

Prineville car thief arrested after vehicle gets stuck in snow bank

by Cheryl McDermott & BWNS

A 21-year old Prineville man was arrested Tuesday evening during a snowstorm on Santiam Pass after he allegedly abandoned a stolen car and disappeared on foot up a snow bank, police reported Friday.

Cody Jay IPOCH - CCJ photo According to an Oregon State Police (OSP) news release, a trooper and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) personnel came upon a 1997 Pontiac Grand Am that was stuck in a snow bank on Highway 20 in the Santiam Pass area about 5 p.m., January 8. The car had come very near to striking two snowplows before getting stuck, and only had one tire chain in place on a rear tire of the front-wheel drive car. The driver also carried no identification, troopers said.

Because the car was stuck on a blind, uphill curve, the trooper had ODOT pull the car out and told the man to drive to the bottom of the pass and await his arrival.

When the trooper arrived, the driver had abandoned the vehicle and fled on foot up a 12-to-15 foot snow bank. The trooper pulled two plug wires on the vehicle to disable it, and followed the man's trail through hip-deep snow, but was unable to find him, the news release stated.

An hour later, ODOT reported the man had returned and was asking to use their phone. Sgt. MacKenzie and Trooper Belding investigated, and the suspect admitted he had stolen the car, OSP said. The Prineville Police Department confirmed it was stolen and the suspect was taken into custody.

The cold and wet suspect, identified as 21-year old Cody Jay Ipoeh, volunteered to be taken back to Prineville, troopers said, where he was lodged in the Crook County Jail and was charged with unauthorized use of a motor vehicle.

Ipoeh was also cited for reckless driving, misdemeanor attempt to elude on foot, and failure to carry a drivers license.

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