



Chelan County Sheriff's Office

Brian Burnett, Sheriff

Law and Justice Bldg ★ 401 Washington Street #1 ★ Wenatchee, WA 98801
Phone: (509) 667-6851 ★ Fax: (509) 667 6860

For Immediate Release	Contact: Sergeant Kent Sisson
Incident #: 19C12709	
Climber Injured During Fall – Cannon Mountain	Phone: (509)667-6864
Date: 11/06/2019	http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/sheriff

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Sheriff Brian Burnett reports a Seattle man was rescued on Tuesday evening (11/05/2019) after suffering a significant fall on Sunday while descending Cannon Mountain. Ryan Cairnes - 36 years of age – suffered serious injuries in the fall, but eventually made his way to a trail on Tuesday evening where rescuers located him. He was transported to Central Washington Hospital in Wenatchee where he is in stable condition with fractures to his neck, right knee, scapula and also rib injuries.

The initial call to the Sheriff's Office reporting Cairnes as a potentially overdue climber was made on Monday at about 2:00pm by his mother in Pennsylvania. She advised that they had last heard from Cairnes at 4:05pm on Sunday – via text - while he was near the summit of Cannon Mountain which is approximately nine miles southwest of Leavenworth, WA. Family believed Cairnes had planned to be out Sunday evening, but was not certain of his itinerary and had little additional information. A search and rescue deputy with the Sheriff's Office located Cairnes' vehicle parked at the Stuart Lake Trailhead on Monday at 3:45pm.

On Tuesday morning, when it was determined Cairnes had not returned to his vehicle, nor made any attempts to contact family or friends, a search was initiated via air and ground assets. A Sheriff's Office helicopter began flying a search area above Cannon Mountain and eventually located what were believed to be human tracks in the snow descending the west side of the mountain. The aircraft encountered 40-knot winds during the initial search. As the winds subsided, a team of two Chelan County Mountain Rescue personnel were inserted to a point at which they could reach the summit and begin following the tracks down the west aspect of the

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Johnson**

Undersheriff

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mountain. By 4:45pm the team could not see a continuation of the tracks as they descended the slope around the 6,000 foot elevation. Darkness set in and the search team began making their way back to the Stuart Lake Trail. As the mountain rescue members were working their way down to the trailhead, they located Cairnes on the trail. He was conscious and alert with significant injuries from the fall he suffered on Sunday. A rescue team with a wheeled litter was requested and Cairnes was taken to the trailhead where a Cascade Medical Center ambulance was staged. Cairnes was transported to the hospital in Wenatchee.

During an interview with Cairnes at the hospital on Wednesday morning, he told a Sheriff's Office search and rescue coordinator that he believed he was going to die as he began sliding and tumbling down the mountain on Sunday afternoon. Cairnes stated he began descending the mountain summit (8,500ft elevation) shortly after sending the text to his mother in Pennsylvania on Sunday at 4:00pm. He was not having any issues during the descent until he encountered a boulder field around the 5,500 foot elevation level and was forced to alter his course to continue the decline. Cairnes said that while in a couloir, he "slipped" on what he believes was ice and began sliding uncontrollably down slope bouncing off of boulders and over ledges. Cairnes believes he slid and fell nearly 400 feet down the slope prior to coming to rest near the base of the mountain sustaining the many injuries to his body. Cairnes was wearing a climbing helmet and backpack with overnight and survival gear which he credits with cushioning some of the impacts. The backpack stayed intact during the fall and he was able to utilize his sleeping bag to stay warm through Sunday night. Cairnes did not have an emergency beacon or any cellular service to call for assistance and realizes now that he had not been specific with anyone concerning his climbing itinerary.

Due to his injuries, Cairnes made the decision to remain in place on Monday and only maneuvered himself over to a waterfall so he would have drinking water. His hope was that someone had called to report him as overdue (which did not occur until Monday afternoon). Cairnes decided that on Tuesday morning he would begin trying to hike his way out to the west toward the Stuart Lake Trail. The injuries to his neck, scapula and ribs prevented him from carrying his backpack. He found a branch to use as a walking stick to support his very injured right knee and decided to only carry his water bottle, helmet and sleeping bag. Cairnes said he

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spent nearly all of Tuesday working his way to the west where he knew the trail existed. He observed the Sheriff's Office helicopter flying in the area, but was not able to make himself visible to the crew. Cairnes entered into a forested area prior to nightfall and eventually made it down to the Stuart Lake Trail at nearly the same time the mountain rescue members were hiking back toward the trailhead (6:05pm).

Cairnes stressed that he feels lucky to be alive and appreciates the efforts of Chelan County Mountain Rescue and the Sheriff's Office.

Inquiries concerning this media release may be made to Sergeant Kent Sisson at the Chelan County Sheriff's Office – (509)667-6864

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