

Inyo County Search

**October 21st, 2004
Lone Pine, Inyo County
2004-026**

by Jim Bakos

RMRU was called out of county to assist Inyo Search and Rescue in locating four overdue hikers thought to be somewhere between Cottonwood Pass and the Whitney Portal in the Sierras. An early winter storm had blanketed the region with fresh snowfall, so the urgency of the search was greatly heightened.

RMRU team members started for Lone Pine at 0300, and arrived at the command post by 0800. Once the Snow Cat transported us to the trailhead, our task was to snowshoe in over Cottonwood Pass, and continue down the Pacific Crest Trail to the Rock Creek Ranger Station. Spending two nights in the snowbound High Sierra.

This was the first clear day of searching, so by the time we reached the trailhead the Inyo helicopter had spotted the hikers at Sky Blue Lake, and started the process of evacuating them to the Lone Pine airport.

These hikers did exactly what they were supposed to do. They got into trail conditions that they felt uncomfortable with, due to the heavy snowfall, so they set-up camp and waited for the rescuers to find them. Because of this, all four were in excellent condition upon being rescued.



Photo: Gary Hampton

Will, Jim, and Patrick, with Inyo County SAR's Snow Cat

Sadly, our return trip to Riverside County didn't turn out so well. About 45 minutes down 395 from Lone Pine our Sheriff's Black & White Explorer had a mechanical malfunction. This caused the three intrepid RMRU rescuers to spend way too much time in the thriving metropolis of Pearsonville, California, waiting for a tow truck and a ride home. By the time I returned home, exactly 23 hours had passed without sleep. We are eternally grateful to Deputy Kim Judge for

keeping our welfare at the top of her list, and Gwenda Yates for driving the round-trip from Hemet to Pearsonville to Rescue the Rescuers....

We would also like to thank Inyo County Search and Rescue, The National Parks Service and Sierra Madre Search and Rescue for their hospitality and camaraderie.

Members responding were myself, Jim Bakos, and Will Carlson.

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.