

Should you show a drowning man?

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/07/06/should-you-show-a-drowning-man/

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[This](#) is one of the most gruesome pieces of video I have seen on a news programme. It shows 28 year-old Mike Barnett who died from hypothermia after becoming trapped in a drain grill during the recent floods near Hull. You do not see the moment of death, nor were the pictures broadcast live. But the sight of a man, surrounded by rescue workers, with his head just above water is stomach-churning. As with any horror movie, it is the suggestion of the agony and the fear that he was going through that is more disturbing than any footage of blood and gore. Should Sky have shown this? Their [defence](#) is that Mike's father wanted it shown. It supports his allegations that the emergency services failed to act properly during the four hour ordeal. But it is definitely one of those ghastly stories that would worry me if I was sitting on the sofa with my kids. My view is that Sky handled this one very well and that it was justified. [Judge](#) for yourself. Generally, British TV errs on the side of caution in regard to explicit pictures. As a TV news editor I did once get a complaint about showing a man being rescued from a collapsed building – but what had offended viewers was that we broadcast the *sound* of his moaning. Inevitably, we had far more complaints when we showed pictures of a race horse breaking its leg.

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