

Harsh weather prohibits search for missing Mt. Hood climbers

by Cheryl McDermott

Heavy snow, strong winds and temperatures near 10-degrees prohibited rescue team members from searching for two climbers who failed to return from a Mount Hood excursion on Monday afternoon, the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office reported.

Two experienced climbers, men in their late 20s, planned to climb the mountain on a westerly approach, and descend on the west, arriving at Timberline Lodge about 3 p.m., January 14, deputies said.

When they hadn't returned by 9 p.m. and their vehicle was found remaining in the lodge's parking lot at midnight, the sheriff's office began coordinating a Search and Rescue (SAR) operation to involve their personnel, Portland Mountain Rescue, and the 304th U.S. Air Force Rescue Squadron.

The overdue men are reportedly experienced climbers who were carrying a cell phone. As of midnight, however, no phone contact had been established and "coping activity" didn't produce credible or reliable information regarding the men's location.

The climbers were not equipped with a mountain locator device, SAR said.

“With the present excessive and severe weather conditions, this is not considered a safe time to deploy SAR personnel into the field to search for the missing climbers,” a SAR coordinator reported, adding that weather conditions will continue to be monitored.

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