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By David Bedard/176th Wing Public Affairs

Alaska Air Guardsmen rescue hikers near Isabel Pass

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — In partnership with the Alaska State Troopers, Airmen with the Alaska Air National Guard's 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons rescued two distressed hikers near Isabel Pass north of Paxson.

According to Alaska Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Evan Budd, Alaska Rescue Coordination Center superintendent, the mission was opened in response to a request for assistance from the Alaska State Troopers.

The father-and-son hikers used a GPS-enabled satellite communication device to contact the State Troopers after the pair took a wrong turn and found themselves on a 4-by-4-foot ledge on a steep screed slope that made self-extraction a dangerous effort.

After receiving a report of the distressed hikers from the Troopers, the AKRCC tasked the Alaska Air National Guard to respond.

An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter from the 210th RQS launched from Eielson Air Force Base and an HC-130 Combat King II from 211th RQS launched from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Aboard each aircraft were a pararescueman and combat rescue officer who are highly trained personnel specializing in rescue operations.

The HC-130 performed aerial-refueling with the Pave Hawk during the rescue to extend the helicopter's range and decrease their response time.

The pararescueman and CRO aboard the Pave Hawk deployed via hoist about 150 feet away from the hikers, so they could traverse the slope and prepare the father and son for a safe hoist to the helicopter.

After packaging the hikers, the helicopter crew performed an overhead hoist to extract the team and survivors safely from the slope and deliver them to the Troopers.

Budd credited the father for carrying and properly using a satellite communication device.

"They did an excellent job," he said. "Key to this positive outcome was the father quickly identifying that the surrounding terrain far exceeded their capabilities. They knew who to call and what information to provide to ensure a quick, safe rescue."

For this mission, the AKRCC, the 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons, and the Alaska State Troopers were awarded two saves.