

Ogden Scout leader rescued from mine shaft above Ophir

An Ogden Scout leader was rescued from an Ophir Canyon mine shaft late Monday by Tooele County Search and Rescue volunteers.

Steven F. Stanford, 65, Ogden, was treated and released from Tooele Valley Regional Medical Center after spending about eight hours at the bottom of a mine shaft.

The Scout leader had trouble with his equipment when hiking the mile route to the cave and the five boys went ahead of him, according to chief deputy sheriff Frank Park. When he arrived at the mine shaft opening, the boys were not in the vicinity, so Mr. Stanford began looking for them.

The group, who had explored the cave previously in search of crystals, was out of school Monday because of the Martin Luther King holiday.

While searching for the boys, however, Mr. Stanford made a

wrong turn and fell down a 70-foot incline, then dropped another 20 feet to the bottom of the cave, according to Deputy Frank Park.

"It was a miracle we found him," said Sheriff Marion Carter. "His voice was so muffled because of the distance and the ledge above him. I am sure it was a terrorizing experience for him, because he was injured and probably disoriented. At that point his chances for survival were slim."

The Scouts looked for their leader in the cave after they found his back pack at the opening of the mine. However, after not being able to hear his voice, they decided to contact the sheriff's office.

The boys hiked down the mountainside, and then walked back to Ophir where sheriff authorities were notified at about 6 p.m. Twelve members of the

Sheriff's Search and Rescue Unit and three deputies began the search for Mr. Stanford, Deputy Park said.

Deputy Park said that the search team was not able to hear Mr. Stanford's voice until a member, who was secured by a rope, went down the incline.

The Scout leader had suffered a broken wrist, strained knee, and sprained ankle from the fall, Deputy Park said. Rescuers hoisted him out from the cave and administered first aid. After walking out of the cave, Mr. Stanford was placed on a stretcher and transported down the mountainside. He was taken to the Tooele hospital at about 1 a.m. Tuesday.

"Fortunately, he was well-prepared with equipment, lights, and medication for asthma," Deputy Park said. "Their problem came when they became

separated."

Sheriff Carter says the number of open mine shafts in Tooele County are of great concern to him and his office. "There are countless numbers of them all over the county," the sheriff said. "One of the main problems is that many have deadly air in them that cannot be detected without proper mining equipment and training."

The sheriff says he intends to contact the state about identifying ownership of the abandoned mines. "Our search and rescue volunteers can map them out, and close those that the state approves," Sheriff Carter added. "That is something we want to get started on right now."

He added, "My advice to anyone thinking about exploring these abandoned shafts and caves is to stay completely out of them. They are extremely dangerous."

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