



## Man falls near waterfall.

**June 3, 1999**  
**South Fork Gate**  
**UTM 11S 5191-05, 3733219**  
**1999-009**

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On June 22, 1999, RMRU was called out on a rescue of an injured hiker. Chris, a 22 year-old was hiking with a couple of his friends up the North Fork of the San Jacinto River. The area they were illegally trespassing into what is considered very technical and dangerous terrain. They had spent the day climbing alongside some waterfalls. They ended up at a swimming hole where they proceeded to swim and indulge in alcohol. Chris attempted to climb from the swimming hole up some very loose scree. Loosing his footing he fell breaking his arm and injuring his knee.

When we arrived on scene, CDF Firefighters and Hemet Ambulance personnel were already administering first-aid. While being briefed on Chris's condition, by the waterfall, we realized that chances for an easy and safe evacuation looked pretty grim. Scanning the area we discover that the terrain was very unstable for a safe litter evacuation. We couldn't find anything secure enough to use as anchor points for lowering the litter. We thought that maybe we could possibly raise our subject out of the canyon to higher ground where we could have the helicopter pick him up at first light. (There wasn't anyway that we could use the helicopter at our present location, because of the narrow deep canyon we were in.) The CDF personnel (except one) and the Hemet Ambulance people left after giving Chris his third and final dose of morphine. At this point, we narrowed our evacuation choices down to one. We decide that the only way to get our subject down was to carry the litter in chest deep, near freezing water and to lower the litter very close to the waterfalls. Our time was getting short since it started to rain and we were in a flash flood zone. We loaded our subject into the litter and briefed him on what we needed to do. After deciding the safest route and setting up our ropes we were ready to go. We radioed based and told them of the dangers RMRU members will be undertaking and how our major concern was the possibility of several members becoming Hypothermic after being in the near freezing waters. Our subject was becoming more concerned with the situation as the last dose of morphine was wearing off. He kept asking us questions about the water and the loose rock. We told him this was going to be very dangerous and we would prefer to have him walk out with assistance. Since this was the first time we were able to communicate with him, we were now able to ask him more questions concerning his injuries. After a round of conversation, he asked if he could try walking. He tried and had a shaky start yet, we got him up and he was able to take a few steps. This completely changed everything.

We now slipped a climbing harness on him and both belayed and assisted him back to base. We reached base at about 5:00 am, and loaded Chris into the ambulance. Chris was very lucky his injuries weren't life-threatening. From the information by the Riverside County Sheriff, Chris was intoxicated and suffered a broken arm and bruised knee.

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.