

Airmen Rescue Injured Hiker

Air Force Print News | August 17, 2007

MALMSTROM AIR FORCE BASE, Mont.-- A UH-1N "Huey" helicopter crew assigned to the 40th Helicopter Squadron here, rescued an injured hiker Aug. 10 near Cook City, Mont., just north of the Montana-Wyoming border.

The rescue, executed at approximately 9,000 feet, raises the unit's total number of "saves" to 369 and marks its fourth rescue in 2007.

The isolated site was about six miles southwest of Granite Peak, the highest point in Montana, at an elevation of 12,799 feet.

The crew consisted of four members, including Capt. Brian Rhoades, the aircraft commander; 1st Lt. Clell Knight, the co-pilot; Tech. Sgt. Scott Andrews, the flight engineer; and Capt. (Dr.) Mitchell Parrish, a flight surgeon.

Once they arrived on the scene the crew worked closely with ground coordinators who directed the helicopter to the location of the injured hiker.

"We were informed of the general location of the lost hiker and told he would be in a gray tent in a ravine," said Captain Parrish, on his fifth search-and-rescue mission. "On arrival we realized locating the hiker would be more difficult than expected. Luckily, shortly after arriving in our search area, the ground party was able to reach the patient and then vector us to his position."

The weather made this rescue difficult, as the crew had to navigate around thunderstorms and forest-fire smoke to make the extraction, Captain Rhoades said.

"If a rescue situation does not lend itself to landing, Malmstrom AFB's UH-1N's have a hoist capability that can raise the victim to the helicopter while it's hovering up to 200 feet above the ground," said Captain Rhoades, who has more than 1,100 flight hours in the UH-1. "However, for this rescue we determined the safest option was to sit (the helicopter) down in a nearby field."

The crew landed approximately 200 yards from the victim and with the assistance of the ground crew moved the injured hiker to the helicopter by stretcher.

The patient was in stable condition with an apparent left ankle fracture and right ankle sprain, Captain Parrish said. The crew took the hiker to the Billings International Airport and delivered their patient to an ambulance for transport to the hospital.

"The entire crew performed very well," Captain Rhoades said. "The experience and teamwork of the entire aircrew ensured mission accomplishment for a very challenging mountain operation."

The squadron's last save was July 8 when a crew rescued a 19-year-old male who sustained a leg injury while in the Absaroka Range just south of Livingston, Mont.