

Missing Snowmobilers Update: Father Deceased, Son in Serious Condition

by Richard Burton

Searchers found the snowmobiles of the father and son who had been missing since Sunday, followed foot tracks leading from the area, and located the men Tuesday about 3:30 p.m. Only the son survived, said authorities.

Brian Rouse, 29, was reported to be in serious condition at St. Charles Medical Center after being transported by an Oregon National Guard Blackhawk helicopter late last night.

Roger Rouse, 53, is deceased.

An earlier news release from the Deschutes County Sheriff's office said both men were found and were suffering from varying stages of hypothermia, but it was later determined that Roger Rouse was deceased and no further lifesaving efforts could be made. Brian Rouse was found to be suffering from various stages of hypothermia but able to talk to search team members.

The men left for a snowmobile ride about 7 a.m. Sunday morning, and planned to return at their scheduled time of 1 p.m. They were reported missing about 7:30 p.m. when they failed to return, and searchers found their vehicle and trailer in the Dutchman Flat Sno-Park area near Mt. Batchelor about 22 miles west of Bend. An extensive search took place over the next two days, with at times over 60 snowmobilers, snowshoers, volunteers, and search & rescue team members combing the area.

Adverse weather conditions including deep snow, high winds, and low visibility hampered the search, said Lt. Shane Nelson.

The Rouse's snowmobiles were located at the top of the Bridge Creek Watershed, off of # 6 Trail that goes around the back side of Tumalo Mountain about 12:20 p.m. Tuesday. Search teams followed two pair of foot tracks leading from the area, and additional teams were sent to the opposite end of the Bridge Creek Drainage, said Lt. Nelson.

About 3:30 p.m., search crews located the men in the Bridge Creek Drainage area, approximately two miles west of Tumalo Falls Trailhead and ten miles west of Bend.

The Blackhawk helicopter was able to evacuate Brian Rouse, and he was airlifted to St. Charles Medical Center-Bend, arriving about 10:20 p.m. The sheriff's office news release reported him to be in serious condition, suffering from hypothermia.

Due to adverse weather and dangerous conditions, the helicopter was unable to transport the deceased man. Evacuation of Roger Rouse is ongoing and is hampered by steep, heavily forested terrain in the area, along with snow and weather conditions.