



# SHERIFF KOOTENAI COUNTY



SHERIFF **BEN WOLFINGER**

UNDERSHERIFF **DAN MATTOS**

## Media Release December 10, 2016

**Kootenai County, Idaho** – Recent winter storms prompt backcountry travel advisory from the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office.

With the recent snow fall, the Sheriff's Office has been responding to an increased number of stranded motorists in the backcountry areas throughout the County.

This morning, at about 2:30 AM, deputies were called to the National Forest area, near Burnt Cabin Saddle in regards to four stranded individuals whose vehicle had become stuck in the snow. Due to poor cell phone reception, a lack of knowledge of the area and the deteriorated weather conditions, they were stranded for nearly twelve hours before Backcountry Deputies and Search & Rescue personnel located them. When located, the individuals were suffering from hypothermia and dehydration due to not being prepared for the conditions.

The Sheriff's Office is warning the public that even though the snow in the local areas is minimal, the backcountry areas are seeing significant snow depths of several feet.

If you do travel into the mountainous areas, you should be prepared with food, water, warm clothing and sufficient supplies to weather a night in the woods should you become stranded.

Additionally, you should have a travel plan which includes letting someone know where you are going, and by which route, as well as when you plan on returning. If you have snow chains, they should be put on prior to becoming stuck. Travelers should also not exceed their vehicle limitations. It is still possible to become stuck with snow chains and 4-wheel drive.

If a motorist does become stranded, they should stay with their vehicle. Trying to walk out of the backcountry can decrease the ability of rescuers to locate an individual as well as increase hypothermic conditions.

For further information on backcountry travel advice, citizens can contact the Sheriff's Recreation Safety Section - Backcountry Unit at (208)446-2250.

Ben Wolfinger, Sheriff  
By: Lieutenant Stu Miller,  
Recreation Safety Section