

**Missions**  
**July - December 2022**

# Thank You!

To all that volunteer their time and financial assistance....

**Countless people owe their lives**



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## RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS



Thomas Blanke - Oceanside | Coby Brown - Hemet | Steve Bryant (MRA) - Alta Loma  
Pete Carlson (MRA) - Blue Jay | Kase Chong (MRA) - Hemet | Blake Douglas - Riverside  
James Eckhardt (MRA) - Riverside | Matt Frenken - Hemet  
Michael George (MRA) - Riverside | Donny Goetz (MRA) - Idyllwild  
Josh Gould - Murrieta | Beth Jeffery - Murrieta  
Glenn Henderson (MRA) - Hemet | Eric Holden (MRA) - Temecula  
Rob May (MRA) - Riverside | Caleb Miner - Hemet | Tobias Moyneur - Calimesa  
Robert Newton - Hemet | Shani McCullough (MRA) - Temecula  
Amber Prestegard - San Diego | Vinay Rao - San Jacinto | Steven Rider - Oceanside  
Tyler Shumway (MRA) - Hemet | Becky Templeton - Murrieta | Jessie Virga - Temecula  
Ray Weden (MRA) - Murrieta | Richard Yocum - Idyllwild

### **Support Members**

Corey Ellison (MRA) | Kaitlyn Ellison | Joe Erickson (MRA) | Gary Farris (MRA)  
Kaylean May | Brad Scott | Ty Wittersheim



**MISSION REVIEWS**

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**On the Cover -**

Team Training

Mt. San Jacinto

Photo - Kase Chong



## President's Message

### Eric Holden

2023 is upon us and it has definitely not been as much of a slowdown for RMRU as we had seen at the start of 2022.

We have had multiple technical mission on Tahquitz rock in the past 6 months where normally we have about 1 a year. Make sure to visit [rmru.org](http://rmru.org) to read all about them.

Out of county Mutual aid is becoming more and more common as we have more and more people heading into the wilderness for their recreation.

While we have sent team members into other counties to help, I wanted to send big thanks out to all the counties that have come down to

Riverside. I am not going to list them all because there are so many I may miss one, so again thanks to all the assisting counties.

**Snow is here!**

This is one of the best snow years we have had on our mountain in the past decade or so. This is great as it brings much needed water to the county and is also wonderful for snowshoeing, skiing, and for the first time in a while ice climbing.

With the added fun also comes added missions as things go wrong and we have had a few very technical snow/ice rescues lately.

RMRU continues to be a top notch professional rescue

team and I am looking forward to the next year.

No matter the weather, holiday or time of day, RMRU will be ready to respond to the next call for help.

Cheers,  
Eric Holden  
RMRU President

**Mountain Rescue Association**  
[mra.org](http://mra.org)



*RMRU joined the MRA in 1961 and is a regular member.*

# Mission Reviews

July - December 2022

*The following pages contain a selection of firsthand accounts of RMRU missions written by the team members involved.*



## Missing Person – Bogart Park

July 02, 2022

Bogart Park, Cherry Valley

Mission # 2022-17

Written by Eric Holden

At 0030 in the morning, we got a callout for a missing late 40's female that had gotten separated from an event at Bogart Park.

The family, aviation and blood hounds had been trying to find her since about 1600 the previous day. Vinay, Blake, Glenn, and I all made the drive out there and along with the Riverside County search teams began to search the trails around the park at around 0200 in the morning.

We searched until about 0500 in which we regrouped as we found no sign of her.

We requested additional help and got 4 members from DSSAR and Ray and Shani from RMRU. About an hour after we deployed the additional rescuers, a Sheriff's deputy found her, safe back at her home in Banning. We were all glad for

a good outcome and drove back home to get some sleep.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Shani McCullough, Vinay Rao, and Ray Weden

### Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside County Search Dogs, DSSAR, STAR-9

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## Tahquitz Rock Fatality

July 04, 2022

Tahquitz Rock, Idyllwild, Ca.

Mission # 2022-18

Written by Eric Holden

At about 6pm we got a callout for a climber that had taken at least a 200ft fall on Tahquitz rock. Multiple team members began their drive up the mountain as Rescue 9 was in route.

Rescue 9 was able to lower a medic to the subject and determine that the fall was unfortunately fatal. RMRU members continued up to Humber Park in case a carry out was needed, but Rescue 9 was able to extract the subject.

We don't have a lot of details to what caused the accident, but it appears the climber was free soloing in the vicinity of the Trough. Our thoughts and condolences go out to the climber's friends and family.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Eric Holden Shani McCullough, Vinay Rao, Ray Weden

### Other Agencies Involved:

Rescue 9

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## Skyline Trail (Cactus to Clouds)

### Missing Hiker

July 17-18, 2022

Palm Springs / Mt. San Jacinto

Mission # 2022-19

Written by Eric Holden

### July 17th:

At 1600 we got a callout for an overdue hiker who was hiking the Cactus to Clouds trail.

He had left on the 16th from the museum trailhead at 0600 and had not checked by the next day. Temperatures were in around 115

## MISSION REVIEWS JULY - DECEMBER 2022

degrees for the last few days in Palm Springs.

We all met at the lower tramway station, and it was decided that James, Steve, and 2 state park volunteers would ride the tram and hike from Grubbs notch, all the way to the desert floor in case he was near the top. Shani and I would start from the museum and hike as far as we felt it was safe to do so, and Glenn would run base.



Shani on Trail at night

We located the subject's car at the museum to confirm he was still on the mountain and by the time we started hiking it was 2000 and the temperatures had dropped to 105. Shani and I hiked up to about the 2000ft elevation marker with no sign of the subject before making our extremely hot return to the museum. At midnight it was still 98 degrees outside.

James and Steve, along with two state parks volunteers made the 8000ft elevation loss and the 11-mile trip. Along the way they discovered an article of clothing, which would later be confirmed to be the subjects, around 3000ft of elevation.

Unfortunately, they were also too physically exhausted from the heat

and hiking conditions to do an extensive off trail search of the area. They made it back to the museum around 0400 hours and a callout was made for additional resources to meet at the museum at 0600.

### July 18th:

The plan for the day was to insert field members near the article of clothing and begin a search. Vinay, Richard, DSSAR, and Palm Springs SAR members were all inserted via a Helicopter hover step while Coby and I staffed base. Due to the over 100-degree heat, searching was limited for only a few hours and members had to be extracted due to safety concerns.

After all members were out of the field Star 9 aviation flew the area a few more times and located the subject. A rescue technician was lowered to the subject and unfortunately he was found deceased. Our thoughts go out to his friends and family.

RMRU would like to remind the public that Skyline(C2C) is one of most difficult hikes in the country. That combined with the high heat make for a very deadly combination. The most common mistake hikers make is thinking they can turn around if they start to feel tired or too hot.

Unfortunately, once you start the return hike the temperatures only get hotter as you descend. With an air temperature of 115 the ground temperature can be easily over 130-degrees from baking in the sun all day.



### Searchers Dropped Off

We highly recommend that if you plan on hiking Skyline/C2C, that you do it in late fall before the first snow and bring at least 5 liters of water. There is no water anywhere along the trail and the cooler temperatures make for a much more pleasant hike.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Coby Brown, James Eckhardt, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Shani McCullough, Vinay Rao, Steven Rider, Richard Yocum

### Other Agencies Involved:

RSO – Rescue 9/Star-9, DSSAR, Palm Springs SAR



## OES Missing Person

July 23, 2022

San Diego near Julian

Mission # 2022-20

Written by Blake Douglas

RMRU was requested to assist with an OES operation in San Diego County, searching for Terry Hughes, age 76. San Diego resources had been searching for Hughes for approximately a week, and RMRU would join a large, multi-county effort on Saturday

July 23.

Hughes lived in a rural (continued)





Assignments given out at Base

neighborhood in Julian, characterized by low hills and oak savannah/chapparral ecosystems, with large and mostly fenced-off properties dedicated mainly to ranching or retirement.

Hughes and his family enjoyed roadside walks in the area but generally kept close to their home and followed predictable routes, which made it all the stranger that Hughes would not only go missing but remain undetected for multiple days. Foul play was not suspected, and it was assumed that Hughes would be found somewhere between two reliable sightings of him that had occurred on the evening of his disappearance.



Matt in one of the search areas.

Matt, Coby, and I were split among various teams throughout the day, although the abundance of private property generally meant that our searches were limited to the road margins, any fencing gaps, and the occasional unrestricted property.

Our searches produced no results, nor were any other teams successful. Unexpectedly, we were recalled to base around 3pm, and informed that the groundskeeper of a local property had just located Hughes' remains. He was remarkably close to our search areas, but considerably farther from the road than our grids had allowed; how he came to be in that location, or why, will probably remain unknown.



Checking the sides of the road for signs.

We extend our condolences to Mr. Hughes' family and thank San Diego Mountain Rescue Team for coordinating the mission.

#### RMRU Members Involved:

Coby Brown, Blake Douglas, and Matt Frenken

## Hoist Rescue

July 30, 2022

Pechanga Reservation - Temecula

Mission # 2022-21

Written by Vinay Rao

Late Saturday evening (7-30-22), RMRU received a call about a person that had been lost on the Pechanga Reservation (near Temecula, CA) for about three days and was heard calling for help by some hikers in the area. Pechanga Fire was with the subject and needed RMRU and RSO Aviation to hoist them out.

Responding team members were Vinay and Josh. We met the Rescue-9 crew at Hemet-Ryan airport and headed to the subject's location. Arriving at the location we determined that the best option was to bring all parties, the subject and the two firefighter/paramedics, up to Resq9.

Vinay went down on the hoist with three body suits while Josh organized activities on the helicopter to receive the subject. The hoist of all four parties – subject, firefighters, and Vinay – was accomplished quickly and safely.

The subject was dropped off at Inland Valley Medical Center and we returned to Hemet Ryan Airport. A short and smooth rescue!

#### RMRU Members Involved:

Josh Gould and Vinay Rao

#### Other Agencies Involved:

RSO – Rescue 9 and Pechanga Fire

## Devil's Slide Trail Walkout

August 06, 2022

Devil's Slide Trail above Humber Park, Idyllwild

Mission # 2022-22

Written by Richard Yocum

On 8/6/2022 at 1407 hours RMRU was requested to assist a hiker with Parkinson's disease having trouble coming down the Devil's Slide Trail from Saddle Junction to Humber Park. By one report, he was experiencing a medical emergency. Riverside Sheriff's Rescue 9 helicopter (RSQ9) had been circling over the area and over the Tahquitz Meadow area, but apparently was unable to locate the subject, and RMRU was asked to meet at Humber Park.

Vinay and Richard were in Idyllwild town center grabbing lunch after some tech rope training and Matt was also in the area, and they arrived Humber Park within minutes. As they were packing gear, they were approached by several members of the subject's hiking party and then the subject's wife.

This provided the opportunity to gather information about the subject: a 75-year-old White man with Parkinson's on no meds but who just recently had an adjustment to his deep brain stimulator (DBS) for Parkinson's. He was training with a group that takes people with Parkinson's on hiking trips.

The group had made it past Saddle Junction but on the way down the subject had fallen a couple times and was feeling exhausted. Some members of his group attributed



Subject with friends / RMRU

his exhaustion to the recent adjustment of his DBS. While most of his party returned to Humber Park, he was being walked down by a Nurse Practitioner and her husband. He was not seriously injured in the falls and was not having a medical emergency. The hasty team of Richard, Vinay, and Matt started up Devil's Slide at 1450 and after about 1.1 miles came across the subject with his two companions hiking with trekking poles down trail, below the big switchback, at 33.77043, -116.68259. He was standing within minimal assistance, alert, oriented, conversant, with a strong radial pulse of 80/min, and respiratory rate 14.

He reported being fully hydrated with adequate calories. He denied other medical problems. RMRU assessed that a continued slow, careful, guided walkout was the best evac strategy and offered our assistance, but his two companions preferred to continue guiding him by holding onto his daypack

from each side. He declined having paramedics at the trailhead to evaluate him.

Tom, who was at Wellman's Divide (with Eric and Blake) ran most of the way to Devil's Slide, after which he was advised by the hasty team that he should continue down trail to rendezvous but need not hurry. Meanwhile, Glenn had driven the SAR truck from the Hemet station and helped Ray with base communications and they were later joined by Caleb. Tom eventually joined the hasty team descending the trail. The last quarter mile or so of the walkout was completed by Richard and Matt, while Vinay and Tom went ahead to join Glenn and Caleb at Humber. Stopping about every 15 minutes for a short rest and water break, the group made steady but slow progress and arrived at Humber Park at 1635. A final medical eval by Richard found no change in the subject's status. Additional hydration, electrolytes, and rest were recommended.



Glenn, Vinay, Tom, Friend, Subject, Richard, Caleb, and Matt

### RMRU Members Involved:

Tom Blanke, Matt Frenken, Glenn Henderson, Caleb Milner, Vinay Rao, Ray Weden, and Richard Yocum



# Missing Person Search

August 11,12, 16, 2022

Lake Hemet and Surrounding Areas

Mission # 2022-23

Written by Vinay Rao & Richard Yocum

Lake Hemet, located in Garner Valley CA, has a beautiful and popular campground and was the location of this multi-day search. A church group had been camping in the area the weekend of August 5th when one of their members decided, without telling anyone, to leave the campsite somewhere between 9:30pm on August 6th and 5:30am on August 7th. After waiting about a day, the pastor of the church and a friend of the missing individual became concerned and notified the Riverside Sheriff Office. RMRU was activated to begin the search the afternoon of August 11th. The circumstances of this search were complicated by the fact that the missing person was known to have had past negative interactions with law enforcement, which meant that volunteer search parties needed to be accompanied by armed deputies.



K-9 Team after search

The command post (CP) for the search was set up at the Sheriff's Lake Hemet Mountain Station and James Eckhardt began mapping



Richard at Comand Post running Mapping Software

out search areas for the Riverside Search Dogs (K-9) teams. A team of two dogs and handlers with a deputy searched the northwest shore of the lake. The lake shoreline was also searched by boat and much of the general area was searched by helicopter. As the evening progressed, CP made the decision to continue the search the next morning. A brief conference call between James, Vinay, & Richard established a plan for Friday's search areas.

On August 12th Richard and Vinay met at the Mountain Station early morning and re-established the CP. Resources available this day were: three K-9 teams, a RSO drone team, two RSO detectives, two RSO deputies and four RSO Mounted Patrol deputies. The K-9 teams were assigned to search the entire perimeter of Lake Hemet accompanied by a combination of Mounted Patrol and deputies on foot. Two Mounted Patrol units searched a dense brushy area just to the south and northeast of the lake. The detectives drove to Mountain Center and Idyllwild to look for any stores, etc. for cameras that might have useful footage and to put up fliers of the missing subject. One deputy used a four-

wheel drive to search the Hurkey Creek Campground, a yellow-post camping area northeast of Lake Hemet and several roads in the area. The drone team conducted an aerial search over the lake and several marshy areas. Unfortunately, no clues were found, and it was determined that the best option was to suspend, not terminate, the SAR efforts until additional information becomes available.



Vinay showing information to Dog Team Member

SAR efforts resumed the evening of August 15th with a deputy searching the powerline cut north of the lake, and then the morning of August 16th when four K-9 teams focused on the area northeast of the lake and ROVE searched the powerline cut. Richard provided remote mapping support for the August 16th operations. SAR efforts were again suspended.

## RMRU Members Involved:

James Eckhardt, Vinay Rao, and Richard Yocum

## Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside Search Dogs, RSO Aviation Unit helicopter and drones, RSO Mounted Patrol, RSO ROVE



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**Three Overdue Hikers****August 13, 2022****Marion Mt. Trail,  
San Jacinto Mountains****Mission # 2022-24**

Written by Eric Holden

At 1:30am in the morning, we got a callout for three overdue teenage hikers that left on the Marion Mountain Trail to hike to San Jacinto Peak around 8am the previous day. As we were driving to the mission the subjects hiked back into their campsite at Marion Mountain Campgrounds.

RMRU Members Involved:  
Blake Douglas and Vinay Rao

**Overdue Scout Leaders****August 28, 2022****Tamarack Valley,  
San Jacinto Mountains****Mission # 2022-25**

Written by Eric Holden

At 12:30am in the morning, we got a callout for two overdue Boy Scout Leaders that didn't make it back to their campsite in Tamarack Valley with their troop after hiking to San Jacinto Peak.

As we were driving to the mission the Scout Leaders made it back to their campsite safely.

RMRU Members Involved:  
Blake Douglas, Matt Frenken, and  
Vinay Rao

**Missing Man OES****Cucamonga Peak****September 6.7. 17, 2022****Cucamonga Wilderness Area of  
the Angeles National Forest****Mission # 2022-26**Written by Richard Yocum and  
Blake Douglas**Richard:**

On 9/5/2022, RMRU was request by Cal OES to assist starting 9/6/2022 in a mutual aid search and rescue operation for Carlos Monay Garcia, a 46-year-old man who on 9/4/2022 was on a day hike with a friend to summit Cucamonga peak. He was last seen when he parted company with his hiking companion on the switchbacks below the peak and above Bighorn Saddle, with limited water and food, and no headlamp, map, compass, GPS, or phone.



RMRU members do a hover exit  
for assignments.

On 9/6/2022, along with helicopter and drone aerial searching, numerous field teams from several counties were deployed to search the peaks, trails, canyons, etc. The 5 members of RMRU were inserted

by helicopter on Cucamonga Peak and proceeded to their assigned search areas, with James and Tobias searching the very steep slopes below the peak and Steven, Vinay, and Richard searching along the trail between Bighorn Saddle and Icehouse Saddle, and then up to Timber Mountain. Both teams hiked out together down Icehouse Canyon to their motorized extraction point at the trailhead. Neither Carlos nor any definite clues were reported on this day of searching.

**Blake:**

On 9/7/2022, RMRU was again requested to respond to the OES callout. We deployed myself, Steve Rider and Matt Frenken. We were assigned two adjacent areas on the northwest face of Etiwanda Peak, which is to say, a long talus slope with unknown obstacles. We were told that a prior team had covered the upper half of one search area, but that they were unable to proceed due to needing rope to continue, so we anticipated and packed for rappels.

The upper region of our search area was steep and uneven, but easy to search due to relatively dispersed vegetation, and no large rocks or terrain that would obscure a human. We quickly agreed that the likelihood of our subject being in this area was low due to there being no attractive features (water, shelter) and the terrain being visibly difficult from the trail. Nevertheless, we continued descending in traversing sweeps until we reached a point where the descent split into two shallow gullies with

a ridge between them. Matt took the talus gully to the left, Steve took the ridge, and I took the stepwise gully to the right. We all encountered "interesting" terrain but nothing technical or requiring ropes, and we found no signs of our subject, and virtually no signs of human presence at all, which is often an indication that the area is truly avoided.



RMRU members all being flow in.

Upon reaching the base of our lines, we linked up to the Middle Fork Trail and hiked out. Search operations were then suspended for several days due to the storm front from Hurricane Kay making conditions unsafe.

On 9/17/2022, the OES callout was reactivated and RMRU was requested, SBSAR hoping to get in a few more hours of searching before terminating the effort. At this point the searches had been ongoing for at least a week, with hundreds of hours of search time, but no evidence of Garcia had been found whatsoever. Myself, Tyler Shumway, Caleb Milner, Matt Frenken and Tobias Moyneur responded. We were split into two teams, with Tyler, Caleb and Tobias headed to another area near Etiwanda Peak, and Matt and me heading to the switchbacks leading to Cucamonga Peak, one of

the high-probability areas and the location of Garcia's point last seen.

After exiting the helicopter Matt and I discussed how to proceed, since we wanted to cover as much untouched ground as possible but recognizing the value of re-searching parts of this high-probability area. We decided to proceed west, off the end of a small bump at the edge of the summit "plateau", where we found a backpack that seemed to match the subjects. Our excitement was deflated when we discovered that rather than being gray, like the subject's pack, ours was originally green, with the exposed portions having faded to gray due to UV exposure. Following this, we descended along our search route, finding trash and signs of alternate use trails, but no signs of Garcia.

SBSAR concluded the search with no evidence of Garcia's whereabouts.

#### LESSONS:

Late summer is an attractive hiking season, particularly for recreational hikers who may not venture into true wilderness very often, and search teams observe several factors in common to missions that take place during this time. This mission is reinforced by similar circumstances that took place on a search by Inyo and Sierra Madre SAR near Split Mountain the week before.

- Do not leave people behind, particularly when they are physically struggling, disoriented, or showing signs of exhaustion. Have an experienced member of your team



One of RMRU search areas down canyon.

run "sweep" in the rear or stop and take an extended rest. Make a plan for when to abandon your hiking objective and turn around. Leaving people behind should only occur in specific medical and emergency scenarios.

- Bring abundant water and food, a dedicated light source, and your phone.
- Research! Spend at least a day, at least a day ahead of time, reviewing maps and trail reviews of your destination, with a particular mind toward knowing your options. If you get lost at point A, what could help you find your way again? Is your route appropriate for your current skill and fitness level? Have you discussed plans with your hiking partner and family on what to do if you are lost, separated, or running late?

#### RMRU Members Involved:

James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Caleb Milner, Tobias Moyneur, Steven Rider, Tyler Shumway, Vinay Rao, and Richard Yocum





## Lost Hiker in Park

September 12, 2022

Bogart Park in Beaumont

Mission # 2022-27

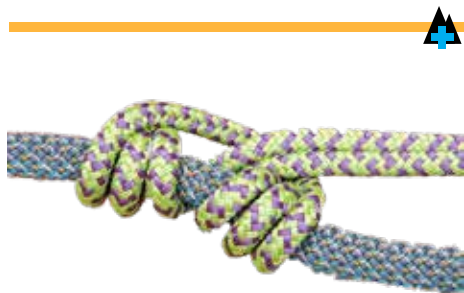
Written by Matt Frenken

On 9/12/22 at 0140, RMRU received a call for a lost hiker in Bogart Park, Beaumont, CA. Team Members James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken and Eric Holden responded to the call along with Riverside County Sheriff's Office. Upon arrival at the command post in Bogart Park, James Eckhardt confirmed with RCSD that a deputy was in voice contact with the lost hiker.

James and Matt repositioned to the location where the deputy was in voice contact with the subject with the intention of hiking in and walking the subject out depending on any injuries. At the same time this was happening, Eric Holden arrived at the command post where he witnessed the subject walking down the trail towards the other RCSD deputies on scene. Subject was checked for injuries and turned over to RCSD deputies for further follow up. Mission completed 0330.

### RMRU Members Involved:

James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, and Eric Holden



Prusik Hitch

## Tahquitz Fatalities

September 28, 2022

Tahquitz Rock, Idyllwild

Mission # 2022-28

Written by James Eckhardt

Our sincerest condolences go out to the family and friends of Chelsea Walsh and Gavin Escobar. The two climbers died in a fall from Tahquitz Rock (Lily Rock) on Wednesday, September 28th. Herein we present our observations of the climbing system and the route, a timeline of events as provided by eye witness accounts, and what we believe occurred.

Riverside Mountain Rescue was notified of a climbing accident on Tahquitz at 12:40PM involving two subjects, one of whom was deceased. We staged at the Idyllwild Forest Service Station and were notified that a rescue technician from Star-9 had pronounced both subjects deceased, and we would be required to assist in their transport. Idyllwild Fire hiked up to the subjects and confirmed the pronouncement. We hiked up to the base of the rock, near the start of The Trough with USFS fire personnel, collected evidence, packaged the subjects and hoisted them with Star-9, finishing before 6:00 PM. In the following days, we returned to the scene of the accident and worked with the coroner to gather more evidence.

The two climbers were found at the base of the gully below The Trough at treeline (Fig. 1). Both climbers were wearing helmets, harnesses and climbing shoes at the time of the accident. Both had a near equal number of cams

and quickdraws racked on their harnesses. Gavin was carrying a partial set of nuts, and Chelsea was wearing crack gloves. Chelsea had a PAS girth hitched through her harness with a locked screwgate at the far end, an unlocked screwgate clipped to an ATC and an unlocked screwgate clipped to a hollow block (Fig. 2A). Chelsea was not connected to the rope or any anchor material. Gavin had a single length sling girth hitched to his harness's tie-in points with an unlocked carabiner clipped to the sling and the belay loop (Fig. 2B). Additionally, an ATC was attached to his belay loop with a locked screwgate and both strands of the rope running through the ATC and through the screwgate. There was a four to five foot loop of rope extending from the top of the ATC with two opposite and opposed wiregate carabiners clipped to the rope. These carabiners were not connected to anything else. The rope had some sheath damage to the area around the ATC and significant sheath damage a few feet below the ATC, but there were no breaks present. Each end of the rope had a single figure 8 tied into it, one loose and one hand tight (Fig. 2C-2D)

Figure 2. A, Example showing how gear was found on Chelsea's harness. B, Example showing how gear was found on Gavin's harness. C, Climbing rope showing figure 8 knots tied into the rope ends. D, Damaged sheath below Gavin's ATC.

A broken piece of tubular webbing was found wrapped around a tree close to the start of Upper Royal's Arch (Fig. 1A). It was gray/white



Overview of the West Face of Tahquitz Rock

and faded looking, however upon retrieval and closer inspection, it had originally been fluorescent green and was now fully faded from prolonged sun UV exposure. The unfaded color was visible in the knot, however it was very difficult to see without close inspection. The webbing felt old and stiff when dry, but when wetted, it felt significantly better and looked much less faded (had one not known it was originally green).

We measured the breaking strength of a loop of the webbing in three tests and it broke at 2.54kN, 3.56kN, and 3.20kN with only one break being at the knot.

Video taken by Chelsea at the tree before Gavin began rappelling shows both climbers clipped into the single loop of webbing which was not backed up. Both climbers were in good spirits and unhurried in their preparations to bail.

Figure 3. Images of the broken piece of webbing. A, Webbing as it was found on tree with arrows indicating the two broken ends.



B, Image showing full length of webbing retrieved with break and C, close up image of break. D, Test 1: webbing broke at 2.54kN. E, Test 2: webbing broke at knot at 3.56kN. Image shows the original color (neon green) of the webbing. F, Test 3: webbing broke at 3.2kN.

Climbing gear from the party was scattered throughout The Trough, with the highest item being an alpine draw midway between the first and second belay on that route. The lowest confirmed item was Chelsea's helmet. Locations where certain items were found are shown above in Figure 1.

Two climbers witnessed the fall, and had both stated they were fairly certain they had seen a rock

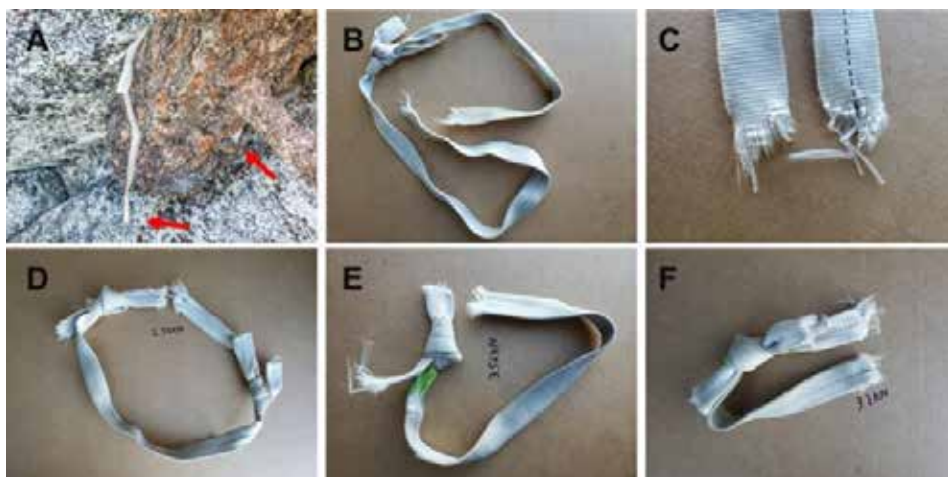
falling with the two climbers between the size of a trash can and half a refrigerator. We identified a rock with recent damage below The Trough that was around 3 ½ x 3 x 1 ½ ft in size. We also identified fresh impact sites on slabs above the boulder where it likely fell.

There were two parties that witnessed the accident. One party of two was bailing from Super Pooper and another party of four had completed Left Ski Track and was sheltering near the top of The Trough. Based on their accounts we have built a timeline of events and conditions.

8:00 – 8:30 AM: Gavin and Chelsea passed a party of four just below Lunch Rock. They state they will be



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climbing Dave's [Deviation]. Weather is good with a few puffy white clouds.

10:30 AM (ESTIMATE): Time that climbers estimate they begin climbing Super Pooper. They see Gavin and Chelsea at Pine Tree Ledge with one leading just above the ledge. This is the last time Gavin and Chelsea are seen. They had also noticed Gavin and Chelsea beginning the second pitch of Dave's Deviation on the approach. Weather is still good.

11:42 – 11:43AM: Both parties take pictures showing clouds raining in the distance. Begins drizzling shortly after. Party on Super Pooper begins to discuss bail options.

12:03 PM: First rope team has topped out of Left Ski Track and seeks shelter under a rock near the top of The Trough. They hear chatter and laughter from another climbing party nearby. Weather has significantly deteriorated and it is now thundering with heavy rain and small hail. Members of both climbing parties note that they were surprised at how quickly the storm intensified. Water is running down rock faces and has soaked all climbing gear. There is

little to no wind. The second rope team on Left Ski Track joins the first two that are sheltering.

12:03 – 12:15 PM: The climbers on Super Pooper begin bailing. Both hear a noise to climbers right and simultaneously look and see climbers and a rock falling. All four climbers sheltering near the top of The Trough hear the fall to climbers left. No one hears rockfall before the fall. At the time of the accident, it was still thundering. However, the rain had lessened and it was no longer hailing. Winds were still light.

12:17 PM: Climbers on Super Pooper make first 911 call. Based on the physical evidence and witnesses, we believe that Chelsea and Gavin had climbed Dave's Deviation and continued towards Upper Royal's Arch via either Gallwas' Gallop or Piton Pooper.

As the storm moved in, the party reached the pine tree close to the first pitch of Upper Royal's Arch and, given the conditions, decided to rappel rather than continuing upwards. By the time they reached

the pine tree, the webbing was wet, and as such, it would have been more difficult to ascertain the quality of the webbing without closely inspecting the knot and seeing the original color. They likely clipped into the webbing with their personal anchor systems.

As the terrain below the pine tree is sloping with only small areas to stand, it is likely they would have both been weighting the webbing. They then tied stopper knots into their rope, clipped it through the two wire gates opposite and opposed and dropped the ends. Gavin was first on rappel and descended a few feet before the webbing broke. As it was a single strand with no redundancy, both climbers fell.

There was no evidence of rockfall hitting the tree or surrounding rock, and the webbing could not have been cut by a rock. As such, we think it most likely that the falling rock reported by the witnesses was dislodged somewhere on their fall.

#### RMRU Members Involved:

Caleb Milner, Coby Brown, Eric Holden, James Eckhardt, Raymond Weden, Richard Yocum, Robert Newton, Shani McCullough, Steven Rider, Tobias Moyneur, Tyler Shumway

#### Other Agencies Involved:

RSO Aviation, Idyllwild Fire, US Forest Service Fire, Cal Fire



## Lost Hikers off Trail

September 29, 2022

Marion Mountain Trail,  
San Jacinto Mountains

Mission # 2022-29

Written by Matt Frenken

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit received a call for service for two lost hikers near Marion Mountain Trail at 2100 hours. Team Members responded to the call.

Upon arriving at the command post at the Marion Mountain trailhead, team members James and Matt were selected as Team 1 with the assignment to try and locate the missing hikers, evaluate any injuries and if needed call for support from Team 2 (Eric and Steven) with Coby running the Command Post.

As Team 1 began hiking up the Marion Mountain Trailhead, two headlamps were identified coming down the trail and confirmed to belong to our two lost hikers. As both hikers were uninjured, James and Matt proceeded to escort the subjects back to the trailhead where they were met by RCSD deputies who took the two hikers back to their vehicle.

It was later determined that after receiving instructions to stay put and that people were coming to rescue the lost hikers, the subjects got cold and saw what looked to be a trail and decided to follow it.

The subjects are fortunate that the trail that they decided to follow was the correct one and that this mission had a good ending, and no one was injured. Mission Completed 2330.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Coby Brown, James Eckhardt,  
Matt Frenken, Eric Holden, and  
Steven Rider

## Lost Hiker and Dog

September 30, 2022

Deer Springs Trail,  
San Jacinto Mountains

Mission # 2022-30

Written by Jessie Virga

Around 8pm we were notified of a lost hiker near the Deer Springs Trailhead. I left the gym right away and arrived at the trail head shortly after the other members.

We decided to access a maintenance road that was closer to the hiker's last known location rather than proceeding down the Deer Springs Trailhead.

Within a few minutes we were able to reach the lost hiker and her two dogs. We gave her and her dogs water and offered food and a jacket. Once she was ready, we guided her and her dogs back onto a trail and down to the main road where she was escorted by RSO back home.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Matt Frenken, Shani McCullough,  
Jessie Virga, and Ray Weden

## Burned Out Car

October 02, 2022

Lake Hemet Fairview Fire

Mission # 2022-31

Written by Ray Weden

A burned-out car was located off Rouse Ridge near the Fairview Fire burn scar. The car came back from a check by the Sheriff as registered to a missing person out of Imperial County. We were asked to search the surrounding area which consisted of steep and overgrown terrain for any clues that may assist in finding the missing person.

### RMRU Members Involved:

James Eckhardt, Caleb Milner, Rob Newton, and Ray Weden

## Fallen Climber

October 15, 2022

Suicide Rock, Idyllwild

Mission # 2022-32

Written by Richard Yocam

At about 1348 hours Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit received a request to locate and rescue a rock climber who had fallen while on Suicide Rock and might have broken both ankles.



Downpour at base during which RMRU was helping to carry out

His climbing companion reported that he had taken a 12-foot fall



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while attaching to an anchor and landed on a narrow ledge partway up the Johnny Quest climbing route.

The Riverside Sheriff's Aviation Unit was not available to assist due to stormy weather. Cal FIRE, which was notified shortly before RMRU, was the first on scene with the subject and performed the initial patient assessment and packaging, including splinting both ankles.

The first RMRU Team (James and Richard) hurried up the climber's trail while Vinay remained at the trailhead to assure adequate radio communications to the command post at Idyllwild Fire Station. When they reached the subject, Cal FIRE had shortly before commenced a litter carryout descent on the climber's trail.

Just at that moment, the approaching storm arrived with heavy rain mixed with hail, and the trail turned into a small stream of water. During the slow and careful descent of the steep, rocky, and slippery trail, the litter team was joined by additional RMRU personnel (Vinay, Shani, and Donny), additional Cal FIRE personnel, and US Forest Service personnel, who assisted in the litter carry out.

At about 1514 and after fending off hypothermia, the litter team transferred care of the subject at the trailhead to AMR, who transported him to a hospital for further care.

Immediately after completion of this rescue, RMRU received a call for another mission, for a hiker



(L-R) Donny, Beth, Shani, and Vinay) back at base, mission over.

needing assistance on Thomas Mountain.

**RMRU Members Involved:**

Tom Blanke, Coby Brown, James Eckhardt, Michael George, Donny Goetz, Beth Jeffery, Shani McCullough, Steven Rider, Vinay Rao, and Richard Yocum

**Other Agencies Involved:**

Riverside County Sheriff's Deputies, Cal Fire, and US Forest Service

**Lost Hiker**

**October 15, 2022**

**Ramona Trail,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

**Mission # 2022-33**

**Written by Thomas Blanke**

Subject reported as lost on Thomas Mountain. Team was in Idyllwild on stand-by after Suicide Rock carry out was completed.

Deputy requested RMRU support due to proximity of the team.

Subject was talked back onto trail and into the parking lot by responding deputy via cell phone. Subject arrived back at the trailhead simultaneously as the team arrived. Team departed trailhead

for dinner in Idyllwild.

**RMRU Members Involved:**

Tom Blanke, Coby Brown, James Eckhardt, Michael George, Donny Goetz, Beth Jeffery, Shani McCullough, Steven Rider, Vinay Rao, and Richard Yocum

**Hypothermic Climbers**

**October 22, 2022**

**Tahquitz Rock, Idyllwild**

**Mission # 2022-34**

**Written by James Eckhardt**

On Saturday evening I was relaxing at home after hiking with Tyler to the chockstone on the North Face of San Jacinto earlier in the day. While descending Tyler and I had watched clouds start to blow over Fuller Ridge and discussed that the chances of a rescue would be high later in the day due to the storm. At 9:30PM the call came out that there were two climbers stuck on Tahquitz. I immediately knew the climbers were in a dire situation due to the storm, so I grabbed my technical gear and lots of warm layers and headed to Humber Park. When I arrived with Vinay close behind in our rescue truck, Donny and Caleb were already packed. It was raining, foggy, windy, and cold. We were able to communicate with the climbers via radio as they had taken handheld radios climbing. Donny advised them to rappel as it would take a long time for us to reach them from the top of Tahquitz. I quickly packed and Donny, Caleb and I headed for the base of the route they were climbing, North East Face West. While our initial plan was to meet the climbers at

the bottom of the route, Donny, Caleb, and I had packed 600 feet of rope with all other technical gear necessary to rappel to the climbers. Matt and Vinay would hike up behind us with extra warm clothing and shelter.



**Air-5 starting Hoist of 1 Subject.**

As we continued up the climber's trail, we could see the climbers' lights. Due to the fog, it was impossible to tell where they were on the rock face. The climbers then advised us that they could no longer continue to rappel due to cold. When we heard this, we headed for the North Gully descent route. Our plan was to scramble to the top of the route and rappel down to the climbers. We discussed the very likely possibility that the subjects would become moderately to severely hypothermic and immobile by the time we reached them. In this case we would need more rope, litters and manpower and we only had six RMRU members responding. As such we quickly called for mutual aid from a number of other Mountain Rescue teams in Southern California.

We ascended the North Gully and Donny quickly set anchors while I prepared to rappel to the subjects with warm dry clothing, hot chocolate, and food. When I reached

the end of my first 200-foot rope, I could hear the climbers. I built an anchor, fixed my second 200-rope, and rappelled to the end. I could now see the glow of the climbers' lights but was surprised that I had not reached them even after close to 400 feet of rappelling. I fixed my third and final rope and rappelled the full length of this rope at which point I could see the first climber about 100 feet below me. The second climber had rappelled, so was below the upper climber. I could not get closer to the climbers until I had a fourth rope, so I verbally assessed the condition of the climbers as best I could. They were mildly to moderately hypothermic.



**Air-5 crew member with 1 Subject.**

We needed to get to the climbers, however pulling the uppermost fixed line was risky given the conditions and the possibility of the rope getting stuck. Without the line, I would have no access to the rescuers at the top. As soon as we confirmed that a team from CAL FIRE was heading up with a fourth rope, Caleb rappelled made the first rappel and successfully pulled the rope. As soon as he rappelled to me, I fixed the rope and rappelled to the first climber. I built an anchor, secured the climber, and then gave her hot chocolate and a belay parka. Caleb rappelled to me, and then continued to rappel

to the second climber using the climbers' ropes. He set an anchor and secured the lower climber and himself. I then lowered the higher climber and rappelled. We were now within a rope length of the ground, so I lowered the climbers one at a time (Caleb rappelled with the first to stabilize him). I also requested a wheeled litter and a helicopter since at least one of the climbers was not ambulatory.

Three members of CAL FIRE received the climbers on the ground, and we put them in sleeping bags and began to rewarm them. Donny, Vinay, and Matt along with more members of CAL FIRE soon arrived with more insulation and we tried to warm the climbers with hot water bottles. Members of search and rescue teams from San Bernardino County and San Diego County began hiking up with a litter and wheel. Seirra Madre Search and Rescue arrived and coordinated with Los Angeles Sheriff's helicopter Air Rescue 5 to hoist both climbers. Air Rescue 5 hoisted the second climber at 9:40AM and flew both directly to the hospital.

#### **RMRU Members Involved:**

James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Donny Goetz, Eric Holden, Caleb Milner, and Vinay Rao

#### **Other Agencies Involved:**

San Bernardino Cave and Technical Rescue Team, Wrightwood/Phelan Search and Rescue, San Diego Search and Rescue, CAL FIRE, Idyllwild FIRE, SERT, LASD Air Rescue 5, SB Sheriff Aviation, Riverside County Sheriff's Aviation Unit





## Hikers Injured in Snow

November 08, 2022

Mt. San Gorgonio

Mission # 2022-35

Written by Steven Rider & Beth Jeffery

Steven:

Tuesday, November 8th RMRU received a call that (SBSO) San Bernardino Sheriff's Office was requesting assistance for a possible carryout with (SGSAR) San Gorgonio Search and Rescue. Four RMRU team members reported to the command post. James was first to arrive, and while being briefed learned that rather than a carryout the mission would be to reach the subjects and stay with them overnight. There was a severe storm with torrential rain at lower elevations and snow and high winds up higher on the mountain.

SBSO considered whether it would be safe sending a team up in the storm. We were very confident we could do it, and after some discussion it was deemed possible and necessary. It was decided that three members would go up and one would run base. Matt would run base while James, Steven and Tobias would go to the subjects. The three were driven to the trailhead and began our ascent at 5:38 PM.

We hiked up the mountain, traversed a ridge then dropped into the canyon ultimately reaching the subjects location at approximately 2:00 AM. Another team was sent the following day Wednesday, November 9th which included Ben of SGSAR as well as two RMRU members, Beth and Blake, for re-

supply and relief. Aviation was on standby and had made several fly-over attempts but was unsuccessful for a hoist operation secondary to inclement weather.



Campsite for 2 nights

Knowing that we had enough supplies and considering the current conditions it was decided that the same RMRU members would stay with the subjects another night and the relieving mountain rescuers were turned around. RMRU stayed with the subjects a second night. On Thursday morning November 10th there was a break in the weather and aviation was able to begin hoists. Two subjects and three RMRU members were flown safely off the mountain and back to CP by 8:57 AM.

Beth:

In the late afternoon of Tuesday November 8, 2022, RMRU received a second call to assist San Gorgonio SAR Wednesday morning with taking extra supplies to the stranded hikers and relieving the 3 RMRU team members that were going up the mountain Tuesday night.

Two RMRU team members, Blake Douglas and Beth Jeffery, reported to assist Wednesday morning at 7:00am. The two team members and Ben from SGSAR were dropped off at a snowy trailhead Wednesday morning at 9:30am.

The three began route finding as they climbed up the mountain in fresh snow that fell the night before. They were hopeful the fog and wind would clear enough for a helicopter to hoist the subjects and team members off the mountain.

But the fog only cleared for about 10 minutes before it quickly rolled in again. The helicopter made several attempts to get to the subjects but was unsuccessful due to the weather. The three rescuers ended up hiking about 5 miles and 4700 feet of gain in over 5 hours. We were post-holing and dealing with icy conditions. With about 300 more feet to climb to the point where we would descend in to the drainage, the command post told the us to turn around. With limited daylight, the team still needed to descend into a rocky and icy drainage from 9800 feet down to about 8200 feet and the team would arrive after dark.

The team was able to retrace the snowy trail back and returned to base. The three were back to the command at 6:30pm. The following morning, the weather cleared for a successful hoist.

RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Beth Jeffery, Tobias Moyneur, Shani McCullough and Steven Rider

Other Agencies:

San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Teams) (San Bernardino County Sheriff's Rescue Helicopter

## **Lost Hiker assist DSAR**

**November 20, 2022**

**Hills Near Desert Hot Springs**

**Mission # 2022-36**

Written by Ray Weden

On Sunday 11/20 we were asked to assist the Desert Sheriff Search and Rescue (DSSAR) Team with a lost hiker. Their team had been searching Saturday evening after a 911 call was received for a male subject who was lost in the hills above Desert Hot Springs. Eric, Blake, and I were given the assignment to make our way to the last known point of our missing person while James and Glenn were running the command post.

We were driven in by DSSAR in their Jeep as far as an offroad 4x4 could go and were on foot from there. We made it to the last known point shortly thereafter and started tracking. There were signs that someone had been in the area recently but clearly no one was there now. Our Sheriff's helicopter "Rescue 9" also assisted in search patterns as we searched on the ground.

After spending some time in the area, we made our way out through a canyon and back to the dirt road we came in on. Matt came and picked us up to take us back to the command post. Several of us were done for the day while others stayed around to plan for the next operational period. While on my way home I got the message that the missing person had been located in town and was no longer missing.

### **RMRU Members Involved:**

Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, and Ray Weden

### **Other Agencies:**

Desert Search and Rescue and Sheriff's Aviation



## **Evidence Search**

**November 28, 2022**

**North Fork San Jacinto River**

**Mission # 2022-37**

Written by Jessie Virga

First RMRU sends our deepest sympathy and condolences to the family and loved ones of the individual who has passed.

This search began early Monday morning at a rendezvous point located a few miles from the search location. It is at this rendezvous point that Riverside Sheriff's Office conducted the pre-search briefing with the (Deputies, Sheriff's Posse, RMRU, and The K9 team. After the briefing all teams proceeded to the search location where Posse and K9 deployed and began the search.

Our RMRU team conducted a grid search pattern throughout the untamed portion of the North Fork San Jacinto River. After many iterations of this grid pattern search, RMRU paired up with the K9 team and conducted several more laps of the entire search area.

After almost six hours of searching through dense terrain and massive amounts of poison oak, the entire search party was able to find and identify more evidence that includ-

ed additional human remains. At the conclusion of the search the Riverside Sheriff's Office gathered all evidence and conducted a post-search briefing.

### **RMRU Members Involved:**

Glenn Henderson, Beth Jeffery, Vinay Rao, and Jessie Virga

### **Other Agencies:**

Sheriff's Posse and K-9 Team



## **Hiker on Wrong Trail**

**December 06, 2022**

**Humber Park to San Jacinto Peak**

**Mission # 2022-38**

Written by Editor

We received the call at 6pm that a hiker took the wrong trail in the dark coming back down to Humber Park from San Jacinto Peak. He called 911 and they got his GPS location from his phone. He had turned and gone to Strawberry Cienega by mistake and the trail was icy and he did not feel safe.

Aviation RSQ-9 was going to see if they could hoist the hiker out. RMRU waited at Humber Park to see if they could or if RMRU would have to hike in. It was a calm night and clear and RSQ-9 was able to do the hoist and RMRU went home at 7pm.

### **RMRU Members Involved:**

James Eckhardt, Donny Goetz, Vinay Rao, and Richard Yocum

### **Other Agencies:**

Sheriff's Aviation RSQ-9



# ABOUT RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

**FOUNDED 1961**

**MEMBER MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION 1963**

**GOVERNING BODY: RIVERSIDE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**

**MEMBERS: ORIGINAL: 6 | CURRENT MEMBERS: 38**

**ANNUAL BUDGET: ORIGINAL \$200 | CURRENT \$15,000**

**MISSIONS: TOTAL OVER 2,000 | AVERAGE PER MONTH: 3.33**

## RMRU BOARD MEMBERS 2022 - 2023

**Eric Holden** - President

**Donny Goetz** - 1st Vice-President | **Ray Weden** - 2nd Vice-President

**Vinay Rao** - Secretary | **Blake Douglas** - Member at Large



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Your donation is deductible from both your state and federal taxes

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**Please send your donation to:**

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43950 Acacia Street  
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**Courage  
Commitment  
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