

Hikers Rescued After Night in Snow, Wind, Cold

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With the cold, snow, and blasting winds we got Tuesday night here, you can imagine the conditions on the western edge of the High Country, on the ridge at the state line where the Appalachian Trail runs. Well, a couple of trail hikers can give you a first-hand account. Avery searchers gathered at the Frank Volunteer Fire Department in far western Avery to take part in a search along the Appalachian Trail, an effort that then turned into a rescue. The effort launched late yesterday morning after a call from the two hikers reporting that they were trapped by deep snow and were being beaten down by the combination of high winds and single-digit temperatures—the combination making for extremely dangerous wind chills. Searchers took Whitaker Branch Road heading to an intersecting point along the trail near Little Hump Mountain, while arrangements were being made for a NC State Patrol helicopter to possibly be employed, but just as searchers got to the area, they came upon the two missing hikers, who then were helped to warm vehicles for a much-needed warm-up. An Avery Sheriff's deputy took the two back to their vehicle at the state line after they declined a medical check at an area hospital.