

Brian Kutil

Over 100 lifeguards traded stories Friday about fellow lifeguard Brian Kutil, who died during a recertification swim at Mira Costa High School pool last Thursday morning.

“He was swimming halfway down the pool and stopped,” said Chris Linkletter, chief of the lifeguard section of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. “They got to him but he wasn’t breathing,” she said.

The cause of death of Brian Kutil, 42, is not yet known.

Fellow lifeguards, some of whom are trained paramedics, and paramedics from the Manhattan Beach Fire Department, treated him immediately.

“He couldn’t have gotten a better, faster, higher level of care,” said Linkletter.

Kutil was transported to Providence Little Company of Mary Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Linkletter said that it was the first death of a lifeguard in the line of duty, other than a couple which were related to cancer. The lifeguards have been using the pool at Mira Costa for their annual 500-meter recertification swims for a decade, she said.

“Everyone said he would give you the shirt off his back,” said AJ Lester, an ocean lifeguard specialist who served with Kutil.

Kutil started as an ocean lifeguard with the Los Angeles County Fire Department in 1994. In 2001, he was promoted to full-time ocean lifeguard specialist and worked for many years at Dockweiler State Beach. Later, he began working as a deckhand on the rescue boats.

“He was a great lifeguard, but when he got on the boats, he found his calling,” said Lester. “He took a lot of pride in it.”

“He taught me a lot of what I know about boats,” he added.

Most recently, Kutil worked *Baywatch Del Rey, Santa Monica* and *Cabrillo*.

“Whenever you were around him, you were laughing,” said Lester. “On a rescue boat, we might all be laughing and then get a 911 call. He was the guy you wanted backing you up.”

Kutil grew up in El Segundo. He swam and played water polo at El Segundo High School. After graduating in 1991, he went to El Camino College, where he joined the swim team.

Corey Stanbury, his coach at El Camino, said that Kutil was one of the better swimmers he’s seen in his 27 years there. He noted that Kutil still held the fifth fastest time for the 1,650-yard swim. He was particularly impressed by Kutil’s work ethic.

“He worked so hard that after a workout, when he got out of the water, he would run to the bathroom and throw up,” he said.

Kutil’s sudden death has shaken the lifeguarding community, Stanbury said.

“Some of my swimmers really looked up to him,” he said. “They’re pretty shocked by his passing.”

Stanbury thought that Kutil had “a real love for water, all things of the ocean.”

“He got to do something he loved,” he said. “If we could all do that, it would be awesome. It’s pretty much a tragedy that he passed away at such a young age.”

Kutil is survived by his parents, sister and three nephews. A memorial service is planned for Saturday at 10 a.m. at El Segundo Beach. **ER**