

Rescue Teams Search for Man Swept Out at Sea During Baptism

A man swept out to sea by 7-foot waves during an oceanside baptismal ceremony in California on Sunday remained missing a day later as hopes faded he would be found alive, officials said on Monday.

U.S. Coast Guard spokesman Adam Stanton said three men were initially washed away by the surf while performing the religious ceremony, held on the shore of the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve in the small Santa Barbara County city of Guadalupe.

Two of the men were able swim back to shore without injuries, but the third man, whom authorities have not named, was still lost on Monday afternoon, according to a statement by the Santa Barbara Fire Department.

The missing man had been helping to perform a baptism in association with the Jesus Christ Light of the Sky church, which holds similar events two or three times a year, according to local newspaper the *Santa Maria Times*.

Some 25 people, mostly Spanish-speaking, attended the event, the paper said.

Pastor Maurigro Cervantes told Fox News-affiliate KCOY TV that he was one of the three men conducting the baptism when big waves began to roll in and pulled his cousin out to sea.

"I tried to take him ... but he was heavy and then another big wave come and took him," Cervantes said.

Search helicopters and boats joined in the rescue effort for the missing man all day on Sunday, Santa Barbara Fire

Department Captain David Sadecki said.

By Monday afternoon, the Coast Guard had called off its air search without finding the man. Local officials with rescue watercraft remained in the area, Sadecki said.

Editing by Cynthia Johnston and Steve Orlofsky

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