



AAC Publications

FALSE INREACH ACTIVATION

California, Mt. Shasta, Avalanche Gulch

On May 15 at 10 a.m., the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office called U.S. Forest Service ranger Nick Meyers to inform him of an inReach SOS activation near Red Banks, a series of cliffs that form a prominent landmark on the Avalanche Gulch route. No other information was available, and there were no cell phone calls or other communication connected with the activation.

Rangers Forrest Coots and Haylee Darby were ascending the route at the time and were near treeline. They continued up to Helen Lake—at 10,443 feet, the lake is over 2,000 feet below Red Banks—speaking to climbers along the way. Numerous guides on the mountain were also contacted. Nobody reported a distressed party. Coots and Darby staged at Helen Lake for several hours with no sign of emergency. The call was cleared, and rangers descended later in the afternoon.

ANALYSIS

The use of satellite-based communication devices has increased dramatically in recent years. While these devices undeniably save lives every year, they come with their own disadvantages, primarily the overuse of the SOS feature for non-emergency situations and, in this case, the false activation. False activation occurs primarily through user error. It squanders valuable rescuer time and resources. An overtaxed system might even impede a real emergency response. It is important for all device owners to protect their devices from accidental SOS activation and only use the SOS feature in emergency circumstances requiring outside assistance. (Source: Mt. Shasta Climbing Rangers.)

Images

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