

Fog hampers hunt for airplane

MEN MISSING: State official, son vanished southwest of Juneau.

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The search expanded Tuesday for a missing floatplane with a deputy state commissioner and his son on board. But foggy Southeast weather is hampering the effort, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Missing since Saturday are Brian Andrews, 56 and deputy commissioner of the state Department of Revenue, and his 24-year-old son, Brandon. Both are experienced pilots. They were returning from a family camping trip on Young Lake, about 20 miles southwest of Juneau, but never made it back to town.

"It's hard to say the best case scenario. Hopefully they are on a lake somewhere waiting for us to find them," Coast Guard Chief Dana Warr said.

On Saturday, the pair dropped off one son in Juneau, then returned to Young Lake to pick up the rest of their camping gear. Searchers found the camp site but no gear, so they appeared to be headed back to Juneau in their Cessna 182 float plane.

The weather since the weekend has been a problem, the Coast Guard said.

"It still hasn't cleared. Fog banks have made it tremendously difficult for our helicopters to get off our ground at times," Warr said. "The fog has come down and it's just sitting over the mountains. It's very difficult to see and it's very unsafe at times for our aircraft."

Neither debris nor any other sign of the men and the aircraft have been found. Any little clue can help, and the Coast Guard wants anyone who finds anything in the area to contact the agency.

"We're trying to find out the mystery of where this aircraft and these two people have gone," Warr said.

The Alaska Army National Guard, Alaska State Troopers and Civil Air Patrol are all helping in the search, which includes a ground search as well as an expanded air search.

Anyone who wants to help search should first contact the Coast Guard, Warr said.