



Riverbed Safety

Downey Fire Department Monthly Safety Message



Facts



- 2 Rivers run through the city of Downey: Rio Hondo and Rio San Gabriel
- Rio Hondo flows along the west side of the city, with access points at Suva street in the northwest, and Southern avenue (Stewart & Gray) at the west city border.
- Rio Hondo also flows into the Los Angeles River at Imperial highway.
- Rio San Gabriel runs along the east side of the city with access points at Firestone and Imperial.



Hazards

- While the riverbed is a public right of way, it is important to remember that various hazards exist.
- The following slides will outline some of the potential hazards and some tips to stay safe around riverbeds.

Oncoming Foot/Bike Traffic

- The riverbed is a common location for people to engage in exercise.
- Often people will utilize the long pathways to run or bike.
- This can present a hazard to unsuspecting pedestrians.
- Always be on the lookout for others moving towards you.
- Regularly check behind you to see if anyone is coming.





Trips/Falls

- The flood channel in the riverbed system has steep walls that lead to the bottom.
- This creates a dangerous drop that can injure someone who has tripped and fallen.
- Be sure to stay on the path and be cautious of your surroundings- Look up, look down, look all around.

Unhoused Communities

- It is becoming more common to find an increasing number of individuals that reside in certain areas of riverbeds.
 - Indicators of this type of activity include the presence of tents, food, trash or any other signs of activity.
 - It is safest to avoid areas that appear to have been inhabited.
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Swiftwater

- The riverbeds were constructed to provide drainage in the event of heavy rains.
- During rains, the riverbeds become filled with water that rapidly travels south.
- Even a flood channel water that doesn't appear to be moving very fast can carry someone a way with a surprisingly strong current:
 - 3 mph= 33.6 lbs
 - 6 mph= 134 lbs
 - 9 mph= 302 lbs
 - 12 mph= 538 lbs



Swiftwater

- The easiest way to be safe when the riverbed has moving water is to stay away.
 - It may seem tempting to go into the fast-moving water, however, this is extremely dangerous.
 - The water will carry you for miles without stopping and puts you at risk of drowning and hypothermia.
 - For reference, if someone were to enter the channel at the Suva bridge entrance, they would likely be in Long Beach by the time the firefighters would arrive.
 - The water is also unsanitary, which increases the chances of infection.
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Swiftwater

- The flood channels are all trapezoidal design to aid in water flow, however the side walls differ between the channels and so do their complications.
- The Rio Hondo river is a narrow channel with a rocky face. This rocky face is dangerous as it is abrasive to someone moving quickly through the water.
- Rio San Gabriel is a smooth, concrete faced channel which makes the edge slicker when wet.

