



## Hiker Missing in Heavy Snow

**March 1, 2009**  
**Palm Springs Tram, San Jacinto Mountains**  
**2009-003**

By Bob Bakos

While I was kicking-back on my day off, I received a page around 1830 for a late hiker coming out of the Skyline trail (a treacherous route in our mountains). We learned he was at an approximate elevation of 7500 feet, or about 1000 feet below the level of the Palm Springs Tram.

Pete Carlson, Dana Potts, Dave Webb, Michael George, Jeff Toscas and I responded to the page and met at the lower Tram station. After a minimal briefing by the sheriff's deputy in charge it was decided to send in a hasty crew including: Dave, Pete and myself. We went down to the subjects to initiate the rescue, while a second crew of Dana and Michael would then deploy into the field once they had established a base of operations.

Snow conditions on the way down were terrible in that the snow was very easy to punch through, often times sinking up to our hips. This invariably slowed progress down the Skyline Trail. Faint voice contact had been established around 2130. Visual contact of the subjects waving their headlamps occurred around 2200. The initial subject was found at 2230, with his friend who was wrapped in an emergency blanket, wearing shorts and no shoes or socks.

The subject's friend had apparently convinced him to do the hike expecting very different conditions and, once the subject had been forced to stop due to exhaustion, the friend continued up the trail until his "guilty conscious" forced him to come back down and wait it out with the subject. Both gentlemen lacked any trauma or any other medical concerns.

Both were given water, food, and warmer clothes and were convinced to proceed up with the aid of Team 1. Team 2 had reached the launching pad prior to Team 1 making contact with the subject, but was advised to return to the warmth of the tram station and await further instructions. Team 1 initially started up the trail with subjects at 2300 and through gradual process Team 1 and the subjects reached the tram station at 0300 where they were given food, water and coffee, and the opportunity to rest for a couple hours 'till the first tram car would take them down.

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.