

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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Recent Incidents Overview – Aircraft's hard landing in Rimrock / Search and Rescue

AIRCRAFT INCIDENT – On December 13, 2015, at approximately 11:45 AM, 62-year-old pilot Charlie Hoye from Rimrock attempted to land his single engine Lance Air 360 aircraft at the Rimrock Airport - 3400 block of E. Airport Drive. While landing, the aircraft struck asphalt with enough force to cause the landing gear to fail resulting in the plane sliding approximately 150 yards before coming to rest.



Hoye did not require medical attention. The plane sustained heavy damage to the wings, underbelly and prop. The landing gear was completely collapsed. The NTSB was notified and will conduct a follow-up review of the incident.

SEARCH AND RESCUE – On December 10, 2015, at about 9:30 PM, the Sheriff's Office was called to help find a 19-year-old Manuel Ortega after he got lost in the dark somewhere between the communities of Cottonwood and Sedona. Ortega was scheduled to get picked up at his home, located on Bill Gray Road inside the Coconino National Forest, by a family member to go to work. When the family member called to say they were running late, Ortega stated he would start walking toward Hwy 89A and wait for the ride.

Ortega left his house on foot at 3pm. At approximately 6:30 PM, he called a family member to say that he was lost and could no longer see where he was going due to darkness. Before he could identify a location, the phone stopped working.

As a result, the Yavapai County Search and Rescue Team's (YCSRT) Search Dog Unit, 4x4 Unit, Quad Unit, along with Verde Search and Rescue (SAR) personnel, were deployed. A DPS Ranger helicopter also arrived for an air search. Both Verde SAR and Ranger checked an area indicated by Ortega's cell phone provider as his last location, but he was not found. 4x4 units were assigned to check nearby roads while the Search Dog Units began checking areas in the vicinity of the man's home. One of the dog teams found a track and deployed a search dog, but lost the track in rough terrain.

Fortunately, as the sun started to rise, one of the dog handlers saw Ortega walking in their direction. He told rescuers that after leaving home, he attempted a 'short cut' route to the highway and became lost in the dark. He dug a hole near a tree to try and stay warm waiting for daybreak. Ortega had also unsuccessfully tried to start a signal fire overnight. Although wearing only light clothing, he survived the night without any medical issues.

The Sheriff's Office is extremely grateful for all the search and rescue volunteers who worked through the night to locate the missing man. Their dedication to unselfishly help others is commended.

Please note: The time it took to locate this man would have been far less if his cell phone battery was charged to allow calls and the ability to obtain GPS coordinates for tracking.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:
www.vcsoaz.gov