MEDIA RELEASE

Severe Winter Weather Backcountry Advisory/Warning

All of Central Oregon and the Deschutes National Forest

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The Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office and The Deschutes National Forest are issuing a joint advisory concerning backcountry travel in our areas. The following conditions may exist in all or some backcountry areas:

- 5-7 ft. of recent snowfall creates severe backcountry conditions
- Elevated avalanche conditions: natural and human triggered avalanches have been reported
- High winds have brought down trees across backcountry areas
- Snow cat operators report becoming disoriented and losing trails in whiteout conditions and extremely deep snow with severe snow drifts. Trail grooming is suspended during severe snow conditions.
• Backcountry and trail users alike have an increased likelihood of becoming exhausted, stuck, broken down, lost or injured during present conditions.

• Cell phone service is limited in many backcountry areas, batteries die, users are often poorly equipped and do not know their location this may further complicate emergency situations.

• Search and Rescue assistance may take hours, overnight or even days before rescuers can reach people in urgent need. You not only risk your own life when in a dire situation, you risk the lives of rescue personnel. Instances of death increase during extreme weather events.

• Until conditions improve and the snow pack settles we advise all users of the hazardous conditions and to avoid backcountry areas, even backcountry trails.

• Current-severe winter hazards include: unconsolidated deep snow, strong winds, zero visibility, buried trail and other directional signing, variable (high to extreme) avalanche conditions, deep tree wells, buried hazards, downed trees, heavy snow/ice falling from trees, no trail grooming in high elevations, continued heavy snow and/or rain possible for several days. Slush and water hazards may develop with rain on snow conditions.

The Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue would urge all recreational users to use extreme caution during this current winter storm.