



## Lost Hikers Tramway

**November 29, 2015**  
**Wellman Divide Area**  
**2015-048**

Written by Eric Holden

At 8:30pm we get the callout, Hasty Team needed at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway to look for 3 missing hikers. I quick grab my stuff and head out the door, making sure to take extra jackets as on our last mission temps were in the teens. I met Cameron in the parking lot of the tram when one of the employees said he the tram was closed and we would not be riding up. At this time Glenn got in contact with us and Cameron and I drove down to one of the lower parking lots where RSO Aviation (STAR-9) was waiting to fly us in.

After a briefing with Glenn and TFO Eric Hannum we found that the subjects had been spotted from the helicopter and had built a substantial fire. Their location put them near Wellman's Divide, very close to a location I was at during our Radio Coverage training a few months ago. Kirk showed up just as we were about to leave to wish us good travels on our journey.

Even though the strong winds were pushing the helicopter around quite a bit, the expert piloting skills of Andy Rasmussen has us on the ground in Round Valley without incident. We made the quick hike up to ~9500ft and located the subjects within 75ft of the Lat./Long provided to us by aviation. The first thing we noticed is that there were 4 people, not 3. The substantial fire was actually quite small but looked big as they made it next to a boulder that illuminated the entire area very well. The subjects were very happy to see us and although a little cold, in good spirits. They all had jackets, food and water.



**Subjects and Cameron by fire  
Photo by Eric Holden.**

We put out the fire and then proceeded to make the 3-mile hike back to Mountain Station with Cameron leading the way. Once back at the tram we were able to warm up to some nice hot food and warm drinks of coffee and hot coco. We slept the night and caught the first tram back down at 6:15am.



**Subjects with Eric and Cameron in Tramway  
Photo by Glenn Henderson.**

Along the way we found out that they had made it to the peak in great time but lost the trail at Wellman's Divide, quite a common occurrence if you are not paying attention. They tried to find the trail but when it got dark they decided to text out for someone to dial 911 as they had spotty service. They then stayed put and made a small fire to keep warm.

The subjects were decently prepared for their hike with extra water, food and clothing but unfortunately lacked the necessary navigation tools to make it back to the tram. Utilizing a map at every trail junction or a GPS would have prevented them getting lost. They did the right thing once they realized they were lost which was to stay put. This turned what could have been hours of searching into a quick find. Big thanks to the Riverside Sheriff's Aviation unit for their help with the search and to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway.

**RMRU Members Involved:** Cameron Dickinson, Eric Holden, Glenn Henderson, and Kirk Cloyd.

**Sheriff's Aviation:** Andy Rasmussen (Pilot), Eric Hannum (TFO).

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.