Charges pending for man accused of pointing laser at KSP helicopter

BY CHRISTOPHER LEACH
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

A Lexington man was arrested early Wednesday morning after he allegedly pointed a laser at a Kentucky State Police helicopter, which authorities said was returning from a rescue mission.

The laser incident happened around 12:30 a.m. near West Loudon Street in Lexington. State police said the helicopter was on its way back to Frankfort when Markus Smith, 39, of Lexington, pointed a laser at the aircraft.

Smith's citation said he tried to get away from the helicopter on a moped, but officers in the aircraft were able to keep an eye on him and relay his information to officers on the ground. Police surrounded Smith in an alley near North Broadway and West Fifth Street, the KSP report said. Smith turned himself in and admitted to pointing the laser at the helicopter.

Smith is charged with laser/vision interference, tampering with physical evidence, no operator's license for a moped, third-degree criminal trespassing, no registration and failure to maintain insurance. State police said potential federal charges are pending.

"Laser strikes can alter the intended flight path or cause temporary visual disturbances for the pilot and flight crew," State Police Post 12 Public Affairs Officer Andy Stepp said in a news release. "These are not harmless pranks. They violate federal law and can have dangerous consequences for everyone involved, both in the air and on the ground."

Smith is being held at the Fayette County Detention Center on a $1,500 bond, according to jail records.

Hours earlier, the helicopter helped rescue an 18-year-old camper from Hanson's Point in the Red River Gorge. The Wolfe County Search and Rescue Team said the camper suffered a medical emergency in a remote part of the gorge.

A team of rescuers hiked about 2½ miles to the camper and determined that an aerial rescue would be best. State police's aviation unit assisted with the rescue by lowering a basket to the camper and hoisting them to a nearby landing zone, according to the rescue team.

An ambulance was waiting at the landing zone to take the camper to a hospital, according to the rescue team.

"This rescue was a great example of multiple agencies working together to provide the safest and most efficient outcome for a patient in a remote and difficult-to-access location," the rescue team said in a Facebook post.

Kentucky PSC investigating rising gas, electricity costs

BY LIAM NIEMEYER
KENTUCKY LANTERN

Kentucky's utility regulator has launched an effort to study the affordability of electric and natural gas utility service for residential ratepayers, arguing that utility access is "fundamental to the health, safety and well-being of Kentuckians."

A news release issued Wednesday by the Kentucky Public Service Commission says federal data shows the cost of electricity for residential ratepayers in Kentucky has increased by 21.8% from 2020 to 2025.

The regulator wrote that because of rising utility costs, the agency believes a "broader examination" of affordability issues would help it better understand "the factors affecting affordability" and "evaluate existing and potential approaches for addressing those concerns."

A coalition of groups advocating for the environment, renewable energy and consumers had called on the regulator in June to launch such an affordability investigation that would include examining the potential costs of fossil fuels and data centers.

The regulator plans to host a "technical conference" next year examining the issues brought to light in the investigation. The regulator is asking utilities and other interested groups to submit initial comments in the investigation by the end of September.

Kentuckians can submit a public comment in the case by searching for the specific case number for the investigation, which is 2026-00185.

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