



Hikers Stranded

Man Lost in Wilderness

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San Jacinto Wilderness Near Laws Camp

2007-001

by Lee Arnson

I'm just settling in with my family to have dinner when Glenn Henderson calls to tell me we have a mission in the high country.

A 40-year-old man has called 911 with his cell phone stating he was lost in the woods. He set out on a day hike from the Palm Springs tram earlier in the day, it was now getting dark and the tram was nowhere in sight. A sheriff's helicopter spotted the subject earlier but because of impending darkness was unable to land. They were however able to give us latitude and longitude which helped us considerably to locate our subject area.

Because I live closest to the trail head (Humber Park) and have a good feel for the high country, I was given the green light to go out by myself while the rest of the team caught up. The extremely cold temperatures and strong winds we've been experiencing in Idyllwild were a big part of this decision. We felt time was definitely of the essence.

As I was hiking up to Saddle junction, Gwenda Yates called me on my radio to inform me base was set up and other team members were on their way.

I eventually got into the area that matched the co-ordinates given to us by the sheriffs aviation unit. I yelled out, but got no response. I yelled out again and this time got a faint response. The subject was approximately 300 yards north of Laws camp. He had built a fire and had stacked enough wood to get him through the night. He also made a bed on top of the snow with pine boughs and he seemed in good shape with no injuries. This was one of the few people who did exactly what they are supposed to do when they get lost, STAY PUT.

I offered to make him some coffee and something to eat, but to my surprise he just wanted to get moving. He felt his wife was very worried and he just wanted to get out of the woods.

We made sure the fire was out and then made our way up to Saddle junction where

team members Jim Manues and Patrick McCurdy met us. We eventually made our way down to Humber Park around midnight where Grace Manues and Gwenda had a hot pot of coffee waiting for us.

It turned out that our subject was visiting from Florida and was staying at a hotel in Palm Desert. A Cabazon deputy gave him a ride to his hotel and we went our separate ways home.

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.