



Three Lost Hikers

February 21, 2016
Marion Mt Trail
2016-005

Written by Eric Holden

At 6:40pm we got the callout for 3 missing hikers and were told to meet at Marion Mountain Trailhead. As I am gearing up I get the word to head to Hemet-Ryan for a possible hoist. Once with Aviation I find that one of the subjects fell into water and is wet and cold so we quickly gear up and head out. Turns out the subjects were south of the Seven Pines Trail near the North Fork of the San Jacinto River. We quickly spot them and determine that a hoist will be the best option. Through the expert flight skills of STAR 9, they lowered me on a rock outcropping and then send down three screamer suits. Once with the three males I find that two are in good condition, but the one who fell into the river is suffering from mild hypothermia. Uncontrollable shivering, decreased mental status, and one foot was completely numb. He could still walk and follow directions so I threw another jacket on him to protect from the rotor wash and suited him up in a screamer suit and helmet. Once again aviation perfectly placed the hook into my hand and the subject was on his way. While he was getting secured into the helicopter, I got the next subject prepared, and within a few minutes aviation was flying them both to Keenwild where medics were on scene.

While waiting on the helicopter's return I spoke with the third subject and found that they had left via the Marion Mt. Trailhead, but due to the snow ended up going much slower than they expected. They eventually turned around but got lost and followed another group that was moving very fast. They eventually lost that group and unknowingly started descending the down the North Fork. They knew if they followed the water they would eventually make it to civilization. Unfortunately, they didn't bring flashlights, food, maps, etc. and descending a canyon at night, without a headlamp/flashlight is a very bad thing. During their descent they all took a few slips and all got wet feet at some point in time. The wet subject was attempting to down climb a rock and somehow ended up falling and belly flopping into the North Fork of the San Jacinto River (really a stream at this point). Being in wet clothing will cause the body to lose heat up to 5 times as fast and can be quite deadly in the back-country. Unfortunately, the subject kept his wet clothing on instead of removing it and putting on one of his buddy's dry jackets. As the body starts to decrease in temperature it restricts the blood flow to the extremities to keep

the core warm, hence the subjects foot going numb. Once the helicopter returned and picked us both up we went to Keenwild and found the first subject was being warmed up by Cal Fire and Riverside Deputies. He was starting to feel much better and was in good spirits.

Moral of the story, don't underestimate the outdoors. Be prepared! Remember to bring your essentials.

[Essentials](#)

And if you do belly flop into a river that is being fed from melting snow.... get out of those wet cloths.

RMRU Members Involved: Eric Holden.

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.