



Special Press Release

December 30, 2013

On the afternoon of December 27th the Ravalli County Sheriff's Office received a report of possible fatality motor vehicle accident in the West Fork of the Bitterroot. Deputies responded to the area of Woods Creek Road, in the vicinity of Painted Rocks Lake, south west of Darby. Montana Highway Patrol, Darby Ambulance, Hamilton Ambulance, Painted Rocks Volunteer Fire Department and Quick Response Unit, Ravalli County Search and Rescue, and the West Fork Volunteer Fire Department were all dispatched as well.

When Deputies arrived, they learned that there had not been a motor vehicle accident. It appeared that the victim's vehicle had been stuck in deep snow, near the edge of the road, and that as he was attempting to free his vehicle, he had apparently fallen down an embankment, injuring himself to the degree that he could not return to his vehicle.

Deputies also learned that several people had come to the man's aid, and that he was still alive when discovered, initially by two snow mobilers. The two men attempted to render aid to the victim, including first aid, CPR, and lighting a fire to warm him up. When the victim did not respond to their efforts, the two road their snow machines out for help. One of the individuals contacted was a physician. The victim was pronounced dead before he could make it to a hospital.

Ravalli County Sheriff/Coroner Chris Hoffman has identified the victim as 63 year old John M. Sutherland of Marblehead, Ohio. The victim was a part time resident of the West Fork area.

Mr. Sutherland was transported to the Montana State Crime Lab in Missoula. The medical examiner's office said that Mr. Sutherland had suffered some blunt force trauma, but that the likely cause of death was Hypothermia.

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