**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE                                                                  RELEASE 23-050**

**July 5, 2023**

      Whidbey SAR Conducts Rescues Over Holiday Weekend

NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND, Wash. – A Search and Rescue (SAR) team from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island performed two rescues over the Independence Day holiday weekend.

The rescues included a hiker who had fallen down a slope on Silver Star Mountain and a search and subsequent rescue of a speed-flyer who had disappeared near Church Mountain 48 hours earlier.

On Sunday morning, July 2, 2023, the SAR team was called to rescue a 35-year-old woman who had fallen down a slope and been injured on Silver Star Mountain northwest of Winthrop, Wash. The SAR team launched at 9:35 a.m. and arrived on scene about 10:10 a.m.

After a search of the area, the SAR team found the party of hikers with the injured hiker and inserted two SAR team members via hoist. The injured hiker was soon hoisted onto the SAR helicopter and delivered to St. Joseph Hospital in Bellingham, Wash. by approximately 11:20 a.m.

The next morning, July 3, 2023, a SAR team was called to search for a speed-flyer who had gone missing at some point on July 1 near the peak of Church Mountain, northeast of Glacier, Wash.

Speed-flying is a form of paragliding where the speed-flyer launches with a chute from a slope and glides down, relatively close to the ground and at fairly high speeds, rather than soaring like a paraglider.

The SAR team launched at 5:10 a.m. July 3 to conduct the search in the area where the paraglider was suspected to have been flying.

After an initial sweep the SAR team conducted a low-level, slow search and eventually found a chute of the same description as the paraglider’s chute. A SAR team member was inserted to the spot to search for the paraglider where he found footprints heading off into the bush away from the chute. A SAR team member in the aircraft noticed an off-colored patch of green about 80 meters away in small creek amongst fallen trees and, using binoculars, saw the paraglider waving one arm trying to signal the helicopter.

With the paraglider located, the SAR team member on the ground was recovered, then two SAR team members were inserted to the patient’s location via hoist. By 6:35 a.m. the patient was hoisted aboard the SAR helicopter with significant injuries and was flown to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle where he was dropped off just after 7 a.m.

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island SAR has conducted 18 missions this calendar year, which includes 1 MEDEVAC, 3 searches and 14 rescues.

The Navy SAR unit operates three MH-60S helicopters from NAS Whidbey Island as search and rescue/medical evacuation (SAR/MEDEVAC) platforms for the EA-18G aircraft as well as other squadrons and personnel assigned to the installation.  Pursuant to the National SAR Plan of the United States, the unit may also be used for civil SAR/MEDEVAC needs to the fullest extent practicable on a non-interference basis with primary military duties according to applicable national directives, plans, guidelines and agreements; specifically, the unit may launch in response to tasking by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (based on a Washington State Memorandum of Understanding) for inland missions, and/or tasking by the United States Coast Guard for all other aeronautical and maritime regions, when other assets are unavailable.

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