

Statement by Senator Maria Cantwell
As inserted in the Congressional Record on May 14, 2010
National Search and Rescue Week

Mr. President, I rise today to introduce a Resolution to honor our nation's Search and Rescue personnel by designating May 16 through May 22, 2010 as "National Search and Rescue Week."

As many of my colleagues know, I am an avid hiker and mountaineer. Over the years, I have scaled several of Washington State's majestic peaks and hiked many of our backcountry trails. Whenever I load my pack for another trip – whether for a day hike or a trip up Mt. Rainier – I, like all people who enjoy the great outdoors, take steps to prepare myself and minimize my risk. I bring my essential gear, extra food and water, and make sure someone knows my trip plan.

But no amount of preparation can protect you from a misstep or unforeseen circumstance.

In such instances, it is often the swift response of trained search and rescue personnel that makes the difference between tragedy and survival.

These heroes come from a broad range of agencies and organizations, including sheriff offices, police departments, national and state parks, private corporations, and all branches of the military, including the U.S. Coast Guard. All of them – whether volunteer or salaried, military or civilian – exemplify courage, commitment, and compassion in performing their duties.

Whether it is an accident in the wilderness or a natural disaster in a major city, search and rescue personnel are always ready to respond. All across our country, when people find themselves in danger, they can be thankful for the bravery and willingness-to-serve exhibited by these dedicated individuals.

Every day, men, women, pack animals, and search dogs put themselves in harm's way to ensure the safety and security of citizens in need. Their territory knows no bounds; wherever the mission is, they go, sometimes for weeks at a time.

Search and rescue teams are relentless in their training. They go to great lengths to ensure they are physically and mentally fit and well-versed in the newest search and rescue techniques. This preparation enables them to approach complex search and rescue situations with confidence and skill.

Their selfless dedication does not stop at our nation's borders. Civilian search and rescue teams are ready at a moment's notice to respond to international disasters too, including the recent earthquake in Haiti and the tsunami in Indonesia. By extending their reach around the globe to

wherever there is need, search and rescue personnel have saved lives, reunited families, and boosted America's reputation abroad.

In the simplest terms, search and rescue personnel take great personal risks to come to the aid of others. Carrying out their mission often demands great personal discipline and sacrifice, and some even pay the ultimate price. This selfless commitment to others is embodied in the Search and Rescue motto: "So that others may live."

I ask my colleagues to stand with me today to honor the members of the Search and Rescue community across our nation. Their dedication to saving the lives of citizens who are lost or injured does not waver, and neither should we in passing this small act of recognition for their heroic efforts.

Thank you Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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