



Examples of endangered persons refusing SAR help, waiting to call for help or hiding from help because of fear of large bill!

First hand accounts from emergency personnel involved

Climbers attempt self-rescue after dangerous accident

Boulder County, Colorado

Not long after the unprecedented media coverage of a search for missing skiers near Aspen, Colo., a climber accidentally rappelled off the end of their rope, and fractured his pelvis. Fearing the cost of a rescue as recently grossly mis-portrayed in the media, they did not call for help and tried to self-evacuate, resulting in additional injuries. Eventually the climbing partner went for help. Rescuers were exposed to added hazard and difficulty of having to perform the rescue in the middle of the night.

Climber hobbles 3,000' down mountain without rescue

Whatcom County, Washington

A climber from Canada descending Mt Baker had an accident at 9500', fracturing her ankle. Two nearby climbing physicians pronounced it likely fractured. When she asked them about a charge for rescues in the US, they told her it could be perhaps \$10,000. She decided she couldn't afford to be rescued. She took some pain medication, tightened up her plastic boot real tight and slowly hobbled down the mountain. Alerted by another climber with a cell phone, members of Bellingham Mountain Rescue met her at the 6500' level. When told that the rescue team doesn't charge for rescues she collapsed -- admitting to considerable pain. The US Navy used one of its rescue helicopters in this real emergency to train its crew to rescue marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen awaiting rescue in mountains anywhere they operate.

Man miles from shore refuses rescue from lake

Utah County, Utah

A man and a woman were stranded in the water at night 2-3 miles from shore in Utah Lake. Either their boat sank or a watercraft quit. We found them at around 23:00, and as we pulled along the woman and prepared to

help her into the boat, the man, twenty feet away, shouted "DON'T TOUCH HER!" It wasn't until he was assured that we didn't charge for rescue that he allowed us to give them a lift. Both were both coherent; hypothermia would have set in within hours and they likely would not have survived the night.

Victim says "I can't afford help"

Summit County, Colorado

A climber on the south side of Quandary Peak (14,270') got stuck. She called 9-1-1 and the on-call SAR team coordinator made contact with her by cell phone. She repeatedly refused assistance and said she just "wants to be talked out of this area." This particular area of Quandary is quite dangerous and it was after dark when she called. After going back and forth with her for some time, the SAR coordinator finally asked why she didn't want help and her answer was "I can't afford it". Once he explained to her that there would be no charge she instantly changed her tune and SAR went in and assisted her out.

Snowmobiler first calls family, not 9-1-1, for help

Boise County, Idaho

A stranded snowmobiler called, first, his wife for help. She then called the SAR team. When the wife told her husband that she was talking to SAR, he told her to hang up. This was after recent media coverage of the local ski area charging for "out of area" rescues. After assurances that the SAR team does not charge, they finally asked for help. The marine/backcountry deputy that reported this instance said he is regularly asked by the reporting party if there will be a bill for SAR.

Man becomes hysterical over perceived of cost of rescue

Los Angeles County, California

A rescue of a 20-ish man involved a technical rescue of 150'-180' to raise him up to a dam access road. The person was "borderline hysterical" because a county FD helicopter was

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present and he was afraid of being liable to pay for it. It was not until the rescuer with the person convinced him that there would be NO costs that it was safe to work with the victim on a 40°-70° slope.

Lost runner hides from SAR

Tucson, Arizona

A gentleman went for an evening run with his two dogs in the desert near his house. He had minimal clothing and took only a water bottle. He became lost and hunkered down with the dogs. One of the dogs ran off and was found by searchers, which led them back to the subject, who was now moving - to avoid searchers. The man said he heard searchers during the night, however he was afraid he would be billed for the search, so he did not respond. The next morning he deliberately tried to avoid searchers while trying to sneak back to his house.

Overdue persons avoid SAR

Douglas County, Colorado

Two adult dirt bike riders were reported overdue after dark. A dirt bike passed a responding SAR team member on the highway, who turned around to follow the bike. The two pulled into the parking lot of a local establishment. Another SAR member was already there, briefing the proprietor. The rider was one of the two overdue persons. Somehow the two riders knew that SAR was en route; I'm guessing that when the riders got to a place with cell phone coverage, one of them called home and was told SAR had been notified. This rider rode back on a non-motorcycle trail in an effort to avoid SAR. He said that he was worried that he would be billed.

Missing woman tells SAR she is not the missing party

Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon

This search occurred right after Oregon passed a law allowing subjects of SAR missions to be billed. "Our assignment was to check beside the trail to the lake. On the way, we heard a radio transmission that a searcher thought he had found Linda. We thought it was over, but a bit later he reported that the woman he saw had never heard of Linda. The search continued and we prepared to head up the trail toward our search area. Before we got on the trail we were asked to hold our position, so we spent about half an hour talking and waiting for something to happen. Then we found out why we were put on hold. A dog handler had a positive find. He had spotted Linda who was trying to hide, then had to chase her down to talk to her. It seems that the first woman was indeed Linda but had denied it when asked. Only later was the dog handler able to get her to admit that we had found our quarry."

Women searches for husband by herself for hours, dangerous weather arrives

Mt. Evans Wilderness, Colorado

A newly married wife dropped off her new husband for some high altitude hiking and he failed to return to be picked up. She said on their way to the mountains, they had joked about which of their bank accounts would pay for "the \$10,000 rescue" if anything happened to him. Instead of calling for help, she drove the road for three-four hours looking for him, worried about the bill she anticipated. She finally called, but the search began late at night and by then the peak was enveloped in clouds. Searchers had visibility of a just a few feet and risked walking off the top of 600' cliffs.