

## **Dramatic Hiker Rescue in Shelton**

### **Local News**

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SHELTON, Wash. - A U.S. Navy Helicopter crew is being credited with the dramatic rescue of a 16 year old Port Orchard girl from the Skokomish River Canyon Monday, July 26th. The girl had been hiking with her three friends, brother and sister at about 1:50 PM when she slipped and fell about 60 feet down the steep canyon wall into the water. The incident occurred just below the High Steel Bridge located about 14 miles northwest of Shelton in the Olympic National Forest. The girl had been hiking in the area with the five other teenagers. Two of the teenagers had already made their way to the bottom of the canyon when the incident occurred. They stayed and rendered assistance to the girl until rescuers arrived.

Because of the hazardous terrain, rescuing an injured person from the canyon is very difficult at best and can take several hours to complete. When fire rescuers from Fire Districts 4,6, and 9, arrived they found the girls condition serious and deteriorating. The girl was suffering from broken bones, internal injuries and hypothermia. It was apparent that a ground rescue was not going to be sufficient. Accordingly a call was made to the U.S Navy at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island for help.

The helicopter arrived on scene at about 6:30 PM. The pilot of the helicopter carefully lowered the large craft into the canyon under the bridge. The pilot hovered the helicopter with absolute precision while it lowered a Navy rescue diver into the water. The rescue diver then took control of the patient who had been packaged for the lift and transport by Fire rescuers at the bottom of the canyon. The pilot then raised the patient and the rescue diver into the helicopter. After the patient was secured in the aircraft, the pilot carefully backed the aircraft out from under the bridge. The aircraft was slowly and carefully raised even with the bridge deck and signaled with a thumbs up that all went well. Rescuers returned the gesture with a salute.

The patient was then transported to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

Meanwhile back in the steep canyon Fire Rescue personnel needed to extricate themselves and the two boys out of the canyon. The boys were not injured, but did need assistance. Twenty Five personnel from a DNR fire crew that had been working in the area assisted rescuers in pulling rescue personnel and the boys up out of the 400 foot canyon.

Each year the Sheriff's Office and rescue personnel are called to this location because

unwary hikers try to make their way down the side of this very dangerous canyon to the river. At least once or twice per year we experience injuries and deaths in this canyon from hikers disregarding the fact that this canyon is a restricted area. The United States Forest Service has closed the area around the High Steel Bridge canyon and does not allow hiking in the Skokomish River canyon area. It is not yet known if any charges will be forthcoming in this case.