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### **Update: Hatcher Pass Snowboarder Fatality**

(PALMER, Alaska) – The death of 18-year-old Royce Herbert Morgan on Feb. 25, 2009 at Hatcher Pass has been determined to be accidental and attributed to hypothermia due to environmental exposure.

Toxicology results made available from the State Medical Examiner's Office on Friday revealed that Morgan had a 0.053 percent blood/alcohol level and THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, in his system. Morgan and his 25-year-old brother Matthew D. Theodore had been snowboarding on the nearby mountains earlier in the day. Theodore reported that his younger brother had brought a 750 ml bottle of rum and marijuana with him on the trip.

As Theodore and Morgan were snowboarding down the mountain, they somehow became separated. Due to the darkness, snowfall and a temperature of around 20 degrees, Theodore decided to head down alone. He made his way to a lodge where he used a telephone to report that he and his younger brother had become separated.

Dispatchers asked Theodore to remain by the telephone and at the lodge until Alaska State Troopers could speak to him. However, Theodore elected to return up the mountain by himself to search for his brother.

When Theodore returned to the lodge a second time and reported he had found Morgan, Theodore himself was in the beginning stages of hypothermia. Theodore had tried to carry and drag Morgan, but due to the deep snow and rough terrain, he was unable to get him to the lodge.

Upon receiving the call for service, the assigned trooper prepared for a full-fledged search and rescue operation as he had limited information and no one to contact for situation updates. As soon as all necessary cold weather gear and adequate rescue equipment was obtained, the trooper made his way to the lodge. The trooper stopped multiple vehicles on his way up to Hatcher Pass in an attempt to contact either the victim and his brother or a potential witness that could provide details of the situation.

The trooper arrived at the lodge and found Theodore waiting. The trooper retraced Theodore's footprints in the blowing snow until he located Morgan lying in the snow. Although Morgan was not breathing and had no pulse, the trooper performed CPR for approximately 30 minutes until EMS personnel arrived on scene. Morgan was declared deceased.

Morgan was wearing an un-insulated waterproof jacket, T-shirt, snow pants, shorts and gloves. He was not wearing a hat or helmet. In the snow near where Morgan was found was a bottle of rum with only about a quarter of the alcohol left. Two empty beer cans, a lighter and a pipe were found in Morgan's backpack and clothing.

This tragic event highlights several things that outdoor enthusiasts are asked to consider during their planned trips:

1. A trip plan - left with at least two people – describing exactly where you expect to go and what equipment you have with you. Be familiar with the location and hazards of the area.  
<http://www.dps.state.ak.us/pio/docs/WildernessTripPlan.pdf>
2. Bring a personal locator beacon, which can be activated in case of emergency
3. Bring a cellular telephone – which may have service in the area – to describe your situation and direct rescuers to your location.
4. Wear appropriate clothing and consider while it may be warm or dry when the trip begins, weather and conditions can change quickly making warmer clothes a necessity.
5. Pack emergency food, water and first aid supplies
6. Do not consume ALCOHOL or DRUGS!
7. Increase your chance of survival during an emergency by staying near your snowmachine and the rest of your party