



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton
National Park

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

Backcountry Hiker Rescued from Garnet Canyon

Grand Teton National Park rangers used an interagency contract helicopter to rescue a backcountry hiker on Thursday evening, July 5, after he suffered symptoms of acute mountain sickness and heat exhaustion. Steven Bernaz, age 24, from Rolling Meadows, Illinois became too ill to continue hiking on his own at the 10,100-foot elevation near Petzoldt's Caves in Garnet Canyon, and was flown from the canyon to Lupine Meadows on the valley floor at 9:30 p.m.

Teton Interagency Dispatch Center received a call from the Teton County sheriff's office about 6:15 Thursday evening reporting a distress call received from a hiker in the Garnet Canyon area of the park. Rangers were able to make cell phone contact with Bernaz and his hiking partner and determine that he needed emergency medical assistance. Two park rangers immediately began hiking into Garnet Canyon by foot, while an interagency helicopter was summoned for air support. Four rangers were subsequently flown into the Meadows area of Garnet Canyon, and two of those rangers hiked up an additional 800 feet to Petzoldt's Caves where Bernaz was resting. After rangers provided initial emergency medical care, they were able to help Bernaz walk to the Garnet Canyon Meadows and board the helicopter for a flight to Lupine Meadows where a park ambulance was waiting to transport him to St. John's Medical Center in Jackson for treatment.

Visitors to the park's high country are reminded to carry plenty of water and stay properly hydrated—especially during the hot, dry days of July and August. Becoming acclimatized to high elevations is often accompanied by fluid loss, so hikers need to keep themselves hydrated (at least 3-4 quarts of fluid per day). Backcountry users should also take it easy the first day they arrive in the park and limit exertion when first gaining altitude in the Teton Range. In addition, hikers should eat high energy snacks to increase their stamina. If hikers experience muscle weakness, fatigue, light-headedness and/or headaches, they should descend to lower elevations to reduce the effects of acute mountain sickness and continue drinking fluids to ease dehydration.

This marks the fifth major search and rescue operation this year in Grand Teton National Park.

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