

---

# FireFightingNews.com

---

## Ariz Teens Rescued From Tree After Lake Ice Cracks

January 4, 2013

**Arizona** - A firefighter in a waterproof suit crossed a partially frozen Arizona lake to help rescue two teenagers who spent at least two frigid hours hanging onto a dead tree after ice began to crack, authorities said Thursday. A third teen who had stayed on the snow-covered bank of Fool Hollow Lake near Show Low called for help Wednesday while the other two clung to the tree, authorities said.

Emergency personnel retrieved the boys after firefighter Jack Gessner made his way across the lake with a rope attached to a boat carrying other rescuers.

Gessner said he initially crawled atop the ice then had to make his way through the water after he had covered half of the 200 feet and the ice broke.

His suit and training worked as designed, leaving him dry but tired.

"I thought it went well. It was a really good team effort and everybody did their jobs," said Gessner, a firefighter on the ice rescue team of Lakeside Fire District.

Gessner said the boys didn't seem to be panicking, and they were OK as he swam by the tree to reach the shore and get a foothold to hold the rope.

The boys were taken to a hospital for treatment of mild hypothermia.

"Their hands and feet got pretty cold," Show Low Fire Capt. Brent Mix said. "It was dark by the time we got them to shore."

Each of the two stranded teenagers lost a shoe that stuck to the ice. Bonnie Van Aller said her son Christian told her he took off one of his shoes when a branch broke and it got soaked in the lake as his foot slipped.

An emergency room nurse married to a sheriff's deputy, Van Aller said she knew it was a serious situation. She left work to go to the lake after her husband called to report the boys' predicament.

"` Bonnie, it's not good.' For my husband to say that, I've got to go," Van Aller said.

She said she watched the rescue and was confident the firefighters had the know-how to save her son. Still, she was thankful about the outcome.

"This is by the grace of God, I'm telling you. I woke up this morning saying thank you, thank you, thank you - this is my only child," Van Aller said. "Thank God the tree was there."

Arizona lakes usually don't get cold enough for ice to freeze solidly, said Kirk Webb, a spokesman for the Lakeside Fire District.

"Every once in a while we have kids trying to see how far out they can go," Mix said. "That was pretty foolish. There was probably an inch of ice in the middle of the lake."

It was 27 degrees when the call for help was made, and 22 degrees by the time the rescue was completed after sunset, Mix said.

Written by Associated Press

**FireFightingNews.com - FireFighter Owned and Operated**  
©2013 e-Firefighter, LLC - All Rights Reserved.