemed to be intoxicated, Sgt. Ervin said. Two other men went in the river after the man and called to a passing rowboat for assistance, Mr. Gregg said.

Barry Townsend, who described himself as homeless, said he and Mr. Gregg tried to rescue the man but could not reach him.

The men said they did not know the man's name, but they had seen him earlier that day at the Parish Kitchen, a soup kitchen in Covington.

Newport police were the first to respond, with Covington police and Dayton Fire and Rescue.

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Cincinnati Fire/Rescue and Campbell County Water Rescue were also on the scene. The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office sent a helicopter to help with the search.

Police and water rescue officials said they would continue the search until dark.

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