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## Stoney Creek hiker, 72, missing

STONEY CREEK - Police spent several hours yesterday scouring the treacherous Niagara Escarpment for a retired steelworker who has been missing for almost a week.

A helicopter from Peel region was brought in last night to illuminate the area and assist about a dozen officers as they searched the Bruce Trail and a section of railroad tracks along the steep escarpment face above Stoney Creek.

George Taylor, 72, who lives on Maple Drive at the base of the escarpment, was last seen by his wife some time during the evening of April 6 when she left their home for a walk.

When she returned about 8.15 p.m., he wasn't home although his station wagon was parked in the driveway of their brick, ranch-style house.

Hamilton Sergeant Carol Pacey said the former steelworker was avid hiker and she assumed he had gone for one of his regular hikes. Described as healthy and fit, he often went for long walks on the Bruce Trail which is about 100 metres behind his house.

Pacey said police started searching the escarpment face yesterday morning after being alerted the night before that Taylor was missing.

"Hamilton police were notified on the afternoon of April 6, 2004, by family member who are concerned for his well-being. Taylor has no known medical conditions and his behavior is out of the ordinary," Pacey wrote in a press release.

Staff Sergeant Ian James said he assigned five officers yesterday morning to conduct a ground search along the Bruce Trail and a section of railroad track that runs parallel to the trail along the face of the escarpment.

Starting from the path behind the house, where Taylor normally started his walks, the searchers walked the Bruce Trail to the west as far as the Devil's Punch bowl and to the East as far McNeilly Road, a stretch of several kilometers. The popular hiking trail, which is extremely narrow through some areas, is still muddy and slippery and can be treacherous, even for experienced hikers at this time of the year. There are also some steep ravines and gulleys along the escarpment where a hiker could fall and injure himself if he slipped off the trail, which is just a little wider than an animal path in some areas.

By mid-afternoon, after almost eight hours of fruitless searching, seven more officers were added to the ground search, including a canine officer with a tracking dog.

Sergeant Bob Maxwell said a Peel Police helicopter was brought in to assist the searchers in the late afternoon. The chopper has a powerful spotlight that was used to illuminate the trails and allowed the

search to continue after dark. It also has thermal imaging equipment that can detect living persons or animals on the ground through their body temperature.

Maxwell said the search would continue after dark as long as weather conditions allowed. A man who identified himself as the missing person's son said the family didn't want to speak to the media. He also asked a photographer not to take pictures of their property or family members.

Taylor is 6-foot-4 and 220 pounds. When last seen, he was wearing black pants, a plaid shirt and hooded jacket, gray toque and black lace-up winter boots.

If you have any information about his whereabouts, you are asked to call the East End station at 905-546-2929.

*Torstar News Service*

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