

Recovery Teams Retrieve Body of Snowmobiler

by Richard Burton

Weather conditions on Thursday allowed rescue team members to successfully recover the body of Roger Rouse, the 53-year old father who died in the Mt. Bachelor area after going missing and failing to return from a snowmobile ride he began with his son on Sunday.

Deschutes County Sheriff's Search and Rescue, assisted by Jefferson County/Camp Sherman Hasty Team, the US Forest Service, and City of Bend Water Department recovered Roger Rouse from the Bridge Creek Drainage area at 2 p.m. Thursday, November 30.

The recovery teams consisted of about 30 search and rescue volunteers from Deschutes and Jefferson counties, United States Forest Service, the City of Bend Water Department and full-time Deschutes County Sheriff's Office employees.

The recovery teams, on snowshoe and snowmobile, set out on the 4 ½ mile trek from the area at the end of Skyline Road and the bridge crossing Tumalo Creek about 8 a.m. Thursday. Because of the treacherous terrain and ground conditions, Mt. Rescue Unit members had to use special equipment including rope systems, a sked (portable toboggan) and an AMBU sled -- pulled behind a snowmobile -- in order to safely complete the mission by 2 p.m.

The Rouse's had 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., and searchers found their vehicle and trailer in the Dutchman Flat Sno-Park area near Mt. Bachelor about 22 miles southwest of Bend. An extensive search took place over the next two days, with at times over 60 snowmobilers, snowshoers, 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.

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.

Brian Rouse, 29, was found to be suffering from hypothermia but was able to talk to search team members. He was evacuated by an Oregon National Guard Helicopter and was airlifted to St. Charles Medical Center-Bend, arriving about 10:20 p.m. Tuesday. Admitted to the hospital in serious condition, he is reported to have improved to fair condition.

Recovery Teams Retrieve Body of Snowmobiler by Richard Burton