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National Park Service News Release

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Mount Rainier Climbing Ranger and Climbing Guide Recognized for 2002 Rescue

A Mount Rainier National Park climbing ranger and a renowned Mount Rainier climbing guide will be receiving a Valor Award and a Citizen's Award for Bravery from the U.S. Department of the Interior at an awards ceremony in Washington D.C. on May 6. National Park Service Climbing Ranger Chris Olson and Climbing Guide Dave Hahn, who currently works with Rainier Mountaineering Inc., of Ashford, Washington, will be receiving their awards from Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar for the rescue of a badly injured climber on Mount Rainier on June 25, 2002.

Chief Ranger Chuck Young, who will be representing Mount Rainier National Park at the annual ceremony, commented, "The efforts these two individuals took to complete the rescue of the critically injured climber during the 2002 climbing season was nothing short of extraordinary." Young explained that, "...even after surviving the crash of the helicopter that was flying the rescuers up the mountain and helping with the rescue of the injured pilot, they continued on with their mission to successfully complete the rescue at an extremely hazardous area of the mountain".

On June 25, 2002, a climber ascending Liberty Ridge on the north side of Mount Rainier was severely injured when struck in the head by a very large falling rock. His partners requested a rescue for the unconscious man via a personal cell phone. Accessing, stabilizing, treating and rescuing the patient on Liberty Ridge is quite hazardous and involved continued exposure to the same rock fall hazards. Because of their climbing and rescue abilities, Chris Olson and David Hahn were selected for the mission.

While being inserted by contract helicopter on the glacier at the base of Liberty Ridge, the ship crashed and was completely destroyed. Remarkably, Olson, Hahn and the pilot were not seriously injured, though Olson was struck by the engine and doused in oil. Though stressed and shaken, Olson and Hahn regained their composure and assisted in evacuating the pilot via a U.S. Army Chinook Helicopter. Afterward, the two refocused their attention to the injured climber and ascended to the accident site to help complete the rescue. The rescue involved patient stabilization and a long technical rope rescue through the hazardous terrain

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back to the helicopter crash site for hoist extraction. This dramatic and complex rescue took place in a very challenging and dangerous location. It was Olson's and Hahn's skill, tenacity, and extraordinary personal efforts that allowed the successful rescue of this climber.

The Valor Award is presented to Department of the Interior employees who have demonstrated unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger.

The Citizen's Award for Bravery is granted to private citizens for heroic acts or unusual bravery in the face of danger. Recipients have risked their lives to save the life of a Departmental employee or the life of another person on property owned by or entrusted to the Department of the Interior.

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