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Flat-screen TV emits international distress signal

Search and rescue operation leads to apartment

EUGENE, Oregon (Reuters) -- TV hardly gets much better than this.

An Oregon man discovered earlier this month that his year-old Toshiba Corporation flat-screen TV was emitting an international distress signal picked up by a satellite, leading a search and rescue operation to his apartment in Corvallis, Oregon, 70 miles south of Portland.

The signal from Chris van Rossmann's TV was routed by satellite to the Air Force Rescue Center at Langley Air Base in Virginia.

On October 2, the 20 year-old college student was visited at his apartment in the small university town by a contingent of local police, civil air patrol and search and rescue personnel.

"They'd never seen signal come that strong from a home appliance," said van Rossmann. "They were quite surprised. I think we all were."

Authorities had expected to find a boat or small plane with a malfunctioning transponder, the usual culprit in such incidents, emitting the 121.5 MHz frequency of the distress signal used internationally.


Van Rossmann said he was told to keep his TV off to avoid paying a \$10,000 fine for "willingly broadcasting a false distress signal."

Toshiba contacted Rossmann and offered to provide him with a replacement set for free, he said.

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