



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2022

Please find the below statement from the Iditarod Trail Committee:

A severe ground storm with very high winds caused deteriorating conditions on the Iditarod Trail going over the Topkok Hills on the way to Safety. As a result, Gerhardt Thiar (bib #39) activated his emergency beacon at approximately 10:19 a.m. this morning.

An individual from Council, Edward Stang, was in the area on snowmachine and came upon Thiar and his team without knowledge of the emergency beacon activation, and assisted Thiar, who sustained an injury to his leg, to White Mountain. Upon arrival in White Mountain, the Iditarod had Thiar transported via a Bering Air helicopter to Nome, where he is currently being evaluated.

During this similar timeframe, Bridgett Watkins (bib #36) made a call to a family member in Nome asking that she be assisted off the trail. White Mountain search and rescue was immediately notified. In the meantime, Watkin's husband, Scotty, had left Nome by snowmachine with four other residents to assist mushers on the trail. Scotty located Watkins and her team and transported her to White Mountain, where she was evaluated at the local health clinic. Watkins was transported to Nome via Bering Air aircraft and is currently with her family.

White Mountain search and rescue, along with support from the Iditarod trail snowmachine crew who monitors the back of the race, are in the process of bringing both sled dog teams to White Mountain. The sled dogs will be immediately evaluated by Iditarod race veterinarians upon arrival.

Because of these rescue efforts, both mushers did scratch from the race.

The Iditarod would like to thank the Alaska State Troopers, Edward Stang, White Mountain search and rescue, the Iditarod trail snowmachine crew, and the local volunteers who assisted with these rescue responses.

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