

On March 13th 2004 an ELT signal was picked up in Southern Utah. The CAP went out into the night to look for it and found the signal to be coming from a back country airstrip, Dark Canyon/ Middle point also known as Lean-to-Point. The strip is about 17 miles North of Fry Canyon. In the desert darkness the CAP couldn't see anything but helped arrange for a helicopter to go out in the morning. It turned out to be a false alarm but that was not determined until CAP volunteers had taken the risk of flying over isolated rugged country in the darkness. Pat Morley, the Director of Aeronautics in Utah asked Utah Back County Pilots to get the word out to our members that sometimes rough backcountry airstrips can set off ELT's and for us to please check on 121.5 before shutting down so others don't take needless risks on our behalf.

One further note, before the Civil Air Patrol is activated for a downed aircraft in Utah, Pat Morley gets a phone call from Langley to confirm that the State's resources are depleted and that federal resources are requested. On March 13th when Mr. Morley heard that the ELT was coming from the vicinity of Fry Canyon he remembered hearing about our upcoming Fly-In to Fry Canyon and asked the CAP to check with Utah Back County Pilots. We received the phone call that night and appreciate Mr. Morley, Mr. Holloman and all the other CAP members for thinking about us and giving up their sleep to make sure no pilot needed help.

HARD LANDINGS - ELT ACTIVATION by Sevier Valley Sq. Commander, Lee Holloman

What happens when an ELT goes off? It hits the satellites or an airliner picks it up. Then flight service is notified. They in turn notify the Center of Civil Air Patrol at Langley AFB. They issue a flight mission to the area CAP Wing. The Wing in Utah puts out a page to their 15 squadrons. The squadrons call in to wing mission center in SLC. Each squadron needs a crew of three. A mission pilot, observer, and scanner. The wing decides how many crews and aircraft are needed, issues a mission and sortie number. In the last year and a half, there have been 5 ELT alerts in our area. As luck would have it these all came in the middle of the night. How many of you would like to fly on a pitch black night, over mountains, in weather you can't see, looking for an ELT? This could be a real disaster.

Here at Sevier Valley CAP (Richfield) we flew four of these missions. Aircraft were located parked unattended at the following airports: Page, AZ, twice at Mt. Pleasant within a month on the same Cessna 150. The other on March 13, 04 at a small back country airport, near Fry Cyn. called Lean-to-point strip. A Cessna 172 flown by a couple of campers from Calif. made a hard landing and setting off the ELT. They were not aware that the ELT was activated. Our squadron located the aircraft at 2200 hrs. by electronic DF. After daylight, CAP directed Utah Hwy. Patrol helicopter to their lat and long location. This whole exercise could have been prevented, by pilots turning their radio to 121.5 prior to shut-down. It is also advisable to listen to 121.5 on cross country flights. It could be you looking for assistance or help. Please do not put other people at risk.