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## Press Release



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### Volunteers, Troopers Complete Successful Search and Rescues

(GIRDWOOD, AK) In a combined effort between Alaska State Troopers and Alaska Mountain Rescue Group volunteers, three stranded hikers were rescued from the top of Powerline Pass early Nov. 17.

The three hikers were delayed after becoming exhausted trudging through deep snow in the backcountry off of the Indian Trail and were unprepared to spend the night in the cold and windy climate.

Luckily, the hikers – Pam Robinson, 58, of Wasilla and Anchorage residents Madaline Martindale, 46, and Daniel Schubert, 59, – had a cell phone and called 911. At 6:34 p.m., Soldotna Dispatch received a call from the three whom after negotiating through steep terrain, deep snow and cumbersome alders, were tired and didn't feel they could either continue with the treacherous trek or have enough gear to spend the night in the elements.

AST's Helo 1 launched, but after three different approaches from different directions, was unable to get into the area due to the fog. AMRG was requested to assist at about 7:30 p.m. By 8:20 p.m., some AMRG members were already assembling at the Indian Valley trailhead. A total of 17 AMRG members responded to the page for help. At about 9 p.m., two teams with three members apiece set out for the six mile hike up the trail. A group of three headed out about 20 minutes later. The hike, with a roughly 3,500 foot elevation gain, took almost four hours. The rescuers had packs loaded with not only food and equipment to get themselves through the hike, but enough to warm the cold, tired and hungry hikers. In addition, they had supplies to keep everyone warm in case they all needed to spend the night in the Chugach State Park. There was also the fear that the hikers wouldn't be moving well by the time the rescuers reached them.

Girdwood-based Alaska State Troopers Sgt. Bryan Barlow and Trooper Howie Peterson hit the trail on state-owned snowmachines a little later with supplies to help with the rescue efforts. At about 1:15 a.m., AMRG reached the three hikers who were uninjured, but were in the early stages of hypothermia. After the hikers ate, drank warm fluids and donned warmer clothes, they all started back down the trail. Due to the terrain, the two troopers weren't able to go more than 3.5 miles up the trail. Once the two groups met up, Barlow and Peterson started shuttling everyone out to the parking lot by snowmachines. The mission was completed at about 5:30 a.m.

"I'm impressed with both their riding abilities and the machines they have to work with," said AMRG Chair Bill Romberg.

Meanwhile, Barlow said the highly skilled and experienced AMRG volunteers were crucial in the successful completion of the search and rescue.

"I always like to thank them for their prompt and professional response," Barlow said. "They're priceless because they're really professional at what they do."

This was one of three search and rescue operations conducted by the Department of Public Safety and volunteers in Southcentral Alaska in three days.

AST, Alaska Wildlife Troopers and the volunteers from the Butte Volunteer Fire Department searched by air and on the ground for snowmachiner Caleb Bennett, 26, of Palmer after he became stuck in water in the Jim Creek area on Nov. 17 and spent the night walking to stay warm. A trooper on the ground directed Helo 1 to Bennett's location near Hunter Creek after hearing the man shouting for help at 12:12 p.m. the next day. Helo 1 transported Bennett to the airport in Palmer. From there, he was taken to Mat-Su Regional Hospital by ambulance for treatment for severe frostbite and hypothermia.

On Nov. 16, ground searchers from the Forks Roadhouse searched for two snowmachiners, Jeremy Locklear, 25, of Wasilla, and Frank Phillips III, 25, of Anchorage, after they got stuck and lost somewhere in the vicinity of the lodge off the Petersville Road. Talkeetna AST was notified about the lost pair at 3:27 p.m. Helo 1 was unable to launch due to bad weather. The pair was able to eventually make their own way out of the wilderness by 9:50 p.m.

Winter recreationalists are encouraged to be prepared for when things to go wrong and in case they need to spend the night in the outdoors. Essentials include a communication device, a light source, a sleeping bag, a lightweight windbreak to use as a shelter, a camping stove and plenty of food and water, plus alternative heating sources such as hand warmers or even a candle.

Sometimes, it's just a matter of knowing when to terminate the trip and turn around when things become too difficult to try to reach the intended destination.

"Trail or not, it's the backcountry and we're talking about a lot of snow," Barlow said. "Trails go away and you're going to find yourself lost."

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