

Good afternoon thank you for allowing me to testify

I've become a licensed outfitter and guide in Oregon since 1979. I'm also a retired EMT/Firefighter with a good deal of experience on our states white-water rafting rivers and others throughout the country. I am also Outreach Coordinator for Team River Runner We help disabled Veterans through paddle sports. We do everything from calm water to whitewater (free to Veterans and their families). I'll say first that most outfitters are pretty safety conscience. Most deaths seem to occur independent of the guides and outfitters. What we find most often is that they think wearing a PFD (lifejacket) and helmet "isn't cool, I want to get a tan, etc"

Rivers aren't water parks or carnival rides. "Mother Nature" is unforgiving. Help can sometimes be hours away.

I came across a man who was hit on his bicycle (Closed traumatic head wound, no helmet) on the Upper Clackamas River. We had to send an on duty reserve police officer in his squad car 12 miles to where he could call out with his cell phone. Long story short, we had Lifeflight come and take him to the hospital. He recovered after a lengthy stay. I know this was a bicycle story but it could just as easily have been a rafting story sinice it happened where The Upper Clackamas Whitewater Festival is located.

Over my lengthy carrier, I've taken many head hits and If I wasn't wearing a helmet I would be dead or in a care center. Making sure we have helmets available for sale and rent seems to be a minimal standard and one that would likely earn the outfitter additional dollars. Having helmets available is, in and of itself, a reminder that safety is important and would be a wise choice.

Plus, If we can cut down on injuries I'm all for it!

If you go to the website you will see Kevin Pannell, and Iraqi vet with no legs. Kevin lives in Sandy Oregon and paddles with us a lot. If any of you would like to come to one of our paddles let me know Call or email me if interested.

<http://www.teamriverrunner.org/>