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PRESS RELEASE

Fatal Mountain Bike Crash on October 6, 2023:

On Monday, October 9, 2023, the Sheriff's Office received a report of an overdue person in western Sierra County. The reporting party informed us that her husband was overdue from his mountain biking and camping trip. The Sheriff's Office was able to confirm that the missing individual, Joel Lusk of Berkeley, CA, had taken a mountain bike shuttle from Downieville to Packer Saddle on Friday morning. His intended route back to Downieville was the Downieville Downhill Trail, and he planned to go camping in the Gold Lake Basin area after completing his ride. When his wife hadn't heard from Joel, she contacted the shuttle company, which confirmed that Joel had been dropped off at Packer Saddle on Friday, and his vehicle, along with camping gear, was still parked in Downieville.

The following morning, search and rescue teams from Marin County and Nevada County assisted the Sierra County Sheriff's Office in the search for Mr. Lusk. Multiple search and rescue teams scoured the trail throughout the morning, and the California National Guard provided valuable support by deploying a Blackhawk helicopter. Despite the rainy weather, the helicopter reached the search location by late morning.

Around 11:40 AM, searchers discovered Mr. Lusk's mountain bike down a steep and remote area along the trail. The bicycle was located approximately 100 feet below the trail, near the top of a large cliff and a box canyon. After finding the bicycle, several specialized search and rescue rope teams rappelled down the cliffs and into the Pauly Creek drainage. Using a drone, search team members located Mr. Lusk deceased approximately 900 feet downstream. With the assistance of the National Guard helicopter, Mr. Lusk's remains were lifted into the helicopter and transported to awaiting deputies.

The Sierra County Sheriff's Office extends its heartfelt condolences to Mr. Lusk's family and friends during this incredibly challenging and distressing time.

The Sierra County Sheriff's Office wishes to express its deep appreciation to the dedicated teams from Nevada County and Marin County Search and Rescue, as well as the crew from the California National Guard who promptly responded to assist in the search effort. The professionalism and expertise exhibited by these teams are truly remarkable.

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