

Family safe after search on mountain

A Corvallis family found their way safely down South Sister last weekend, after getting lost and calling for search and rescue.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office was dispatched at about 5:18 p.m. on Saturday evening to a report of a family that was hiking down South Sister and could no longer see the trail. Jesse and Amanda Wise were hiking with their five children ages 6 to 15, had called to report they had come up against a rock wall and the clouds had lowered so they could no longer tell which way to go.

Jesse Wise advised they were dressed for the weather, had food and water and the means to start a fire. Wise informed dispatch they would travel a little further to the southeast to a group of trees where he would start a fire.

Attempts to contact Wise again by phone or text were not successful. Dispatch was able to provide fairly accurate GPS coordinates of where Wise had called from, which showed that Wise and his family had gotten off the trail to the west of the climbers trail by about seven-tenths of a mile at an elevation of about 6,500 feet. Accidentally leaving

the trail to the west in this area has proven to be a common cause of hikers becoming lost during this time of the year when the snow is still covering the trail, especially under conditions of limited visibility.

One Forest Service law-enforcement officer responded to the Devil's Lake trailhead and quickly hiked the climbers trail to the last known coordinates in the attempt to locate the family before dark. Five Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue members were deployed to the same trail to assist the officer in locating and assisting the family down the mountain.

The officer was not able to locate anyone at the last known coordinates, but did locate tracks that appeared to be the family's, heading south still off of the trail. It was soon reported the tracks began to lead toward the west, which raised the level of concern that the family would be pulled further to the west making the descent more difficult and more time-consuming. At this time more SAR resources were beginning to be deployed to assist in the search.

At about 8:52 p.m., Wise called dispatch to report the

family had made it back to the Devil's Lake trail and they were all OK, but wet.

Wise's phone had died soon after calling dispatch. Wise was able to build a fire, but the weather cleared up soon after and he was able to see tracks leading in what Wise believed was the right direction. Wise advised he had not brought with him a map, GPS or compass, or a means of charging his cell phone. Wise and his family turned around about 1,000 feet below the summit.

The Forest Service officer ended up following the tracks left by the family on their descent, which revealed that the family ended up coming down the mountain counterclockwise on the Moraine Lake Trail instead of on the climbers trail.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office reminds those who recreate in the backcountry to always be prepared for their plans to change at a moment's notice. Always having the "10 essentials" with you will help ensure a successful backcountry experience. See www.deschutessearchandrescue.org for further information on the 10 essentials.

The Garden Angel



Kalin Emrich & Katie Crabb
541-549-2882

Bye-bye back in! See you face-first!



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