Four Stranded atop Sharatin

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Four men are trapped atop Sharatin Mountain on Kodiak Island, pinned down by high winds and blizzard conditions. As of this afternoon, weather conditions were preventing a Coast Guard helicopter from Air Station Kodiak from responding. Petty Officer Walter Shinn said winds are gusting to 50 miles per hour, and visibility on the mountain is too low for a rescue attempt.

Kodiak Kenai Cable Company president Walt Ebell says the four men include Brian Kincaid, the company's chief operating officer, and three contractors from Belarde Custom Concrete Company of Kodiak. They have not yet been identified. Ebell says the men are installing the first tower in an island-wide network of high-speed microwave relays.

The men were dropped off with a week of supplies in good weather Sunday to continue work on the tower, which had been halted with the onset of winter. During the night, high winds reportedly blew away one tent and some of the supplies.

Ebell says the four men are now back together, after three were separated during the night. The three reportedly hunkered down in a snow cave on the leeward side of the mountain, about 10 miles west of Kodiak City.

One member of the group called the Coast Guard at about 5 a.m. on a satellite phone, reporting he was in good condition. The other three called at 7:45 on VHF radio reporting mild frostbite and hypothermia symptoms.

Ebell says if weather conditions improve, a contract helicopter will pick them up on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Shinn says the Coast Guard will launch sooner if conditions permit. Shinn said the Alaska State Troopers are planning to send a ground party up the mountain, which Ebell confirmed.