

# Hikers to become rescuers

Fire and Rescue Dept to set up special team for Ayer Hitam Forest Reserve

story by  
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AYER Hitam Forest Reserve serves as a recreational park for residents in the surrounding area, especially Puchong, and is one of the favourite spots for hikers.

It is also a research forest for Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Following the recent incident where seven hikers got lost in the forest and found eight hours later, the Fire and Rescue Department said it would form a search-and-rescue team made up of hikers for the area.

Puchong fire station chief Mohd Hisam Mat Yasih said his team would work closely with the leaders of hiking groups to form the "search and rescue team," which would be the third such team to be formed in Malaysia.

"The purpose of it is to help the fire rescue team during emergencies as the hikers are familiar with the trails.

"The volunteers will need to

register themselves with the Puchong Fire and Rescue Department and will receive further training in hiking essentials and first aid," he said.

As it is a research forest and vital that the environment be preserved as it is, no fence or structures are built here.

However, there are signs put up to mark the start of the prohibited area and caution hikers against entering the said area. Hikers who ignore the warning will be sanctioned by the Forestry Department.

There had been cases last year where hikers had wandered into the restricted area and damaged plants that were part of research projects.

Kinrara assemblyman Ng Sze Han urged hikers to cooperate by staying on the authorised trails and within the permitted area, to avoid getting lost.

Hisam said stranded hikers should remain in one place to increase their chances of being found by rescue personnel.

He also advised hikers to stay away from the forest during rainy season.

"This is an ancient forest and some trees are decaying, so it may endanger hikers."



The Fire and Rescue Department has decided to work closely with the leaders of hiking groups to form a search-and-rescue team for the Ayer Hitam Forest Reserve following the recent incident where seven hikers got lost for eight hours.