Wrong turn

Two injured when car plunges into frigid lake

BY ANDREW MOORE
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SENECA — Two men looking for a thoroughfare near Greenville made a wrong turn Wednesday morning and landed in Lake Keowee.

James Farmer, 69, from the greater Greenville area, and his passenger, 52-year-old Donnie Martin, were taken to Oconee Medical Center with non-life-threatening injuries after flipping their vehicle into the lake near the dead end of Doug Hollow Road.

Scott Edgeworth of the South Carolina Highway Patrol said Farmer was driving a 2000 Chevrolet Malibu vehicle south on Doug Hollow when he tried to negotiate a sharp turn where the road ends. Farmer lost control and the car went down an embankment, landing in three feet of water.

Both men were taken to the hospital with minor injuries and treated for hypothermia, but were otherwise uninjured, Keowee Fire Chief Richie Caudill said.

"By the time we got there, they were already on the bank, shivering. Had they gone out any farther, they would have been under water, so they were pretty lucky."

Caudill said he and an investigating Highway Patrolman were told by the men that they had lost their way, and were looking for Pelham Road — a thoroughfare more than an hour away in Greenville.

"I just told them 'I don't think you can get there from here,'" Caudill said.

Two Hutchinson Construction employees who were passing by saw the vehicle in the water and lent a helping hand.

Gerson Quinones, 31, said he and his colleague, 22-year-old Ailud Ruis, assisted one of the men out of the car after getting stuck.

"I looked to the left and saw a car turned over and one guy trying to get the other one out, but I believe he couldn't do it," Quinones said. "He was stuck halfway in the car and halfway out, so we had to cut the seatbelt to get him out."

Keowee firefighters got the call at 9:29 a.m. They were assisted by Rescue 22 and EMS.

Oconee County HazMat was notified to help clean an oil sheen around the vehicle. The Oconee County Dive Team and Station 21 assisted. One of the small Dive Team boats was used to help spread oil absorbent material on the water. McCall Brothers Diving Contractors and Jim's Towing removed the vehicle from the lake.

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PHOTO BY STEVE ZAHN

An oil sheen around the car is dealt with by members of the Oconee County HazMat Team, along with state and federal agencies. The Dive Team and Station 21 assisted and a small Dive Team boat was used to help spread oil absorbent material on the water. The car was removed by McCall Brothers Diving Contractors and Jim's Towing.



JESSICA NELMS/STAFF

The road ended but the ride did not for two men who escaped serious injury when their vehicle flipped into Lake Keowee on Wednesday morning. Keowee Fire Department, Rescue 22, Oconee County HazMat and EMS were all on scene.