

UPDATE: 1 adult, 2 children found with submerged vehicle

By BRIAN WALKER Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, November 3, 2016 11:15 am

FERNAN LAKE VILLAGE — The bodies of one adult and two small children were recovered by rescue divers from a submerged car at the Fernan Lake boat launch this morning.

The Kootenai County Sheriff's Office did not release any further information about the three people who were found.

"Due to this being an ongoing investigation and all family members not being notified as of yet, no other information can be released at this time," KCSO Lt. Joe Jovick said late this afternoon.

Jovick said more information about the three people is expected to be released on Friday.

Jovick declined to say whether foul play is suspected or whether alcohol or drugs were a factor, citing the active investigation. An approximate time of when the car went into the lake was also not released.

Emergency crews responded to the boat launch on the west end of the lake around 10:45 a.m. and found a Ford car fully submerged.

The car was pulled from the lake with its front end facing the boat launch as if it had entered the lake in reverse. It was pulled from the water between the two docks at the site.

The KCSO declined to comment on that detail of the investigation.

A man at the scene, who declined to be identified, told The Press that he spotted the car in the lake as he was about to start fishing.

"I found the car as I was headed out getting ready to fish," he said, adding that he immediately reported the discovery.

He said he witnessed divers pulling the bodies from the car.

The man watched the investigation at the launch in disbelief from a park bench for about two hours. Rescuers stayed with the man and, at one point, prayed with him. He then sat in his pickup in the parking lot still visibly distraught.

Fernan Lake Village Mayor Heidi Acuff, who responded to the scene, called the incident "a city's worst nightmare."

"It's such a tragedy," she said.

The KCSO was assisted by Coeur d'Alene Police, Coeur d'Alene Fire, Kootenai County Fire and Rescue, Kootenai County Emergency Medical Services and the U.S. Forest Service during the investigation.

The boat launch was closed most of the day during the investigation.