

Survivors—The pilot who crashed inside a volcano Part 2

Hosking was having better luck. Working in the choking air, after several setbacks he eventually fixed the helicopter's emergency radio and summoned help. When a courageous local pilot risked a second flight into the crater Hosking scrambled aboard.

Rescuing the other two men was much harder. Benson decided that the most sensible option was to sit tight and wait for a rescue team. The air was cleaner at this height, and he felt that continuing the climb would be too dangerous. Instead, he secured himself in a narrow crevice and waited for help to arrive.

Duddy chose the alternative.

Convinced he would die if he stayed in the crater much longer, he opted to struggle on towards the rim. At one point during his slow ascent he had a terrible shock: a man-sized

object suddenly appeared through the gaseous cloud before crashing to the bottom of the crater. Horrified, Duddy thought it was one of his companions falling to a violent death. In fact, it was proof that a rescue attempt was at last underway. The large object was a survival pack, thrown over the rim in the hope that it might land close to the men trapped below.

The incident badly unsettled Duddy, but eventually he reached the rim at around two-thirty the following afternoon. Coughing and wheezing

from the effect of the gas, he was at least safe, like Hosking. But more than twenty-four hours into the ordeal Benson was still trapped in his crevice and was beginning to suffer.

Having lost contact with the other two, his biggest fear was that he might now be the only one still alive. This made him even more anxious about his chance of being rescued, and the sound of volcanic activity below only unnerved him even more. He tried to take his mind off these fears by

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using little tricks, such as reciting the alphabet backwards. He had no food and hadn't eaten for many hours, but by cupping his hands and reaching out from the crevice he was able to catch some rainwater to drink.

At one point Benson started hallucinating, imagining he could see the figure of Pele, Hawaii's spiteful goddess of volcanoes. He thought she was reaching out to him across the crater, but fortunately he still had some fight left in him. More than once he got to his feet and screamed at her to leave him alone.



By Monday morning Benson was still trapped, but then the haze and smoke cleared momentarily. The improved visibility enabled the pilot of another helicopter to spot the missing man, if only for a second or two. With the smoke thickening once more Benson's shadowy form vanished as quickly as it had appeared, but at least the rescue team knew his approximate position.

Flying down into the crater for a third time was considered too dangerous in the circumstances. Instead, a large net at the end of a 150-foot cable was slowly lowered towards the ridge. Manoeuvring it into position required expert flying and it took a while to get it right. Finally Benson managed to reach out to the net and clamber into it. By mid-morning, nearly two full days after the initial helicopter flight had come to grief, he was airborne once again and on his way to the nearest hospital.

Benson managed to reach out to the net and clamber into it

Nearly a week later Benson was still coughing painfully, but, remarkably, he and the other two men suffered only a few minor cuts and bruises. Following an ordinary crash landing this would have been an extremely lucky outcome, but after coming down inside an active volcano it seems nothing short of amazing.

Read the text carefully and tell me which of these statements is true or false. Just circle or highlight the correct answer!



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|------|--|-------|
| True | The air in the volcano was difficult to breath. | False |
| True | Benson and Duddy agreed about how to proceed. | False |
| True | Duddy was mistaken about what appeared through the 'gaseous cloud'. | False |
| True | Duddy quickly reached the rim. | False |
| True | Benson's biggest fear was falling into the lava. | False |
| True | Benson used distraction techniques to stop him thinking too much or feeling too anxious. | False |
| True | Hallucinating means imagining you can see something or someone. | False |
| True | Visibility was a major problem for the rescuers. | False |
| True | Benson's ordeal lasted nearly three full days. | False |

Having read this *Survivors* story, if you saw on the news tonight that a helicopter had crashed inside an active volcano, would you expect the crew to survive?