

### **3 missing Wisconsin boys found safe after mine search**

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Associated Press

July 11, 2016

Iron Ridge, WI -- Three teenage boys got lost in a labyrinthine abandoned iron mine in southeastern Wisconsin for hours, spending the night huddled together against the cold before rescuers found them alive and safe Monday afternoon.

The boys — Tate Rose and Zachary Heron, both 16, and 15-year-old Samuel Lein — were reported missing about 9:45 p.m. Sunday, authorities said at a news conference. Around 2 a.m. Monday, police found their bikes off a road near an entrance to the mine, Dodge County Sheriff Dale Schmidt said.

Firefighters and rescue teams from multiple agencies began searching the mine, which Schmidt described as a “vast maze” of tunnels that goes on for four miles. Searchers’ efforts were hampered by water as deep as 8 feet in some tunnels as well as a number of cave-ins.

Rescuers led by a state Department of Natural Resources specialist who was familiar with the mine finally discovered a footprint early Monday afternoon and heard the boys yelling for help.

The searchers helped them out of the mine and reunited them with their parents. The boys weren’t hurt aside from scratches, Schmidt said.

“It was a very sad situation that turned into a very joyous one,” Schmidt said.

The sheriff said he spoke with Rose, who told him that the group decided to explore the mine on Sunday afternoon and then got lost in the tunnels. They walked in circles until their cellphone lights died. They then decided to sleep, huddling together for warmth in the 58-degree darkness, Schmidt said the boy told him.

Dodge County is a largely rural county northeast of Madison, the state capitol. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee owns the mine and uses it for monitoring bat activity. As many as 200,000 bats live in the mine, according to UWM’s website, making it one of the Midwest’s largest winter shelters for bats.

The property is marked with no trespassing signs, Schmidt said.