Amateurs in Action

Recounts of ham radio operators who have used their effort and skills to help others in a time of need

Lost in the woods



Bill Barber NE1B

It was a terrific Sunday for a short hike on 11 December 2022. Ed Lawson K1VP set out with his dog Molly on Leavitt Road, near Belmont, New Hampshire, for what would normally have been an easy and uneventful stroll. He had his smartphone, a handheld DMR ham radio, and plenty of daylight, but left his daypack home, since for him this was just a short walk.

Feeling energetic, Ed decided to depart from his intended trail to take a side path, which would require a little bushwhacking to meet up with a distant snowmobile trail. What he didn't know was that the area he was cutting through had recently been logged, and so did not appear the same as what he remembered. Soon, Ed realized he and Molly were lost. He pulled out his phone to alert his wife, only to find its battery was drained.

He turned to his remaining communication device, the DMR ham radio, and called through a recently installed DMR repeater on nearby Gunstock Mountain for somebody to contact his wife. Right away, Bill Barber NE1B answered Ed's call, and got hold of Ed's wife. Once Bill explained the situation, Ed's wife called 911, and the search was on. Bill soon looped in Rick Zach K1RJZ, who was much more familiar with hiking trails in the area.



Rick Zach K1RJZ

Local police and fire units were called in to assist with the search, and they positioned vehicles at likely locations based on information provided by Rick, who relayed information between Ed and the rescue team. The search team sounded sirens at intervals, in hopes Ed could hear them, but Rick repeatedly told them that Ed could not hear them, which at least told them *where Ed was not*.



Chuck Cunningham K1MIZ

After a while, Chuck Cunningham K1MIZ, who was monitoring the search, noticed that Ed had accidentally changed channels. Once Bill and Rick regained communication with Ed, thanks to Chuck, Ed was able to maintain contact until he saw some distant lights, and hiked out to Federal Street, where he found the searchers and notified them. The search was over, and Ed was finally reunited with his wife.

Among other lessons learned, Ed said, *No matter how short you think a hike is going to be, you should take your daypack*. He also mentioned that a flashlight would be a good thing to pack.

You can read more about Ed's adventure on the *Laconia Daily Sun* and on ARRL.