

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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YCSO's Rescue 1 Helicopter Integral in Sunday Rescue

Just before 4 PM on Sunday, March 9, 2014, the Yavapai County Sheriff's office was notified regarding a missing person in the Sycamore Canyon area of the Verde Valley. A group of hikers had left the prior day for a planned campout at a predestinated location in Sycamore Canyon. The group returned to the trailhead on March 9, 2014, but a 33-year-old female, identified as Jennifer Thompson from Phoenix, had fallen behind and was apparently lost. The group waited several hours at the trailhead for Thompson, and when she did not arrive, they contacted the Sheriff's Office.



To expedite the search effort and due to impending darkness, Rescue 1 was launched just after 5 PM to conduct an aerial flyover of the target area. Additionally, GPS tracking data from Thompson's cell phone was used to aid the Rescue 1 crew. Around 5:50 PM, Rescue 1 located the missing camper, landed, and then brought her to safety. Searchers learned she had taken a wrong turn leading her about 4 miles away from the correct trail. Just prior to being found, Thompson was able to find the appropriate trail, but was still 2 miles from the trailhead. She was extremely appreciative of the effort.

As evidenced in recent months, Rescue 1 has been a critical link to quickly finding lost/stranded/missing wilderness seekers. Impending darkness, Thompson's light clothing in anticipation of expected low nighttime temperatures, and her lack of survival gear, underscore YCSO's need for this valuable tool with crews on the ready every day.

Lessons: Thompson was wearing bright clothing which aided the aerial search / Thompson possessed a working cell phone allowing GPS tracking / Fellow campers should have contacted YCSO as soon as it was known Thompson was lost and alone – Time delays can complicate search efforts especially when darkness is near / Thompson should have remained stationary upon realization she was lost – a moving target is generally more difficult for searchers to locate in these circumstances.