

Five lost Mt. Hood climbers rescued

by Cheryl McDermott

Five Portland-area men who became lost in "white-out" conditions on Mt. Hood took refuge in a snow cave and were safely rescued late Saturday night, officials reported.

The men, outfitted with a cell phone, global positioning system (GPS), and a mountain locator unit, called for help Saturday afternoon after they were surprised by a snowstorm during what they had anticipated to be a one-day climb on Mount Hood.

Clackamas County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Search and Rescue (SAR) instructed the climbers to dig a snow cave at their 9,800-foot elevation location to protect themselves from the elements, and launched rescue efforts.

A snow cat was summoned about 10:40 p.m. to transport mountain rescue personnel with Portland Mountain Rescue from Timberline Lodge to the Palmer Glacier area, where rescue climbers continued on by foot.

According to a CCSO news release, the temperature at Timberline was 20 degrees; with wind gusts between

20 to 30 mph.

All five hikers were safely rescued and returned by snowmobile by 11:30 p.m., reportedly in good condition with no injuries. They were identified as Brian Anderson, 24, of Portland; Ben Elkind, 22, of Portland; Bryce Benge, 29, of Lake Oswego; Jeremiah West, 28, of Portland; and 39-year old Brian Weihs of Hillsboro.

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