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Air Force Rescue Coordination Center experiences busy week

By Al Eakle, AFNORTH Public Affairs

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. - It's been a busy week for controllers in the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center here as they assisted in two searches and a rescue Tuesday and another search Wednesday.

The Montrose County (Colo.) Sheriff's Office requested helicopter support in the search for a missing 48-year-old man who was last seen taking his dogs for a walk near a canal. The man, a local radio disc jockey, failed to show up for an early morning work shift and was reported missing to local officials by co-workers. A Colorado Army National Guard OH-58 Kiowa helicopter crew was unsuccessful in finding the missing individual after a three-hour aerial search. The Montrose County Sheriff's Office called off the search Tuesday night.



That same day, the Connecticut Office of Emergency Management requested AFRCC assistance to search for a 78-year-old woman who had wandered away from her home near Southington Mountain, Conn. Connecticut Civil Air Patrol launched aircraft and ground teams to support. Southington County Police found the woman who was transported to a local hospital.

The Jefferson County (Wash.) Sheriff's Office contacted Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Tuesday requesting assistance to rescue a 21-year-old hiker suffering from heat stroke near Tull Canyon in Sequim. After contacting the AFRCC, NAS Whidbey Island launched an HH-60 Seahawk where the crew picked up the individual and transport him to a local hospital where he was treated and released.

The Gem County (Idaho) Sheriff's Department requested helicopter assistance in the search Wednesday for a missing 38-year-old man. The man was picking mushrooms with his wife when he went missing. His wife told police they were hunting for mushrooms in the mountains near the town of Ola when he never returned to their car. The Idaho Army National Guard accepted the mission and has been conducting aerial searches with crews flying a UH-60 Blackhawk. The search is still underway.

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RESCUE**

“When distress calls such as these are received, we investigate the request, coordinate with federal, state, and local officials, and determine the type and scope of response necessary,” said Capt. Ken Moerscher, AFRCC chief of training.

As the United States' inland search and rescue coordinator, the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center serves as the single agency responsible for coordinating on-land federal SAR activities in the 48 contiguous United States, Mexico and Canada.

The AFRCC operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The center directly ties in to the Federal Aviation Administration's alerting system and the U.S. Mission Control Center. In addition to the Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking information, the AFRCC computer system contains resource files that list federal and state organizations, which can conduct or assist in SAR efforts throughout North America.