

Three hikers rescued from abandoned mine in Carroll County

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GALAX, Va. – Three hikers are lucky to be alive after they were rescued from a mine in Carroll County on Monday night.

The risky rescue was all caught on camera.

Just before 9:30 p.m., Galax Volunteer Fire Chief Mike Ayers got a call.

Three women, in their early 20s, went hiking but got lost in an old abandoned iron mine in Carroll County.

"Went in and got disoriented," said Ayers.

The mine shafts are filled with treacherous terrain.

"Some of them are a mile or two long. Some of them are water-filled, falling rocks, slick, quicksand, you name it," said Ayers. "So it's a dangerous place to be."

Crews called in backup. Within 15 minutes, 60 first responders were on scene, including Carroll County Sheriff's Office, Galax Police Department's K9 unit, Pipers Gap Rescue Squad and Baywood Search and Rescue Squad.

Incredibly, the women were able to call for help.

"They were somewhere close to a ventilation shaft and one of them had one bar and was able to call, I think, a parent and say, 'Hey, look. We're in one of the mines. We're in one of the mine shafts and we are lost and we cannot get out,'" said Ayers.

Ayers told 10 News it was a miracle the girls got any cell signal at all. There's barely reception driving around on the road, let alone a thousand feet underground.

“That’s a God thing. That’s 100% a God thing,” said Ayers.

It took crews about 45 minutes to find the women until finally, rescuers spotted them. Ayers says the three hikers did the right thing once they realized they were lost.

“They were very smart. They stopped when they realized they were in trouble. They didn’t move anymore and they went ahead and called early,” said Ayers.

After another 45 minutes of working their way out to safety, the young women thanked the responders who left their families in the middle of the night and put their own lives on the line.

As a parent, Ayers said he’s grateful these hikers made it out safely.

“This was a good outcome. Not all of them are like that, so we were very thankful,” said Ayers. “You celebrate the wins and you celebrate them big.”

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