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**NOAA SATELLITES HELP SAVE HIKER
FROM BLIZZARD ON UTAH MOUNTAIN SIDE**

A hiker stranded three days in a snowstorm 11,000 feet up a Utah mountain was rescued on Thursday thanks to U.S. and Russian environmental satellites in the international Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking Program, Cospas-Sarsat, and to the U.S. Air Force Rescue Coordination Center.

Satellites operated by the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and by the Russian government, detected a distress signal from the hiker's emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB). Hiker John Fawcett was caught in the blizzard, in which winds gusted to 100 mph. He had no food or shelter. His last resort was to set off the emergency signal to save his life.

Fawcett had purchased the EPIRB three years ago because he frequently hikes alone, and thought that someday the EPIRB might be useful. He was right. Its signal was detected by the Cospas-Sarsat system, and NOAA's U.S. Mission Control Center notified the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. The Air Force RCC coordinated the rescue response and dispatched the Utah Civil Air Patrol and the Duchane County Sheriff's Department who sent search and rescue assets via air and ground. During the search, the Civil Air Patrol notified the Air Force RCC that the lost hiker was located with the transmitter device. The hiker was transported to the Duchane Airport by the county sheriff.

"The Search and Rescue satellite system is truly a humanitarian program," said Ajay Mehta, manager of NOAA's Sarsat program. "To date SARSAT has assisted in the rescue of over 14,000 individuals from boating and aviation accidents around world. Over 4,300 were in the United States alone."

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The Cospas-Sarsat system uses a constellation of satellites in geostationary and polar orbits to detect and locate emergency beacons on vessels and aircraft in distress. NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NOAA Satellite and Information Service) represents the United States in this program, providing satellite platforms and ground equipment, and operating the U.S. Mission Control Center.

NOAA's Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES) can instantly detect emergency signals. The polar-orbiting satellites in the system detect emergency signals as they circle the Earth from pole to pole. Emergency signals are sent to the U.S. Mission Control Center at NOAA's facility in Suitland, Md., then automatically sent to rescue forces around the world. Today there are 35 countries participating in the system. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the system.

NOAA's Satellite and Information Service is the nation's primary source of space-based meteorological and climate data. NOAA's Satellite and Information Service operates the nation's environmental satellites, which are used for weather forecasting, climate monitoring, and other environmental applications such as fire detection, ozone monitoring, and sea surface temperature measurements. NOAA's Satellite and Information Service also operates three data centers, which house global data bases in climatology, oceanography, solid earth geophysics, marine geology and geophysics, solar-terrestrial physics, and paleoclimatology. To learn more about NOAA's Satellite and Information Service, please visit: <http://www.nesdis.noaa.gov>.

To learn more about NOAA's role in the Cospas-Sarsat program, please visit: <http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov>.