

Brian Sandoval
Governor



March 5, 2011

Gail Powell
Public Information Officer
Nevada Department of Public Safety
gpowell@dps.state.nv.us
775-687-0325

Media Release

Man Dies After Falling Down Closed Mine Site

On Wednesday March 2, 2011, at approximately 12:00 p.m. Lander County Sheriff Ron Unger was notified that a man, later identified as Devin Westenskow, age 28, of Evanston, Wyoming, fell while exploring an abandoned mine shaft. The mine site closed since 1945, is located in the Jersey Valley at the far eastern part of Pershing County, Nevada.

Sheriff Unger, from Lander County responded to the mine site with the Search and Rescue Rope Rescue Team. Several attempts were made to rappel into the vertical mine shaft with a rope rescue team member and camera to locate the victim. Due to the inherent dangers and instability of the vertical shaft the victim could not be located.

The location of mine site was determined to be in Pershing County in which Sheriff Richard Machado was notified of the situation and additional resources were sent to the scene. At 8:42 p.m. the search was called off for the night due to the dangerous terrain and reopened early morning of the next day. At that time a robotic camera was brought to site and launched from the unstable environment of the vertical shaft. Mr. Westenskow was located at a depth of 182 feet sustaining injuries caused by the magnitude of the fall but was breathing.

Sheriff Machado contacted the Nevada Department of Emergency Management to request assistance from Washoe County Sheriff's "Hasty Team" with rescue efforts. The Fallon Naval Air Station was called in to provide Helicopter transportation for the "Hasty Team" to the site along with ground support equipment.

Lander County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, assisted by Newmont Gold, Phoenix Mine Project, Washoe County Search and Rescue Hasty Team, N.A.S. Fallon, Pershing County Sheriff's Office, Pershing County Search and Rescue, Nevada Department of Public Safety O.S.H.A., The Bureau of Land Management, Nevada Department of Minerals, Access Air, ORMAT Geothermal project and many other volunteers participated in the rescue attempts.

The parents of the victim, Denise and Carl Westenskow, were present at the mine site and were kept apprised of the rescue efforts. After 48 hours of rescue attempts, and all resources were exhausted, monitoring the camera became a priority, Devin James Westenskow was pronounced deceased at 11:55 by Deputy Coroner John Rogers of the Pershing County Sheriff's Office.

The site was secured with a barrier and discussions on how to seal the site will be conducted.

XXX

