

# South Dakota National Guard

## Public Affairs Office

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Guard assists in rescue mission in National Park

BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK, S.D. – Four South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers assisted in a rescue mission in Badlands National Park, near Interior, Thursday, June 7.

The Soldiers, using a UH-72 Lakota helicopter, conducted a cable-hoist extraction of a park visitor who was hiking, fell and was injured on Notch Trail, according to a National Park Service press release.

Dave Johnson, 57, from Audubon, Penn., was hiking alone and when he ventured off the trail and slipped and slid into a crack, according to the release. Park officials stated he started hiking at 7:30 a.m. and had been trapped and unable to get help until he was discovered by other park visitors at approximately 10:30 a.m. He was experiencing severe leg and back pain along with numerous cuts and scrapes.

Park Rangers and the Interior Volunteer Fire Department were first on scene after hiking in about three quarters of a mile to find Johnson. Multiple agencies responded to the incident including Kadoka and Philip Ambulance companies, Jackson County Sheriff's officers and the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

The call for assistance to the Guard came at about 11:30 a.m., after Park Service and emergency response personnel determined that the safest and most appropriate method of rescue would be by helicopter, especially considering the difficulty of bringing a litter down the wood/cable ladder that connects the upper and lower parts of Notch Trail, according to the release.

Incident command officials at the scene made the determination that the SDARNG's UH-72 Lakota helicopter had the right capabilities to extract the injured hiker.

This was the South Dakota Guard's first live-rescue mission in the state with the new UH-72 Lakota helicopter, which was fielded in May 2011. The Guard, along with the National Park Service and other agencies, trained for this exact scenario about a week earlier.

"We trained for this type of scenario on May 30," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Christian Frank, pilot-in-command. "That's how important the interagency coordination and training is. The rescue mission went very smooth."

The SDARNG flight crew from the Army Aviation Support Facility hoisted the patient out to a nearby parking lot. The patient had been secured in a Stokes litter by Black Hills Life Flight personnel, which was already on scene with both a flight nurse and paramedic to provide advanced medical care.

The hiker was then transferred to the Life Flight helicopter for evacuation to Rapid City Regional Medical Center.

Other SDARNG crew members assisting in the rescue operation were 1st Lt. John Barnes, co-pilot, and crew chiefs Staff Sgt. Anton Oerlline and Sgt. Jarred Fusselman.

“This is what the Guard does – helping people,” said Oerlline. “The training we go through prepares us to be able to respond and assist to an emergency quickly and efficiently.”

“Using the Lakota in this manner is what it was purchased for,” said Frank. “The awareness of our interagency partners of our capabilities, as well as our training together makes us a valuable asset to the state and the people.”

“Bridging bonds with other agencies and the people make success possible when an emergency arises,” continued Frank. “We were happy to be of assistance to the emergency crews on the ground and to help get the patient the care he needed.”

Coincidentally, the Black Hills Life Flight helicopter was piloted by Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Ret.) Wes Barnes, the father of 1st Lt. John Barnes.

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**P6070015:** – A South Dakota Army National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter lands in a parking lot to assist in a rescue mission in Badlands National Park, near Interior, June 7, 2012. Four Soldiers assisted in a cable-hoist extraction of a park visitor who was hiking, fell and was injured on Notch Trail. (National Park Service courtesy photo) (RELEASED)



**P6070040:** South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers and emergency response crews discuss the plan for extracting an injured hiker during a rescue mission in Badlands National Park, near Interior, June 7, 2012. A SDARNG UH-72 Lakota helicopter was used to perform a cable-hoist extraction of a park visitor who was hiking, fell and was injured on Notch Trail. The patient was then transferred to a Black Hills Life Flight helicopter and evacuated to Rapid City Regional Medical Center. (National Park Service courtesy photo) (RELEASED)



**P6070029:** South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers, emergency response crews and Black Hills Life Flight personnel evacuate an injured hiker during a rescue mission in Badlands National Park, near Interior, June 7, 2012. A SDARNG UH-72 Lakota helicopter was used to perform a cable-hoist extraction of a park visitor who was hiking, fell and was injured on Notch Trail. The patient was then transferred to the Black Hills Life Flight helicopter and evacuated to Rapid City Regional Medical Center. (National Park Service courtesy photo) (RELEASED)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail [pao@sd.ngb.army.mil](mailto:pao@sd.ngb.army.mil).