



## Marion Trail Search

**February 25, 2017**

**Marion Mt Trail, San Jacinto Mountains**

**2017-010**

Written by Cameron Dickinson

At 7:30pm the team received notification of four male hikers in their mid-20's reporting being lost somewhere south of Little Round Valley. One of the subjects could receive a cell signal and called 911 for rescue assistance.

Myself along with Michael and Eric responded to the call, and were driving to meet with the Sheriff's Deputy at the fire station in Pine Cove for a quick briefing of our missing party. The Deputy could obtain and provide GPS coordinates on the location of our subjects, and information as to the location of their vehicle where they had initiated their hike. This would lead us to Marion Mountain trailhead where our base command would be set up. Once we arrived at the trailhead, Eric would set up base and manage radio relay, while Michael and myself would hike in to reach our missing subjects.

Mike and I would start our hike on Marion Mountain Trail, but due to the heavy snows the mountain received this season down to the lower elevations, it was necessary for us to switch to crampons within one quarter of a mile from the trailhead. We had real concerns on the condition of our missing subjects as the temps were below freezing with even lower temps towards the San Jacinto Peak. A new storm system was moving in which added to the concerns. The GPS coordinates that we received place our subjects near the Deer Springs Trail southwest of Little Round Valley. Mike and I would work our way to this location. It was slow going for us as the conditions became more difficult as the incoming storm would provide lower visibility, higher winds, followed by snow. Our crampons were soon replaced with snowshoes.



**Cameron Hiking up in Strom  
Photo by Michael George.**

In the early morning, we arrived at coordinates location. We did a call-out, and heard a faint response. We did another call-out to confirm direction of our subjects, which placed them on the downslope of the Deer Springs Trail, close to the upper stretch of the North Fork of the San Jacinto River. The downslope was steep and treacherous, so we would slowly and cautiously hike down to our subjects. Soon we would arrive to our subjects, and found them all safe and sound. Our subjects had created shelter and a campfire to keep warm for the night, and had enough cold weather clothing, water, and food to sustain them through the night. We were relieved to find the group in good shape and spirit. As they were packing their gear in preparation for the hike out, they shared their story on how they became lost. Their plan was to hike to San Jacinto Peak from the Marion Mountain Trail, and would hike back down in reverse. Since there was no defined trail as it was covered in snow, they ended up losing direction and ended up down slope approx. 500 feet from the trail next to the river. Their mistake? Not having maps or GPS unit that would provide them a sense of direction and location. They did have a compass, but no maps.



**Cameron (Left) Hiking Subjects Out  
Photo by Michael George.**

Mike and I would lead them back out, down the Marion Mountain Trail, and arrived at the Marion Trailhead/Campground mid-morning. They arrived a little hungry and tired, but relieved their situation was now over.



**Subjects and Rescuers at Base  
Photo by Eric Holden.**

**RMRU Members Involved:** Cameron Dickinson, Michael George, and 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.