

Missing Mt. Hood climbers rescued

by Cheryl McDermott

Searchers led two climbers missing on Mt. Hood since Monday afternoon to safety Tuesday morning after they spent a frigid night in a snow cave, the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office reported.

Matthew Pitts and Justin Votos, both experienced climbers from Portland, were checked by paramedics but found to be in good condition.

Heavy snow, strong winds and temperatures near 10-degrees had earlier prohibited rescue team members from searching for the pair when they failed to return to Timberline Lodge by 3 p.m., Monday.

On Tuesday, searchers were able to get through to one of the men's cell phone, and Pitts and Votos came across a Geocache as they continued their way down the mountain after spending a cold night in a snow cave. Geocaching, according to Wikipedia, is an outdoor treasure-hunting game in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or other navigational techniques to "hide and seek" containers.

Search and rescue members used "pings" from the cell phone and the clues hidden in the Geocache to locate the men, and led them to safety about 10 a.m. The men reportedly did not carry with them a mountain locator device (MLD), personal locator beacon (PLB), or GPS.

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