

Firefighter fell down rock

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Box Springs Mtns
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By Jim Fairchild

Above the eastern edge of Riverside City rises the steep, blocky massif of Box Springs Mountain. Its brush covered slopes gain 1500-2000ft. elevation before a more or less plateau-like formation, festooned with many radio and electronic devices on the peaks. Annually there are a number of fires that burn the grass and shrubs that resolutely grow back.

Late Wednesday afternoon a fire started just east of Belvedere Heights, which is a bit northeast of the University of California campus. About 150 firefighters from the California Department of Corrections successfully put lines around it, and by the middle of the night only spot fires flared and subsided.

Diego Bernal, 24, of Los Angeles, was cutting brush when he tumbled down a very steep, rock face about 35-50 feet and landed on more rocks. For a while he was able to continue working, but then complained of violent head pains, a sore shoulder, and pain about the tailbone. His crewmates had him lie down while they sent for help.

Now, at 2:00 a.m. most mornings we of RMRU aren't usually up to see what's happening, even fires. Nevertheless, our coordinator Al Andrews was busy calling us out, having been alerted to the need for evacuating Diego. I rolled to find Bernie McIlvoy and Jim Anholm putting the frame and wheel on the stokes litter. Soon we were sweating up a dirt road and then a horse trail looking for an informant who was to meet us near the accident scene. Before long we startled the informant into action, and shortly were examining Diego while his concerned friends watched. Nothing too serious, Dr. Jim determined, so we lifted Diego into the litter and wheeled him out. Part way down the trail we met and put to work John & Roy Dew, Rick Pohlars, Kevin Walker, and Mel Krug.

After seeing our patient aboard the ambulance we returned home to salvage a bit of sleep from our interrupted night.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.