Man slips into Laurel Fork Falls

Rescue at Lake Jocassee takes nearly 3 hours

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It took rescuers nearly three hours to lower a man down a waterfall and boat him to a waiting helicopter after he slipped on wet rocks and fell down a remote waterfall on Lake Jocassee in Pickens County on Sunday afternoon.

The man, whose name and condition hadn't been released, tumbled down an upper portion of Laurel Fork Falls, a popular swimming destination accessible by boat or by foot on the Foothills Trail.

After the man fell, 30 emergency responders took a 5½-mile boat trip to get to the base of the falls, said Chuck Haynes, Pickens County's director of emergency management.

Then they had to scale the lower falls to reach the man, stabilize him due to the huge fall and potential for internal injuries and construct an elaborate rope and pulley system to lower him from one part of the waterfall to the next, Haynes said.

He was taken by boat to Devil's Fork State Park and flown by helicopter to Greenville Memorial Hospital, said Scott Krein, director of Oconee County Emergency Services.

Several groups who were at the falls watched the incident, Haynes said.

The fall underscored the danger that exists from climbing waterfalls, Haynes said.

"In general, people will play in the falls, play in the river and their confidence level gets up and they start getting higher and higher and kind of exploring," Haynes said.

"It's just a dangerous area. You've got rocks that are wet and slick and then below you is rock. You don't fall into the lake if you fall off. You fall onto granite."

Crews from Oconee and Pickens counties coordinated the rescue, Haynes said.