

Motorists spend night in snowbound SUV

by Cheryl McDermott

LA PINE, Ore. — A Redmond man and woman wisely had food and water with them when they were forced to spend a cold night in their SUV that became stuck in the snow on FS Road 22 about 25 miles east of La Pine this weekend, deputies reported.

Tyler Purcell, 22, and 35-year old Crystal Bales of Redmond had been traveling on Finley Butte Road (FS-22) near milepost 25 and the South Ice Caves when their 2007 Jeep Rubicon became stuck in the snow about 9 p.m. Saturday, Deschutes County Sheriff's Cpl. Wayne Morgan said.

Unable to dig the SUV out and without cell phone coverage, the couple stayed in the vehicle overnight. Purcell walked several miles the next day until he was able to make a call to his mother, who in turn called Deschutes County 911 Dispatch at 1:30 p.m., Morgan said.

U.S. Forest Service personnel and Deschutes County Search and Rescue (SAR) team members were activated and traveled by track ATVs and snowmobiles to the stranded SUV. The couple, in good condition, was transported about 20 miles on Finley Butte Road where they were met by relatives waiting to take them home, the corporal said.

The area where Purcell and Bales became stuck was about five miles from the location where a 21-year old Bend woman, her 14-month-old daughter and an adult friend met the same fate in Feb. 2007. Tara Lynn Smith's vehicle got stuck in the snow, as did a Good Samaritan's vehicle when he attempted to pull her out, and then a responding sheriff's vehicle when it arrived on scene. All three vehicles were eventually dug out of the snow and backed from the area.

The Jeep will be removed later at the owner's expense, and rescue personnel left the area about 6 p.m.

Cpl. Morgan reminded other motorists, —Always let someone know where you are going; be prepared for the unexpected by having food, water, warm clothing, fire starter and other survival equipment with you; and avoid unnecessary risks.

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