

More resources brought in to search for missing snowboarder

By Bill Lindelof and Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A National Guard helicopter is scheduled to join the search tonight for a snowboarder who has been missing in the Sierra Nevada since Tuesday afternoon.

Capt. Jeff Ausnow of the Placer County Sheriff's Department said the helicopter will fly over the area around the Alpine Meadows ski resort using Forward Looking Infrared Technology in an effort to locate Shawnte Marie Willis, 25, of Tahoma. This will be the first opportunity search teams have had to use air support, he said, noting that a break in the weather they had hoped for before nightfall did not occur.

Ausnow said Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue skiers searched through the night. They were relieved this morning by another search and rescue team of about 10 people on snowshoes who continued the search.

Ausnow said high winds and low visibility have prevented the use of search vehicles, including helicopters and snowmobiles, and blowing snow has covered tracks. Although the search area is relatively small, he characterized it as backcountry on U.S. Forest Service land that is not groomed for skiing.

As the search continues, Willis' family in Humboldt County is hoping for the best, but worried because she has epilepsy.

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