



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tennessee National Guard aircrew rescues stroke victim

CLINGMANS DOME, Tenn. – A Tennessee Army National Guard medical flight crew responded to an emergency air evacuation mission after a victim suffered a stroke while hiking in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park area, April 15.

At approximately 9 a.m., the Tennessee Military Department and Tennessee Emergency Management Agency were notified of a possible stroke victim near Clingmans Dome along the Appalachian Trail, needing immediate medical care. At 9:40 a.m., the Tennessee National Guard received the official mission request.

A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from the Tennessee National Guard's Detachment 1, Company C, 1-171st Aviation Regiment based in Knoxville assembled in under an hour and launched to the incident site at approximately 10:03 a.m.

The flight crew consisted of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Daniel Backus, Pilot in Command, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Trailson Moore, Pilot, Staff Sgt. Donald Sweet, Crew Chief, Col. Robert Ross, Flight Surgeon, Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Banta, Flight Paramedic, and Sgt. 1st Class Giovanni DeZuani, Flight Paramedic.

At 10:18 a.m., the aircraft arrived on the scene, and the flight crew began rescue hoist operations. Ross and Banta lowered to the patient and performed a brief medical assessment; the patient was then mobilized onto a litter and hoisted safely into the helicopter.

Once onboard, the flight crew continued medical aid while enroute to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville.

“The administrative portion of the pre-launch process was flawless,” said Col. Jay Deason, the State Army Aviation Officer. “The flight crew immediately jumped into action and began preparing for the mission; everyone was in sync, and that's the primary indicator that we have a very streamlined process.”

This is the first search and rescue mission by the Tennessee National Guard this year.

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A Tennessee Army National Guard medical flight crew prepares for an emergency air evacuation mission after a hiker suffered a stroke while on the Appalachian Trail in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, April 15. (Courtesy Photo from the Tennessee National Guard)



Staff Sgt. Donald Sweet begins hoist operations and lowers Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Banta to the patient at the Double Springs Gap Shelter on the Appalachian Trail, April 15. (Courtesy Photo from the Tennessee National Guard)



The Tennessee National Guard's Col. Robert Ross (left), Staff Sgt. Donald Sweet (center), and Sgt. 1st Class Giovanni DeZuani (right) offload a stroke patient at the University of Tennessee Medical Center helipad in Knoxville after a search and rescue mission along the Appalachian Trail, April 15. (Courtesy Photo from the Tennessee National Guard)



A Tennessee Army National Guard medical flight crew responded to an emergency air evacuation mission after a hiker suffered a stroke while on the Appalachian Trail, April 15. The flight crew successfully transported the patient to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. (Courtesy Photo from the Tennessee National Guard)

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