



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton  
National Park

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## Grand Teton National Park News Release

### Rangers Conduct Two Rescues in Grand Teton National Park

Grand Teton National Park rangers responded to two separate backcountry emergencies on Saturday, July 21. With the assistance of an interagency contract helicopter, rangers flew a severely dehydrated climber from the Lower Saddle early Saturday morning. Saturday evening, around 5:00 p.m., rangers again used a helicopter to evacuate a hiker from the East Face of Buck Mountain after she sustained injuries to her ankle.

The first rescue involved a fifteen-year-old climber who had successfully completed a one-day ascent of the Grand Teton on Friday, July 20, with a private party. However, he became very dehydrated and ill on the descent and was only able to descend to the Lower Saddle (elevation 11,600 ft.). He spent the night at the saddle, where climbing guides from Exum Mountain Guides attempted to rehydrate and feed him. A guide called rangers for assistance at 4:00 a.m. Due to the patient's deteriorating condition and the severity of his symptoms, rangers arranged to utilize an interagency contract helicopter for evacuation. The helicopter flew a ranger to the Lower Saddle to assist with evacuation at approximately 8:30 a.m. Rangers provided medical care before loading the patient inside the helicopter for a flight to Lupine Meadows. A park ambulance then transported him to St. John's Medical Center in Jackson, where he was treated and released later that day.

Rangers received another emergency phone call from David Rabiger, age 58, whose wife, Susan, age 57, had injured her ankle while descending the East Face of Buck Mountain. The Rabigers, from West Valley, Utah, had summited Buck Mountain and begun their descent around 2:30 p.m., when Susan twisted her ankle at about 11,000 feet in elevation. Since she was unable to bear weight or proceed further, David placed an emergency 911 phone call, which was transferred to Teton Interagency Dispatch Center. Rangers immediately began coordinating a rescue. A reconnaissance helicopter flight located the injured party and assessed the scene. Three rangers were then flown to Timberline Lake (elev. 10,000 feet), and two of them hiked up about 1,000 feet to the Rabigers. Due to the steep and rocky terrain and the nature of Susan's injury, rangers decided to use the short-haul technique to evacuate her. The technique involves placing a patient into either an evacuation suit or a rescue litter, which is suspended below the helicopter by a double rope system; the patient is then airlifted for a short flight to another landing spot where the ship can safely touch down. In this case, a ranger loaded Rabiger into an evacuation suit and attended her while the two were short-hauled to White Grass Meadows. A park ambulance then transported Rabiger to St. John's Medical Center.

Rangers remind backcountry users to refrain from overexertion, especially during the current hot and dry weather conditions. Backcountry users must carry plenty of water and stay properly hydrated. Becoming acclimated to high elevations is often accompanied by fluid loss; therefore, hikers should drink at least 3-4 quarts of fluid per day to stay hydrated. In addition, hikers should eat high-energy snacks to increase stamina. Signs of heat-related illness include heavy perspiration, muscle weakness, fatigue, collapse, headache, and/or confusion.

These incidents mark the eighth and ninth major search and rescue operations in Grand Teton National Park this year. Saturday's Lower Saddle rescue is the fourth helicopter evacuation of hikers who were overcome by the effects of heat, dehydration, overexertion or altitude. There have been several other heat-related incidents this summer where rangers have assisted dehydrated or ill hikers without the use of a helicopter.

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