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PR# 09-014

Rescue on Flattop

Early in the evening on Monday, Jan. 26, Marie Sussek was walking her dog near Flattop Mountain located on the edge of Anchorage. She soon realized she had lost the path in the darkness, was getting cold and needed help. She used her cell phone to call for assistance and a ground search involving Anchorage Police Department, Anchorage Fire Department EMS and Alaska State Parks was initiated.

At about 5:40 p.m., APD contacted the Department of Public Safety and requested assistance from Alaska State Trooper Helo-1 to help locate the lost hiker. With the temperature well below freezing, helicopter pilot Alaska Wildlife Trooper John Chiri and volunteer spotter Scott Horacek launched in Helo-1 and headed for Chugach State Park.

Conditions were right for a nighttime aerial search; the sky was clear and the starlight increased the effectiveness of the night vision goggles.

“We could see people walking all over the place. We were going from light to light trying to figure out which person was lost,” Chiri said.

After about 15 minutes of sweeping the mountain, one light finally stood out. Horacek and Chiri saw a light being waved around by a person below. It was obvious to them that it was a signal and the person intended for them to land. The man that was waving the light happened upon the cold women and gave her his coat while he signaled for help.

Chiri and Horachek transported Sussek and her dog to the Flattop Recreational area parking lot where she was checked out and cleared by medical personnel on scene.

After the rescue Trooper Chiri commented: “This is the kind of search and rescues I like — very quick recovery.”

The Department of Public Safety is very appreciative to the agencies that helped in this search and to the Good Samaritan that took the time to help a person in need.