



In Memory - Bud White

Missions
January - June 2025

Thank You!

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

Countless people owe their lives



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IN MEMORY OF Bud White

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On the Cover -

Bud White -

RMRU Team Member 1964 - 1985

Newsletter Editor -

Gary Farris - RMRU



President's Message Richard Yocum

According to Native American legend, Tahquitz is a powerful mountain shaman representing evil or death whose spirit resides in a secret cave below Tahquitz Peak.

It feels like we met Tahquitz face to face in early March during a 3-day, 2-night mission spanning the year's worst winter storm (see Mission 2025-07). Two hikers had slid off the traverse trail below Tahquitz Peak 700 feet down a steep, icy, boulder-strewn slope and sustained major trauma with multiple fractures, hypothermia, and frostbite.

When we finally reached them more than 12 hours later at 3:30 am, we were battling temperatures as low as 7°F, winds gusting > 50 mph, and low visibility in dense fog/clouds. Rope systems were rigged to bring them both, one by one, back up to the traverse and manage their conditions over two nights and the next two days until the storm finally dissipated

enough for helicopter hoist extractions.

The success of this mission was absolutely dependent on the contributions from a total of 20 different agencies/13 SAR teams from five counties, including three helicopters, that responded to our request for mutual aid.

The arriving SAR teams' resupply of the teams pushing themselves to exhaustion in the field was critical to the sustained effort, as several SAR members were themselves developing hypothermia. A total of 62 SAR volunteers contributed 1,050 volunteer hours on scene (not including travel time) to this mission, along with additional, Sheriff's personnel.

The "can do" attitude and unwavering commitment to getting these two hikers off the mountain alive was the force that overcame Tahquitz's icy grip. For a SAR volunteer, self-recognition of a job

well done is sufficient motivation, but words of affirmation from our rescued subjects are especially meaningful:

"You know when you're a kid, and people say, 'Who are your heroes?' Your mom, your dad, your family, right?"

For me, the search and rescue team when they came in, they actually restored my faith in humanity. I think right now is a difficult time in the world for a lot of people and, you know, those people really gave it their all to save strangers. We and everyone in our lives will always remember you as our heroes."

During the first half of 2025 RMRU participated in a total of 24 missions, some of which spanned multiple days. These missions included lost or exhausted hikers in the backcountry, PCT hikers with hypothermia and unstable

Continued on page 24

Mission Reviews

January - June 2025

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



Exhausted Hikers on Skyline Trail/ Cactus-to-Clouds

January 1, 2025
Skyline Trail, Palm Springs
Mission # 2025-01
Written by Richard Yocum

Having just concluded 2024 with 43 missions under our belts, it didn't take long for the first callout of 2025. The mid-afternoon callout on January 1 was for a hiker too exhausted to continue on the Skyline Trail, the first stretch of the notorious Cactus-to-Clouds hike, ascending from the desert floor to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway upper station. It turned out to be 3 exhausted hikers. Their phone ping indicated they were on or near the trail at about 6,900' elevation. This is a lower elevation than the majority of our missions on upper Skyline, which often involve hikers who encounter snow and/or ice near the start of "the traverse" beginning at about 7,500' elevation, or head up a couloir too soon rather than staying on trail until it ascends Grubb's Notch to Long Valley. The map shows the loca-

tions of hikers on some of our missions over the past several years.



Recent Rescues on Skyline Trail

As I made the short drive from "downtown" Idyllwild to my cabin to sort my gear, I immediately began monitoring radio traffic from RSO Aviation's Rescueg helicopter. I listened as they were able to hoist all 3 hikers and deliver them to AMR at the visitors' center. I let our team know that we could stand down. Even when Aviation is going to respond to a mission, RMRU prefers to get the callout, or at least a standby notification, which allows the team time to prepare gear and rearrange schedules so that we can then respond quickly if Aviation is not able to complete the mission, most often because of weather conditions.

This is a good reminder that each year RMRU has several missions

for hikers attempting Cactus-to-Clouds. Backpacker Magazine rates this hike one of the hardest day hikes in the world, ascending more than 10,000 feet to the summit of Mt. San Jacinto. Too often, hikers underestimate the strenuousness, time required, the heat of the desert, or appear to be surprised when they encounter steep snow and ice conditions at higher elevations, don't realize that alpine weather often changes rapidly, or are ill-prepared in any number of ways. Fortunately, this mission had a good outcome.

RMRU Members Involved:

Trygve Anderson, David Bever, Shana Gutovich, Andy Hayt, Jeff Leisner, Geoff Marshall, Vinay Rao, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside County Sheriff's Aviation Rescue 9 helicopter



Clove Hitch

POTUS Visit

January 7, 2025

Thermal Sheriff's Station

Mission # 2025-02

Written by Trygve Anderson

On January 7th, 2025, RMRU was called upon to assist President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden's visit to the newly established national monument, Chuckwalla.

RMRU members Richard Yocum, Eric Holden, Jeff Leisner, and Trygve Anderson attended a joint briefing at Thermal Sheriff's Station by the United States Secret Service and Riverside Sheriff's Office on the details of the President's trip. RMRU was stationed at Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport to assist with helicopter aid to any officers injured while securing the canyons around where the President was to speak and bless the monument.

Inclement weather and high winds delayed the President and ultimately led to the cancellation of the event. RMRU remained at the helicopter hangar until all officers were able to leave the field safely.

RMRU Members Involved: Trygve Anderson, Eric Holden, Jeff Leisner, and Richard Yocum



Munter Hitch

Lost Hiker South Main Divide

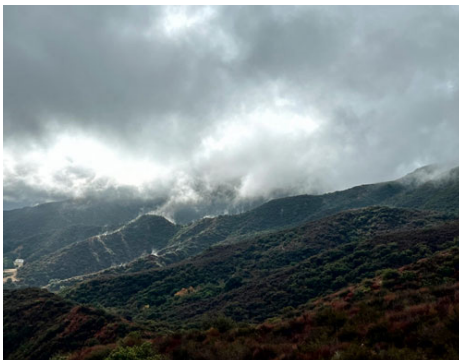
January 26, 2025

Corona, CA

Mission # 2025-03

Written by Stephanie Robertson

The call for RMRU response was sent out at 0645 Sunday 01/26/25 for a lost hiker off South Main Divide near Corona, CA. As team members arrived at the Command Post we learned that an initial search was conducted by an RSO patrol helicopter without any sign of the lost hiker. The weather was wet and very foggy, forcing the patrol helicopter to leave the area.



Area Where Subject was Found

RMRU began organizing a ground search based on a GPS location provided to dispatch. Two RMRU members, Matt and Trygve, went in the field as the hasty team, while we organized a team of six including Tobias, Andy, David, Alex, Geoffrey, and myself. The terrain was steep and muddy from rain overnight, and the weather was foggy with low visibility.

After hiking closer to the search area, we split into two teams with Tobias and Geoff taking a lower route of approach and Andy,



Search Team and Rainbow

Alex, David, and I taking a higher route of approach. Ray and Solan were running Base. Our team of 4 reached the last known GPS location on the ridge most likely to find the lost hiker, began doing call outs of the hiker's name, and sent 2 members, Alex and David, down a steep, overgrown, and muddy wash with rappel gear to attempt to find the subject. Alex and David established verbal communication with the lost hiker.

They were able to get down to his location on the hillside to provide rewarming, hydration, and nutrition. With poor weather, the team began to prepare for a low angle rescue to extricate the hiker. The fog cleared and Rescue 9 was able to hoist out the hiker and two team members to safety. Andy and I enjoyed a muddy hike out.

As a new member this was my first "boots on the ground" callout response. I was impressed with the team's organization, communication, strategy, and adaptation to changing information. This



RMRU Team Members at Base

response was a great example of teamwork and collaboration between RMRU and RSO.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, Trygve Anderson, Alex Cochran, Matt Frenken, Andy Hayt, Geoffrey Marshall, Tobias Moyneur, Stephanie Robertson, Solan Watts, and Ray Weden

Other Agencies Involved:

Corona Fire, Cal Fire, RSO Aviation

Missing Snowboarder at Mountain High

January 28, 2025

Mountain High Ski Resort, Wrightwood, CA

Mission # 2025-04

Written by Richard Yocum

The request for SAR mutual aid to LA County came early Monday afternoon for a briefing at 7 am on 1/28/2025, the following day. The request through the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) was limited to "Type 1" searchers, which is the highest level of skills for mountain rescue teams, and each team assesses which members are available and currently possess the anticipated skills for the mission in order to

participate safely.

After a 3 am wakeup and a long drive, I met Blake and Tobias and other responding SAR teams in the pre-dawn icy-cold darkness for the briefing in the parking lot of Mountain High Ski Resort in Wrightwood. At about 1:30 pm two days earlier, a 35-year-old very experienced snowboarder had disappeared from the other 3 members in his group just after beginning a run and has been missing since. Search efforts, starting within 1½ hours of his disappearance and continuing the next day, did not result in any clues. It had snowed about 12-15", about half of which was after he disappeared, and the estimated temperatures dropped to about 10°F both nights since his disappearance.



Searchers at Morning Briefing in Base

For this 3rd day of searching, the 31 SAR responders rode the ski lift up the mountain to where he was last seen and, as directed by ski patrol, formed one long search line. We proceeded slowly and methodically down the slope to search the area near where he was last seen.

The weather that day was the first that allowed aerial searching. Although previous search efforts



Searchers in the Field

revealed no evidence that he had gone out of bounds, the steep drainage on the backside of the resort was an area of interest and was assigned to LA County's Air Rescue 5 helicopter. As our search line was making progress, we experienced renewed hope when we heard over the radio that the helicopter had found fresh tracks in the snow.

Shortly thereafter we were elated to learn that our missing person was found alive, talking, and in good spirits! From the place where he was last seen, he was found a straight-line distance of 1.6 miles and had descended about 2,560 feet in elevation. Perhaps most surprising was that he was able to survive in those conditions with a cotton sweatshirt and wool cap.



RMRU Team Members

It was believed that he may have inadvertently ended up out of bounds due to poor visibility on

MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - JUNE 2025

the upper run. Nevertheless, this mission is a reminder of the dangers of out-of-bounds activity. We would also like to remind people that wool and synthetic fabrics are a much better choice than cotton for staying warm.

RMRU Members Involved:

Tobias Moyneur, Blake Rankin, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

LA County Sheriff's Department and Air Rescue 5 helicopter, Mountain High Ski Patrol

SAR Teams From:

Sierra Madre, San Diego Mountain Rescue, San Dimas Mountain Rescue, Kern County, Orange County, and Altadena Mountain Rescue

Lost Hiker near Pine Cove

February 14, 2025

Pine Cove near Idyllwild

Mission # 2025-05

Written by Eric Holden

The team was activated for a hiker who had run off after his dog and became lost. When we plotted the Lat/Long it looked like he was very close to a road, just down in a ravine. As we were en route to Pine Cove a Deputy with the Riverside Sheriff's Department was able to locate him and guide him back up to the road.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, Chad Becker, David Bever, Alex Cochran, Kyleen Gonzalez, Shana Gutovich, and Eric Holden

Missing Person in Tenaja

February 20, 2025

Tenaja Wilderness

Mission # 2025-06

Written by Eric Holden

February 20th –

The team was activated to help the Murrieta Police Department search for Hiren Baltazar who had gone missing on February 10th. There were approximately 15 searchers from both RMRU and Riverside County Search Dogs (RCSD), with additional support from both SERT and RSO Aviation and Drone teams.

The team searched throughout the day without sign of our missing person.

February 21st –

The search continued with additional assets coming in from out of county, ~25 searchers from both Riverside County and San Diego County. Cal OES assisted with their FALCON group and we had multiple air assets come out.

The search expanded and continued throughout the day without sign of Hiren.

February 25th –

The search area was expanded with additional resources coming in again, ~26 searchers from both Riverside and San Diego County.

No sign of Hiren was found.

Due to a strain on resources the search was temporarily suspended for a few days.

March 1st –

One last search day concentrating on hard-to-reach areas unfortunately found no sign of our subject was found, ~20 searchers from RMRU, DSSAR, and RCSD

In total SAR members searched about 687 miles of trails, roads, and rugged off-trail terrain without sign of our missing person.

A few weeks later Hiren was located deceased, by members of the public, in a very rugged location about 0.25 miles out of our search area.

Our thoughts go out to his friends and family.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, David Bever, Alex Cochran, Michael George, Kyleen Gonzalez, Andy Hayt, Eric Holden, Jeffery Leisner, Shani McCullough, Vinay Rao, Stephanie Robertson, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside County Search Dogs, Desert Sheriff's Search and Rescue, RSO Aviation, RSO Drones, RSO Mounted Enforcement Division, SERT, San Diego Sheriff's County Search and Rescue, San Diego Mountain Rescue Team, Los Angeles County Air Rescue 5, and Cal OES FALCON group



Figure 8 Follow Through with Safety Knot

The Traverse below Tahquitz Peak

March 1 - 3, 2025

Idyllwild, CA

Mission # 2025-07

Written by Richard Yocum

Once every decade or two we have a “pull-out-all-the-stops” mission that requires us to reach deep and summon all our strength and skills – this was such a mission. At 3:07 pm on Saturday March 1, Riverside Dispatch received a 911 call from two hikers saying they had fallen down the side of a peak, were unable to get up, had no food or water, and one had a broken leg.



Ropes Set Up on the Traverse

RMRU had just come off an all-day mission when the team was activated. The GPS coordinates from the 911 call placed the hikers at 8,400' elevation and about 700' below the traverse trail on a steep slope below Tahquitz Peak. We knew the traverse trail to be hazardous in winter, especially when covered by ice or hard snow, with our last mission there being a fatality. And we knew to approach this mission with the highest urgency because the hikers had taken an incredibly significant fall likely resulting in major trauma and were not prepared for the

winter conditions or the incoming storm. Riverside Sheriff's Rescue 9 helicopter was unable to approach the area due to the weather.



Subjects in Thermal Wrap Waiting on the Traverse

A decision was made for ground teams to use the Devils Slide Trail rather than the South Ridge Trail to access the location. The first hasty teams started up the mountain from Humber Park and established a forward operating base (FOB) at Chinquapin Flat at 8,620 feet. Only those SAR personnel with crampons and proficient in ice axe self-arrest continued past the FOB to the traverse, which was iced over and highly exposed and dangerous. A second helicopter, Cal Fire H608, was unable to locate the subjects but later was able to hover over the FOB and do a night-time drop of RMRU's 600' ropes that we anticipated would be needed. As the night progressed, additional RMRU teams were arriving with the gear needed to set up rope rescue systems. With the temperature dropping into the 20's and later down to 7F, winds 20-30 mph and building,

we requested Cal OES mutual aid for an additional 20 Type 1 snow and ice searchers.

It was after midnight when the first team was able to start across the traverse looking for signs where the hikers had slid off the highly exposed icy trail or any lights below. With strong winds buffeting our faces we struggled to hear any responses to our shoutouts. After several hundred meters and more than a half-dozen shoutouts, we were elated to hear both a male voice and female voice respond! We continued our shoutouts as we moved further west along the traverse so that we could estimate in the wind and darkness where to set up our anchors so that our rescuers would be lowered directly above our subjects rather than too far to one side or the other.



Two Subjects Waiting for Hoist near Saddle Junction

MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - JUNE 2025

As a mutual aid rescuer and Richard were lowered down the icy 40- to 45-degree slope over car-sized boulders and cliffs, we were amazed that our subjects had survived that fall and were able to respond. Reaching our subjects was delayed as we waited with headlamp visibility only 50' in dense fog as another 100' of rope had to be added to our 600'-ropes.



Rescue 9 Performing a Hoist

It was about 3:30 am, 12½ hours after their fall, when we reached the two subjects huddled together in the darkness and shivering vigorously against the wind and brutal cold. They had come to rest on a shallower slope where the tops of manzanita poking through the snow had arrested their fall. He had lost a shoe on the fall and his foot was swollen with obvious frostbite. We assessed major facial trauma

in one subject and a probable tib-fib fracture in the other. With the subjects secure on the slope, our immediate efforts were directed to insulating them from the snow and treating their hypothermia with additional layers of clothing, socks, tarps, sleeping bag, and later a heated blanket. We provided them with much-needed calories and hydration.

Neither subject was ambulatory. We knew that it would be impossible to conduct a litter raise via the difficult route we had descended and so Richard instructed the rope team to haul up both ropes, break down the entire system, and reset the anchors and system at a new location west along the traverse. The brutal cold was rapidly depleting our radio batteries throughout this mission, creating very challenging radio communications. Shortly after first light Rescue 9 made a valiant attempt to reach our location but was unable to descend low enough into the canyon due to high winds.

Raising both subjects, one at a time, up the 700' icy slope took many hours and was exhausting to all involved, including litter attendants and haul teams. Our subjects remained amazingly stoic without complaining, despite the pain and cold they were experiencing. Working the litter back up to the traverse over boulders, post holing (sinking into soft snow up to your knees or more) into the snow over manzanita, and fighting the cold and wind without additional calories as his food had been consumed by our subjects, Richard reached a level of exhaustion he had not experienced in a long time

and felt himself succumbing to hypothermia, rendered useless from that point on. Fortunately, additional SAR personnel were arriving and taking over as the rescuers who were first in the field found their energy expended.



Rescue Members Hiking Out

For a brief time, we had a couple breaks in the clouds and Cal Fire H608 was able to lower two crew members to the ground in anticipation of a hoist evacuation of our subjects. However, the storm was building steadily and after a couple of hours of watching the clouds darken and the wind continued to build, Alex and Richard decided to hike out on their own, followed shortly thereafter by the Cal Fire crew members. On their descent down the mountain, they passed several fresh SAR teams from other counties hiking up to resupply

the teams with fluids, food, fuel, and shelter and to assist the teams with moving our subjects in their litters.



**Wheeling Litter with Gear
Back to Base**

The lowest risk option as that second night approached was to continue to manage our two subjects in their hypo wraps (wrapping subjects in sleeping bags with waterproof tarps) while secured on the traverse. Some SAR personnel were able to take shelter in the hut at the nearby fire lookout tower, but it was not feasible to move our two subjects up to the hut. The storm dropped about 6" of new snow overnight on the traverse. It was a long, blustery, and brutally cold night for those on the mountain. A number of SAR members had to turn their attention to self-care as they began to experience hypothermia. Still without air support, the teams began the painstakingly slow process of set-

ting up rope systems to move the two litters across the 450 meters of dangerously-exposed traverse to the FOB, and then north on the PCT to Saddle Junction where they were met by additional SAR teams with fresh supplies.

The weather forecast for the next morning was for the storm to begin to dissipate. The ground teams identified a potential hoist location near to Saddle Junction and both subjects were moved to that location. With the advent of most welcome patches of blue sky, Rescue 9 was able to hoist one subject, followed shortly thereafter by Cal Fire H608 hoisting the second subject, at 10:45 am on Monday, March 3. Both subjects began their multi-day hospital stays for the management of even more medical problems than were readily apparent in the field. Meanwhile, all SAR personnel elected to hike out of the field on their own.

This three-day, two-night, complex mission in challenging "full alpine conditions" spanning the harshest winter storm of the year in the San Jacinto mountains required the dedicated and coordinated efforts of a total of 62 SAR volunteers (not including additional law enforcement personnel) from 13 different SAR teams from 5 counties; helicopter support from 3 different agencies (Riverside and Orange Counties and Cal Fire); fire personnel from Idyllwild Fire and Cal Fire; and the US Forest Service. There were no injuries to any rescue personnel. The stamina and stoicism that our subjects displayed to stay alive were nothing short of amazing. We are gratified that both

subjects have been discharged from the hospital and are making satisfactory progress in their recoveries.



**Rescue Members Back
at Humber Park**

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, David Bever, Coby Brown, Kase Chong, Alex Cochran, Matt Frenken, Kyleen Gonzalez, Shana Gutovich, Andy Hayt, Glenn Henderson, Jeff Leisner, Benji Mata, Shani McCullough, Tobias Moyneur, Blake Rankin, Stephanie Robertson, Solan Watts, Ray Weden, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside County Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT) and Aviation Rescue 9 helicopter, Idyllwild Fire Department, Orange County Mountain Rescue Team, Orange County Fire Air Support, Sierra Madre Search and Rescue, Antelope Valley Search and Rescue, San Dimas Mountain Rescue Team, Rim of the World Search and Rescue, San Gorgonio Search and Rescue Team, San Bernardino Cave and Technical Rescue Team, San Bernardino Mountain Search and Rescue, San Diego Mountain Rescue Team, San Diego Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Riverside County Cal Fire hand crew, Cal Fire H608 helicopter, and US Forest Service)



MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - JUNE 2025

Search for Overdue Hiker

March 12, 2025

Midland near Blythe

Mission # 2025-08

Written by: Chad Becker

We were called out the early morning of the March 12th for an avid hiker who possibly ran out of water in the desert on Day 3 of her four-day hike. Cell phone contact was lost and her friend from LA was worried about her.

We arrived on the scene early in the morning, picked up tracks from around the vehicle, and started up the wash. We had a potential area the subject was hiking and possible last known contact area.

We met the subject just over half a mile up the wash. She was in good spirits and medically well. After giving her some water we all hiked out together. Rescue 9 was overhead, but the subject wanted to walk out on her own.

RMRU Members Involved:

Trygve Anderson, Chad Becker, Eric Holden, and Solan Watts

Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside Sheriff's Aviation

Desert Divide section of the PCT in high winds. One of the hikers had texted a family member, who subsequently contacted the Sheriff's Office.

RMRU members met at Fire Station 53 on Morris Ranch Rd. in Garner Valley, and a hasty team consisting of Alex, Solan, and Andy was quickly dispatched into the field.

We hiked the Cedar Springs Trail up to the PCT and contacted the subjects, approximately one mile south of the trail junction on the PCT. High winds, approximately 40 to 50 mph across the ridgeline, along with subfreezing temperatures made the hike challenging and a bit chilly.

We found the three subjects huddled in their tent, which was missing its rain fly, attempting to warm themselves with the open flame of their cooking stove. Solan quickly covered their tent with his rain fly and advised them to turn off the stove. The subjects were soaked, and we provided them with as much warm, dry clothing as we could.

They had been soaked by a sudden rainstorm earlier in the evening, and all their gear was wet. They set up their tent to escape the elements, but the rain fly was blown off in the high wind conditions. The subjects warmed up quickly after a few minutes in the tent with the help of some warm broth and snacks. They indicated that they would be willing to try to hike out, which was a good sign.

Once a second RMRU team ar-

rived, (Shana, Geoff, Blake, and David), we made the decision that the hasty team would accompany the subjects on the hike back down Cedar Springs Trail while Team 2 would carry their gear out.

Team 3 (Vinay, Tobias, and Matt) met Team 2 on the trail and assisted with the gear carry out. The subjects were in good spirits and aside from being blown around on the ridgeline, the teams encountered no issues on the hike out.

The subjects were evaluated by Cal Fire and AMR at the trailhead and cleared to leave the scene, and from there they were transported by RSO to a hiker hotel in Idyllwild to warm up and dry their gear.

Early season PCT hikers should be aware that the San Jacinto Mountains can experience true winter conditions throughout the spring, including high winds, cold, freezing rain, and snow, and should endeavor not to be caught off guard by the sudden transition from the relatively mild desert sections near the Mexican border to the alpine environments further north.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, David Bever, Alex Cochran, Matt Frenken, Shana Gutovich, Andy Hayt, Geoffrey Marshall, Tobias Moyneur, Blake Rankin, Vinay Rao, Solan Watts, and Richard Yocum

PCT Hikers in Snow

March 17, 2025

Desert Divide,

Morris Ranch Road

Mission # 2025-09

Written by: Andy Hayt

At approximately 8:00 PM on March 17 RMRU was activated to search for three PCT hikers who were cold, wet, and stuck on the



Hikers near Tramway

March 17, 2025

Palm Springs Tramway

Mission # 2025-10

Written by: Andy Hayt

On the afternoon of March 17th, RMRU received a call for two hikers reported overdue in snowy conditions above the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. A concerned friend had called 911 after losing contact with the pair.

As the team began organizing a response, we reached out to the reporting party. Fortunately, they answered and informed us that the hikers had managed to find their way back to the Tram on their own. No field deployment was necessary.

Takeaway: If you call emergency services for a missing person and later receive an update—such as the person returning or self-rescuing—please notify authorities right away. This simple step helps avoid unnecessary risk to rescue personnel and ensures resources are used efficiently.

RMRU is very happy how this one played out!!

RMRU Members Involved:

Dave Bever, Shana Curtis, and Tobias Moyneur



Figure 8 on a Bight

Missing Hiker

March 25, 2025

Wildomar, CA

Mission # 2025-11

Written by: David Bever

RMRU was requested to assist with a search for a lost hiker on Tuesday March 25, 2025, at approximately 1500 hrs in a remote hilly area of Wildomar CA. Initial information about the search was limited until searchers arrived at the Command Post.

The subject's vehicle was located by family members in the City of Wildomar where a neighbor's security video showed the subject parked and leaving this location on Friday March 21, 2025, at approximately 0935 hrs.

Worried family members notified Riverside County Sheriff's office of the missing subject Saturday March 22, 2025, at approximately 0800 rs. An initial review of the area was made by deputies without locating the subject. The subject did have a history of hiking and spending the night in this area as recently as February 2025.

RMRU organized a ground search of the area based on the February history and a review of the local geography. Five teams comprised of RMRU members (Shana, Ryan, Alex, Geoffrey, and Stephanie), DSSAR members (Chad and Allen), along with RC Search Dog Team members (Ember, Max, and Michael) began searching the area.

The search was suspended on Tuesday at approximately 2100 hrs with the intent of returning the

next morning. RSO STAR9 was requested to fly the area with FLIR after sunset and had no findings.

The team regrouped on Wednesday morning to begin ground searches in multiple areas coupled with RSO 4x4 UTVs to assist in more open areas.

As ground teams consisting of RMRU members (Shana, Ryan, Geoff, and Stephanie) along with RSCD team members (Ember, Mike, and Kevin) began their search, the subject emerged from the brush area to return to his car.

The subject acknowledged he spent five nights sleeping on the ground without a tent or sleeping bag, and indicated he felt dehydrated. He was evaluated by an RMRU EMT Shana, and then again by Cal Fire E75 and AMR. The subject refused ambulance transport and was reunited with family.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Bever, Alex Cochran, Shana Gutovich, Geoffrey Marshall, Stephanie Robertson, Ryan Roleson, Vinay Rao, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside County Sheriff Dog Team, DSSAR, RSO SERT, RSO Southwest, RSO Elsinore RSO Aviation, Cal Fire, and AMR



Butterfly Knot

PCT Hiker with Leg Injury

April 25, 2025

PCT, Snow Creek Area

Mission # 2025-12

Written by: Solan Watts

At approximately 13:30 on April 25, RMRU was requested to rescue a PCT (Pacific Crest Trail) hiker. The subject was reported as having taken a fall and sustaining a lower leg injury. The location of the subject was approximately 3 miles away from Snow Creek Canyon Rd. The weather at the time of the call consisted of high winds, with dense cloud formations in the mountains and nearly clear skies along the pass and I-10. Sustained wind speeds were approximately 25 mph. RSO aviation attempted to hoist the subject out, but the conditions were deemed unsafe to hoist. RMRU members met up with CalFire personnel at the top of Falls Creek Rd. As RMRU members and CalFire were preparing to hike to the subject, CalFire aviation successfully hoisted the subject out with their helicopter. Following the successful hoist, all RMRU and CalFire members were requested to stand down. The mission was completed at approximately 15:30.

RMRU Members Involved: David Altenburg, Andy Hayt, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Geoffrey Marshall, Tobias Moyneur, Rob Newton, Vinay Rao, Stephanie Robertson, Richard Yocum, and Solan Watts

Other Agencies Involved:
RSO Aviation, CalFire

Injured Hiker on Deer Springs Trail

April 18-19, 2025

Deer Springs Trail, Idyllwild, CA

Mission # 2025-13

Written by: Richard Yocum

90 minutes after our mission for a PCT thru-hiker with a broken ankle near Snow Creek ended, another callout came – this was for another PCT thru-hiker who was unable to walk due to an ankle injury. He had activated his Garmin inReach SOS showing his location near the top of Deer Springs Trail.



**Handles on Wheeled Litter
Make it Much Easier**

I made the short drive from downtown Idyllwild and arrived at the trailhead at 5:30 pm, about 5 minutes before Glenn arrived in the RMRU comms van. We collected from the Sheriff's personnel on scene what little information was known. We were not able to contact the hiker because his international phone was not enabled in the US. Air support was not available due to extremely dense fog.



**Lots of Rescuers Makes it Easier
to Take Turns on the Litter**

The next two RMRU responders were 1 hour 20 minutes out, so we decided that I would head up the trail as a hasty team of one in order to confirm the hiker's location, perform the medical assessment, and determine if a litter carryout was the best option. Glenn was able to follow my progress using my GPS tracks on the search map and we had comms by both radio and cell phone.

I reached our subject about 4½ miles up the trail and found him comfortable but unable to bear weight on his ankle. He had injured the ankle badly while hiking 8 days prior and had been giving it some rest, but apparently not enough for him to resume his PCT thru-hike. His pain completely resolved after splinting the ankle and we settled in to make ourselves comfortable in the just-below-freezing night as we awaited additional teams to arrive with the litter. After an hour or so, a team of two arrived carrying the litter. After more wait, the next team of two arrived with the litter wheel and extender handles, and we packaged our subject in the litter.

Beginning with just 5 rescuers, we began the slow descent down the

Continued on page 16



Bud was born on June 12, 1925, and passed away on May 08, 2025, just short of 100 years old. He is survived by his wife Sue (married for over 76 years) and his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.



Bud joined the team in 1964 and retired in 1988 after 25 years of service. Bud was one of the 12 members who signed the Charter making RMRU a Non-Profit Organization in 1964.

Bud was a Girl Scout leader taking the girls backpacking and teaching them how to be safe in the out-of-doors. He was a member of the Sierra Club and helped teach First Aid for the American Red Cross.

As a RMRU team member Bud was a strong hiker and could keep going for extended periods of time. He did many recreational trips with team members over the years and was always up

Alison (Bud) White

1925 - 2025



for a fun adventure. In 1967 he went to Mexico City and climbed Popo (17,800 ft) with 5 other RMRU members. He took many of us to Picacho del Diablo ('Devil's Peak'), the highest peak on the Baja California peninsula (10,157 ft). Bud loved to go off trail

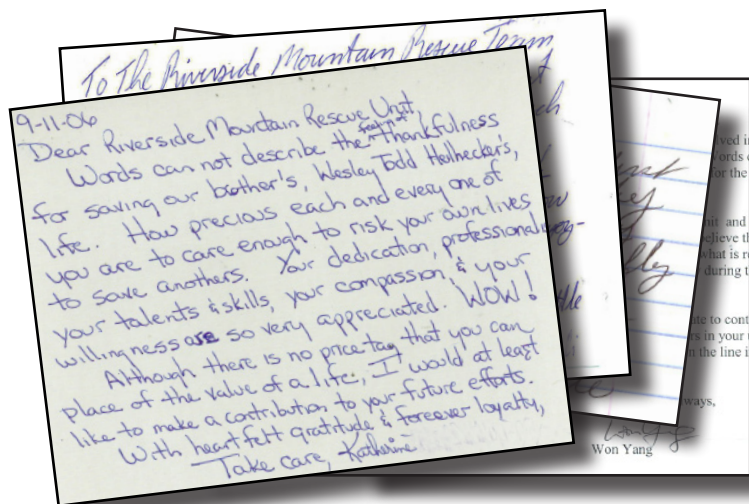


cross country and explore. He found a spring in the San Jacinto Mountains back in the early 1970's and we all started calling it "Bud Springs." Even today people still refer to it after 50 years as "Bud Springs."

Bud was a backpacker, loved bouldering using only 1 hand and with a drink in the other, and was a great all-around mountaineer.

Bud was a runner and ran marathons back before many people did them. He will be missed, but his legend in RMRU will remain forever.





Testimonials

Our Reward
are the people we help



Dear Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit,

It was just amazing work from them, because they had to take care of us as well as also fighting off the weath-er themselves.

You know when your're a kid and people say "Who are your heroes?" Your mom, your dad, your family, right? For, the search and rescue team when they came in, they actually restored my faith in humanity. I think right now is a difficult time in the workd for a lot of people and, you know, those people realy gave it their all to save strangers."

"We won't forget everything that you did to rescue us, keep us warm, and transport us safely off the mountain. You kept our spirits up, and the snacks were amazing. Again, we appreciate you so much and will always be grateful for your efforts on that mountain."

"We and everyone in our lives will always remember you as our heroes."

Dear Sirs,

I wanted to express my sincere gratitude to everyone involved in the search and rescue from Cabazon Mountain. Words can never even begin to express the new found appreciation and admiration I have for the jobs that each and every one of you do.

I really appreciate the quick response to your Rescue Unit and the coordination with the Sheriff's department. Because of your quick action I believe that I am here today and with my family and now have a new outlook on life and what is really important, and I thank you for that. Thank you for staying with my family during this time. Your compassions for humanity really shows. Best Regards Always, Won

Dear Sirs,

I would like to thank you on behalf of my husband and granddaughter for the assistance you gave and my son's family last night and this morning. My husband and I are not hikers (although my husband is a retired Marine) so this is something we don't ordinarily do. When we got stuck up in the forest overnight we knew we would have to fend for ourselves, but we also were pretty certain that our son and daughter-in-law would call for help. They did and you were magnificent.

I also want to thank the volunteer search and rescue team, which was following us even though we never saw them. I know that having such a group in your area gives your residents and guests a great sense of security. I know that they are not under your command, but would you please forward our thanks. Kim



Wheeling Subject down the Trail trail, carefully picking our way over and around rocks and tree roots. Large tree deadfall in a couple of locations added to the challenge and further slowed our progress.

Over the hours we were joined by a total of 4 more RMRU members hiking up the trail. The litter carryout took 3½ hours and at 2:30 am we delivered our subject to the Sheriff's personnel waiting at the trailhead, who rewarded us with pizza.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, Trygve Anderson, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Geoff Marshall, Tobias Moyneur, Stephanie Robertson, Solan Watts, and Richard Yocum



Prusik Knot

Missing Person with Dementia

May 2nd, 2025

Temecula, CA

Mission # 2025-14

Written by: Eric Holden

The team received a callout for a missing person in Temecula with dementia at 0400. As the team was starting to roll into Base, she was located safe behind a store.

RMRU Members Involved:

Kyleen Gonzalez, Shana Gutovich, Solan Watts, and Richard Yocum

Lost Hiker Near Round Valley

May 04, 2025

Palm Springs Tramway

Mission # 2025-15

Written by: David Altenburg

At about 8:45 pm on Sunday evening, we got a callout for a hiker who was lost near Round Valley. After checking the weather, we saw that it was currently snowing, with temperatures hovering around freezing.

At around 10:30, I arrived in the Tramway parking lot to see Coby, Alex, and Solan already there. Stephanie and Geoff were on their way. The Tramway employees were keeping the tram open so that we could ascend. The subject had been in contact with RSO via text and was staying in place under a tree trunk.

Given that we had a location and the subject had been told to stay put, we expected to reach the subject quickly and were hopeful that

they would be mobile. Alex, Solan, and I were to go up the tram as the first team. Coby would take Geoff and Stephanie up to the litter once they arrived. Coby would then run Base from the upper tram station. Geoff and Stephanie waited at the station until we had assessed the subject and determined if the litter or any additional equipment was necessary.

There was not much snow on the ground when we set out on the High Trail, but it was falling quickly. With temperatures right around freezing, snow started accumulating on the ground; what landed on us melted immediately. Between the melting snow and the exertion of the hike, we could not stay dry, but it was an otherwise pleasant evening on the mountain.

After about 3 miles of hiking, we spotted a headlamp. We could not see the subject, but he responded verbally to a callout. When we reached the headlamp, we found the subject sheltered beneath a large tree trunk with the headlamp placed strategically where we could see its light from a distance. He was out of food but had plenty of water. Alex performed a medical assessment, and other than being cold, wet, and hungry, the subject was in decent shape. We gave him a sleeping pad, a dry coat, and some snacks, and he said he would be able to hike back with us after a few minutes to warm up. He had started the previous day in Palm Springs and made it to San Jacinto peak but had lost the trail back to the tram once the snow started.

On the hike back, we offered to

carry the subject's pack, but he insisted on carrying it himself. Once we started moving, he said he appreciated the pace because it was keeping him warm. About halfway back, we met up with Geoff and Stephanie, who were hiking to meet us. We met Coby at the upper tram station just before 2 am. The tram had stopped running for the night, so we spent the night in the station trying to get some sleep until 5 am when the Tramway employees came up to bring us back down.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, Coby Brown, Alex Cochran, Geoffrey Marshal, Stephanie Robertson, and Solan Watts



Injured Hiker on Bear Canyon Trail

May 5, 2025

**Bear Canyon Trail,
Ortega Highway, CA**

Mission # 2025-16

Written by: Richard Yocum

While our mission for lost hikers was still ongoing on near San Jacinto Mountain, we received another callout, at 12:13 am on 5/5/2025. This was for an overdue hiker last seen on the Bear Canyon Trail, off Ortega Highway near to the Riverside-Orange Counties line. He had fallen behind the 3 other hikers in his group and later texted them that his ankle was hurting and his leg cramping. Their group regularly does a 10-15 mile hikes almost every week, but this weekend had set out on a 20-mile loop hike.

Because so many RMRU members were on San Jacinto for the other mission, RMRU requested assistance from Orange County. When I arrived on scene later that morning after making the drive from San Diego, I found that Orange County SAR had set up a command post and already had 3 hasty teams up on the trails. Prior to that, several deputies had hiked partway up the trail. I was fully briefed by SAR Reserve Captain Devon Kemp and the two of us agreed to continue to manage the mission under Unified Command. I re-interviewed the other 3 hikers still at the trailhead. We used their information along with a photo they took of the missing hiker and analysis of a cell phone ping to guide our search strategy. Devon was already working his teams to achieve containment of our missing hiker since there were multiple trails, including the 4-way intersection at Four Corners along the trail.

We were able to deploy two more teams as additional Orange Co. SAR members arrived. RSO Aviation attempted to reach the search area but had to turn back due to low-lying cloud cover. Attempts to obtain additional cell phone data were not successful.

At about 1:30 pm a hasty team heading down the trail overtook our missing hiker. We learned that as it was getting dark the night before, he decided it was too dangerous to continue without a light source, especially with his injured ankle and cramping. His cell phone battery was depleted. He built a small shelter along the trail and slept from about 8 pm

until 5:30 am. After he awoke, he resumed hiking but headed in the wrong direction, up a trail from Four Corners. While our hasty teams were covering various trails at the same time he was on the move, we deduced that our teams were "missing" him as he took the wrong trail.

Fortunately, he was doing well except for feeling cold, hungry, and tired. SAR provided him with dry clothing, hydration, and calories. Another attempt to get Aviation to the scene for a hoist evacuation was again unsuccessful, so the ground teams performed an assisted walkout back to the trailhead, about 2.5 miles. He was medically evaluated by AMR and released to his friends.

Meanwhile, RMRU member Jeff arrived at the Command Post and was waiting to be paired with another SAR member at the time the subject was found. Tobias was enroute and I called him to turn around.

RMRU extends its appreciation to Orange County SAR for helping us out while we were lacking resources due to the other ongoing mission.

This mission serves as a reminder of several important messages. It is almost always easier to find a missing hiker if they stay put in one place, especially if we have a good idea of where they are. It is much harder to find a moving target! Also, hikers are reminded that even if they are planning only a day-hike or shorter, it is always good practice to bring a

light source, extra batteries, a cell phone charger, and extra clothing, water, and food – plan for the unexpected!

RMRU Members Involved:

Jeff Leisner, Tobias Moyneur, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside County Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT), deputies, and Aviation Rescue 9 helicopter, and Orange County search and rescue team and sheriff's deputies



Recovery of Human Remains

May 7, 2025

Near Cabazon, CA

Mission # 2025-17

Written by: Richard Yocum

RMRU was requested to assist the Riverside County Coroner's Office in the recovery of human remains that had recently been found by some adventurers near Cabazon. Kyleen and I responded.

The terrain was steep and unstable, but the mission was accomplished.

RMRU Members Involved:

Kyleen Gonzalez and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

Coroner's Office and other RSO personnel



Broken Wrist on Tahquitz Rock

May 18, 2025

Route "El Whampo"

Mission # 2025-18

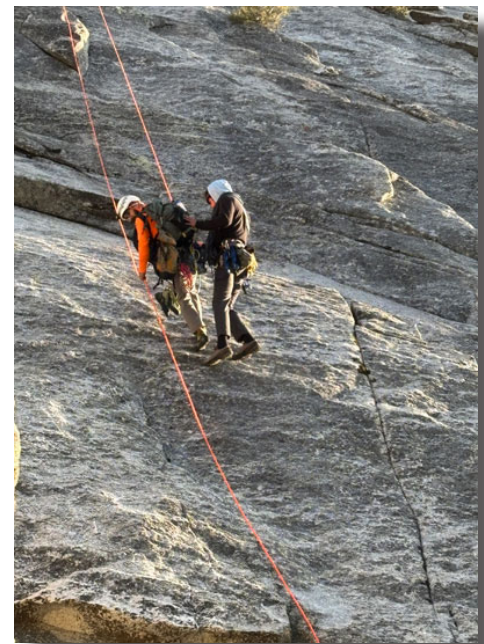
Written by: Blake Rankin

At 13:20, RMRU received a callout for a technical rock rescue involving a climbing party on the route "El Whampo" with one member suffering from a broken wrist. The responding members organized and developed a technical rescue plan at the Idyllwild Fire Station, then met at Humber Park to begin the ascent up the North Gully of Tahquitz with ropes and the necessary technical gear.



Rob Lowering Subject with Blake at Top at Anchors

The weather was a great day for climbing and all available members were critical to assist in carrying a significant amount of gear to the base of the climb, including two 600 ft ropes, and climbing racks. Simultaneously, there was a second callout for a climber with a ruptured Achilles tendon, which



Halfway Down Rob with Subject

complicated communications and resource allocation.

At 14:30, Rescue 9 helicopter performed a hoist of the injured subject. However, they communicated that the risk exceeded the urgency to return for the second, uninjured climber. Once sufficient gear and personnel arrived at the base, Rob and Blake roped up and led the two pitches of "El Whampo" to reach the stranded climber, who was the less experienced of the two and unable to self-rescue.

Upon reaching the belay station, Rob and Blake reinforced the existing gear anchor and built a rope system to lower the uninjured climber, with Rob acting as the attendant. Once both were safely on the ground, Blake rappelled on the same 600 ft rope, leaving the subject's anchor to be retrieved by another party.

The climber was able to walk out



Team Members at Base of Tahquitz Rock Ready to Help if Needed

under his own power and was soon reunited with his partner, who had been taken to the hospital for treatment of a broken wrist.



Rob and Subject Almost to the Base of Tahquitz

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, Trygve Anderson, David Bever, Alex Cochran, Donny Getz, Ed Gelabert, Shana Gutovich, Andy Hayt, Eric Holden, Glenn Henderson, Geoffrey Marshall, Tobias Moyneur, Rob Newton, Guillaume Plateau, Blake Rankin, Stephanie Robertson, Richard Yocum, and Solan Watts

Other Agencies Involved:
RSO Aviation

Broken Ankle Climber on Tahquitz Rock

May 18th, 2025

Idyllwild, CA

Mission # 2025-19

Written by: Eric Holden

The team received two callouts at almost the exact same time. One for a "broken ankle" and one for a broken wrist. The wrist is covered in 2025-018 mission. As we were rolling to Idyllwild Star 9 was able to hoist the subject out. He had fallen on the Vampire and tore his Achilles tendon. He was going to try and limp out but wisely called for help.

RMRU Members Involved:

David Altenburg, Trygve Anderson, David Bever, Coby Brown, Alex Cochran, Donny Getz, Ed Gelabert, Shana Gutovich, Andy Hayt, Eric Holden, Glenn Henderson, Dave Kosmal, Geoffrey Marshall, Tobias Moyneur, Rob Newton, Guillaume Plateau, Blake Rankin, Stephanie Robertson, Richard Yocum, and Solan Watts

Collapsed Hiker near Round Valley

May 25th, 2025

Round Valley, Mt. San Jacinto

Mission # 2025-20

Written by: Eric Holden

The team received a callout for a collapsed hiker near Round Valley in San Jacinto State Park. Bystanders had reported that he didn't have a pulse, wasn't breathing, and a boy scout troop had started CPR.

As we were enroute to the tram CalFire was able to lower in a paramedic and hoist the subject out.

RMRU Members Involved

Alex Cochran, Dave Kosmal, David Altenburg, David Bever, Eric Holden, Geoffrey Marshall, Guillaume Plateau, Shani McCullough, Solan Watts, Stephanie Robertson, and Vinay Rao

Missing Rock Collector

June 7, 2025

Desert Palms, CA

Mission # 2025-21

Written by: David Bever

RMRU was contacted just after midnight to be at a briefing at 7 am to help with a search in a remote desert area north of Desert Palms, CA.

The reporting party (RP) indicated that the subject frequented this area on occasion to collect rocks and was last seen by her on Thursday June 5th at 1100 hrs. On Friday June 6th at 0430 hrs, the subject called the RP indicating his vehicle was stuck in the sand and that he was attempting to dig his tires out with a shovel.

The subject also called a friend for help on June 6th at 1300 hrs requesting assistance. On June 6th at 2000 hrs the RP drove to the area and began searching but was unable to locate the subject and notified the Sheriff's Department on June 6th at 2200 hrs.

The subject, a 75- year-old male, was in good health with only minor

medical conditions.

RMUR and DSSAR members met at the Thermal Sheriff's station at 0700 hrs for briefing. RSO aviation assets were grounded due to fog. CHP fixed wing aircraft A61 was available and responded to assist with the search.

Two 4X4 DSSAR vehicles along with a few RMUR personal vehicles capable of driving in the terrain were designated for field deployment.

Teams comprised of RMUR and DSSAR members were established, with RMUR taking command.

Richard was Incident Commander (IC) and Dave was Base Operations.

The teams began moving to their search areas from Base when a reporting party via 911 indicated he was with a possible deceased individual in the general area of our missing subject.

CHP fixed wing A61 arrived overhead and located the new reporting party and subject's vehicle.

With A61's guidance, a DSSAR 4X4 vehicle with crew members from CalFire made their way to the subject and pronounced him deceased at 0830 hrs.

RMUR and DSSAR search and rescue members wish to extend our sympathies to the subject's friends and family.

RMUR Members involved:

David Altenburg, Chad Becker, David Bever, Alex Cochran, Matt Frenken, Andy Hayt, Dave Kosmal, Geoffrey Marshall, Guillaume Platteau, Stephanie Robertson, Solan Watts, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

DSSAR, RSO SERT, RSO Thermal, CHP Aviation, Cal Fire, AMR

Missing 70-Yr-Old Hiker

June 10, 2025

Temecula –

Dripping Springs Trail

Mission # 2025-22

Written by: David Bever

RMUR was requested to assist with a search for a missing hiker at 1545 hrs on 6/10/2025 in a remote, hilly area just east of Temecula, CA at the Dripping Springs trailhead. The reporting party (RP) indicated the subject, a 70-year-old male with Parkinsons, was unfamiliar with the area and left for a hike with no cell phone, water, or other supplies at approximately 1000 hrs that morning.

Our first RMUR member arrived on scene to find RSO, CalFire, and AMR on scene responding to an incident-within-the-incident as the RSO drone team spotted the wife of the subject, who hiked in to look for her husband, struggling to walk on the trail. As CalFire was preparing to enter, the subject's wife emerged from the trailhead and was treated for dehydration by AMR 427.

An RSO bloodhound was deployed up the Dripping Springs trail and

advised they were on-track up to approximately 1 mile in where their dog tired and returned to base.

As RMUR members arrived, David Bever assumed command and deployed two hasty teams – one up the Dripping Springs trail and the second up the Wildhorse trail. The teams were comprised of RMUR members and a CalFire firefighter to allow use of their radios. The Dripping Springs team was Rob, Dave Kosman and CalFire Firefighter Suhar.

The Wildhorse team was David Altenburg, Kyleen, and CalFire Firefighter Kelly. Three Riverside Search Dogs rescue team members Kevin Powel, Mike De Lannoy and RMUR member Matt arrived and were also deployed up the Dripping Springs trail to pick up where the RSO bloodhound tired.

Additional RMUR members and the command van arrived. Team members Coby, Alex, and Stephanie along with Dog team members Tina Brown and Max Shui began assisting with the establishment of the command van while others were preparing to be picked up and flown into higher ground to begin searching.

At 1910 hrs, the hasty team on the Dripping Springs trail indicated they had located the subject 2.9 miles in and at 1545 feet of elevation gain. The subject was laying on the trail, non-ambulatory and suffering from possible dehydration. RSQ-9 was able to response and airlifted the subject

MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - JUNE 2025

to a landing zone established by CalFire E3166 across from the entrance to Vail Lake. The subject was transported by AMR 427 to Inland Valley Hospital with minor abrasions, lacerations, and possible dehydration.

RMRU Members involved:

Dave Altenburg, David Bever, Coby Brown, Alex Cochran, Matt Frenken, Kyleen Gonzalez, Shana Gutovich, Dave Kosmal, Rob Newton, and Stephanie Robertson

Other Agencies Involved:

Riverside County Search Dogs, RSO Southwest, RSO Bloodhound, RSO9, Cal Fire E3166 and Truck 73, and AMR 427



Many of the Personnel Involved in the Anza Search

The subject was last seen on his Anza property on Wednesday late in the afternoon. The last cellphone contact was late evening when the subject was heard potentially out of breath, running, followed by a "thud" and loss of contact.

decision was made to expand the search team with Cal OES mutual aid teams in the mid-morning. By afternoon we were joined by 28 additional

Missing Man near Anza

June 19-21, 2025

Anza Area

Mission # 2025-23

Written by: David Bever

RMRU received a call to assist with a search for a missing resident at 0700 hrs on Thursday 6/19/2025 in a rural area in Anza, CA. The reporting party (RP) indicated the subject, a 61-year-old male with no major medical conditions had been working on his property in Anza and failed to return home the night before.

The subject's wife reported him missing early Thursday morning.

Our first RMRU member arrived on scene to find RSO Deputies along with the subject's van. Deputies indicated they checked the immediate vicinity, along with a blood hound and helicopter STARg and found nothing.

RMRU members with the assistance of two Riverside County Search Dogs (RCSD) members, RSO MED horse team, and four Desert Sheriff's Search and Rescue team members (DSSAR) all performed a hasty search followed by a grid search of the property until the search was suspended after sunset.

The search continued on Day 2 with RMRU team members and two RCSD team members. A



Searching in Brush Areas

searchers from RSO UAS, RSO SERT, San Diego County Sheriff's Office SAR, San Diego Mountain Rescue Team, San Bernadino SAR, San Bernadino Sheriff's Office, and the San Bernadino Cave and Rescue Team.

Our search area expanded to include locations identified by cell phone forensics, again with no results until the search was suspended again after sunset.



High Tech Mapping of Search Area

An additional Cal OES mutual aid request was made for the third day.

Day 3 search began with seven search dog teams, and a total of 104 searchers from across Southern California.

RMRU members and teams from RSO UAS and SERT, San Diego Mtn Rescue team, San Diego Sheriff's Office SAR, CARDA, San Bernardino Cave and Rescue, SB Victor Valley, SB Mtn SAR, SB Bear Valley, SB West Valley, SB RIM SAR, Orange County SAR, DSSAR, and Riverside County Search Dogs all joined the search. Search team members expanded the search area out to a 1-mile radius.

At a little after 0915 hrs, the subject was located approximately 850 feet from the CP sitting near a large boulder in apparent good health.

The subject appears to have been intentionally evading searchers for the past 2 days.

CalFire and AMR were called, and the subject was transported to Temecula Valley Hospital for evaluation.

RMRU Members Involved: David Altenberg, David Bever, Coby Brown, Alex Cochran, Joe Erickson, Edgar Gelabert, Shana Gutovich, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Dave Kosmal, Geoff Marshall, Shani McCullough, Tobias Moyneur, Rob Newton, Vinay Roa, Stephanie Robertson, Solan Watts, Ray Weden and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved: Riverside County Search Dogs, RSO Southwest, RSO UAS and SERT, San Diego Mtn Rescue team, San Diego Sheriff's Office SAR, CARDA, San Bernardino Cave and Rescue, SB Victor Valley, SB Mtn SAR, SB Bear Valley, SB West Valley, SB RIM SAR, Orange County SAR, DSSAR, CalFire Patrol 28, and AMR 502

Missing Hiker in Angeles Forest

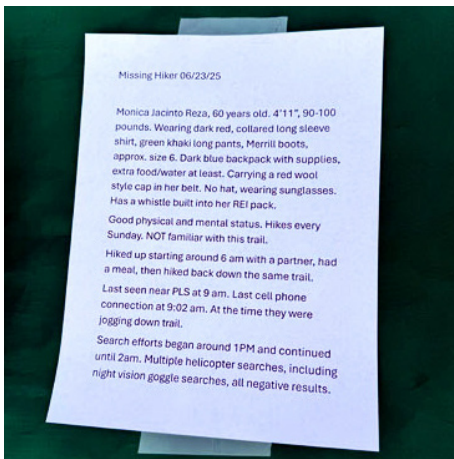
June 22 – July 01, 2025

Mt. Waterman – Angeles National Forest Mission # 2025-24

Written by: Goeffrey Marshall

Sunday, 6/22 – Operational Period 1

At approximately 9:30 am, a hiker named Monica went missing near Mt. Waterman in the Angeles National Forest.



OP1 Missing Hiker Information

She had been hiking a new trail with a group of friends when they jogged ahead. When they looked back, she was no longer visible.

Around 11 am, an unrelated hiker flagged down an LA County Sheriff deputy patrolling the area and reported the missing person. By pure coincidence, I was riding my motorcycle in the mountains that day and had pulled over at the exact spot where the report was being taken to use the restroom at the trailhead.

Sure enough, later that evening around 7 pm, RMRU was notified of a mutual aid search request scheduled for the following day. Teams from Montrose, LA Sheriff's and LA Fire worked tirelessly that night searching on the ground and via helicopter equipped with night vision goggles until 2 am, but unfortunately, they were unsuccessful in finding Monica.

Monday, 6/23 – Operational Period 2
Matt, Stephanie, and I responded on behalf of RMRU. We had all woken up around 4 am to reach the briefing location in Angeles Forest by 7 am.

Our first assignment was to hike down Devil's Canyon Trail and search for any clues near the stream that might indicate the subject had passed through. We hiked for about 3 miles and navigated south, passing numerous sand traps, none of which showed any signs of human footprints.

Our second task was to rendezvous with a team hiking downstream from further north.

Due to extremely poor radio communications, we were instructed to return to Base instead.

MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - JUNE 2025



OP2: Geoffrey, Matt, and Stephanie at Trailhead

Later, we were assigned to search a ridgeline for any sign of foot traffic. The terrain was made up of loose rock and gravel, making it difficult to differentiate between large animal and human prints.

Aside from a few deer and mountain lion tracks, the area appeared undisturbed. When we returned to Base, we were informed that a red beanie belonging to the subject had been found downhill and off-trail, the only confirmed clue so far.

Tuesday, 6/24 – Operational Period 3

Richard was the only RMRU member deployed for OP3. He was assigned to a field team with three Orange County SAR members.



OP3: Briefing at Base

They were driven a short distance to the Three Points trailhead on Angeles Crest Highway and hiked

about half a mile before dropping into a steep canyon.

Travel was extremely slow due to loose rock, one rappel, dense vegetation, deadfall, standing water, and difficult footing. About two miles in, the vegetation became impassable. With limited radio coverage, they had to contact another field team to relay a request to CP for a helicopter extraction. They were eventually hoisted out by LASD Air Rescue 5. No clues were found.

Wednesday, 6/25 – Operational Period 4

I returned with new RMRU member Dave Kosmal. Our assignment was to continue a search along a dry wash between two ridges. After being inserted into the field by Air 5, we bushwhacked north to where the previous team had ended.

Vegetation was extremely dense, and we often could not see each other, so we stayed within shouting distance. On the way back south, we had to climb partway up the ridges and do callouts down into the thick brush.

Radio comms with Base were lost, but we stayed in contact via satellite messaging. Midway through the assignment, we were notified that Air 5 may not be able to extract all field teams and were asked to consider self-extraction.

After reviewing topo maps, I proposed climbing over two ridges to reach Devil's Canyon Trail. Dave agreed.



OP4: Geoffrey Being Lowered from Air 5

The terrain was steep with loose rocks and waist-high brush. We avoided hazardous drop-offs and used vegetation for support on the descent. At one point, we crossed a ravine on a large, downed tree to avoid the thick brush below. We eventually reached the trail and returned safely. No clues were discovered.

Thursday, 6/26 – Operational Period 5

I stayed overnight at a nearby Christian camp and was the only RMRU member responding. I was paired with two Tulare County SAR members to grid-search a 118-acre area north of the original trail. The slope was steep with loose sand and little shade. We did callouts and inspected in and around large rock formations within our area.

We encountered two friends of the subject and a separate group searching on their own within our area. Footprints were faint and in-

President's Message -

continued from page 3

ankle injuries, rock climbers with a broken wrist and ruptured Achilles tendon, the rescue of an out-of-bounds snowboarder, mutual aid to two missions in LA County, and assist for President Biden's dedication of the Chuckwalla National Monument (cancelled due to high winds followed by the massive LA fires).

RMRU's needs for maintaining its high level of mission readiness are ongoing, including the replacement of many hundreds of dollars for lost or damaged gear during the Tahquitz traverse mission, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank our many supporters.

Whatever the weather, time of day, or mission, RMRU remains ready to respond to those in need, even it means taking on the Tahquitz mountain spirit!

Stay safe,

Richard Yocum
President, RMRU



Grapevine Knot
(Double Fisherman)

conclusive, so we were never sure if they belonged to the subject or her friends.



OP5: Search Area Looking Down

By 2 pm, we had covered only 15% of our area, had found no relevant clues, and water was running low. There were no streams for filtering, so we were instructed to return to Base instead of continuing.

The search was cut short that day due to logistical issues, including lack of air support due to other activities going on off the mountain.

I later hiked the subject's known route solo. The trail was strenuous, and it was clear we were searching for a very fit individual. I also inspected the heavily searched area where her hat was found, indicating she had followed a boulder-filled wash downhill.

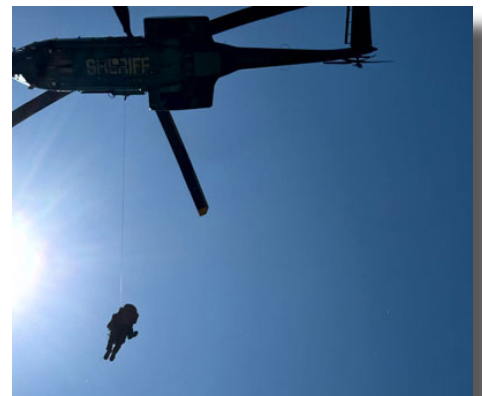
I reached a trail crossing that gave her three options: right toward the road, left toward Twin Peaks, or straight into the stream that leads to Devil's Canyon, where other

missing persons have been found in the past.

Friday, 6/27 – Operational Period 6

After another night at the Christian camp, I joined Nick and Mark from Altadena and San Diego MRT. Our mission was to push upstream in Devil's Canyon while another team worked downstream. The brush was thick, and we took turns bush-whacking both sides and walking the stream bed.

Nick advised that we remain alert for any signs of decomposition. At one point, we all smelled something like dead fish. We investigated and confirmed it was likely just a fish carcass, as fish had been seen in the stream earlier.



OP6: Hoisting out of Canyon

Eventually, the stream became completely choked with branches and impassable. This was the same point Dave and I had searched from above two days earlier. We saw no signs that anyone had pushed through. After exploring further and finding no clues, we radioed base.

Air 5 hoisted us out of the canyon 15 minutes later. Saturday,

MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - JUNE 2025

**Saturday 6/28 –
Operational Period 7**

David and Andy represented RMRU for OP7. They were hoist-inserted by Air 5 with Ventura County teams to investigate a side drainage into Devil's Canyon.

**OP7: Incident Command Center**

The area was too steep and overgrown to enter, and they were forced to abandon the approach. With no signs of human travel and no evidence in the area, they concluded the subject was likely not there. They covered the remainder of their zone in Devil's Canyon and were extracted via Air 5. No clues were found.

**Sunday, 6/29 –
Operational Period 8**

Dave Kosmal and Shani left Temecula early and met up with Stephanie at the CP. They were assigned to a steep but open slope between a ridge and trail. They traversed it methodically but found no clues. After returning to CP, they were informed no new clues had been found.

By evening, we were all notified that the mutual aid search would be scaled back to a limited ongoing search until further notice.

What was meant to be a simple out-and-back day hike most likely

turned tragic with one wrong turn. At the time I am writing this, Monica still has not been found.

RMRU strongly recommends that anyone venturing into the wilderness carry a reliable map, paper or digital, and ensure any digital maps are downloaded in advance. Bring a battery bank to recharge your phone if needed. According to the subject's friends, her phone battery was known to be unreliable.

Another important tip: if you become lost and it is safe to do so, stop where you are and shelter in place. As long as someone knows your route and expected return time, search teams will know where to begin looking.

**OP7: Searchers Being
Flown Back to Base**

More than 100 SAR personnel from teams in both southern and central California participated in the search.

**OP8: Dave and Shani
Searching a Slope****RMRU Members Involved:**

David Altenburg, Matt Frenken, Andy Hayt, Dave Kosmal, Geoffrey Marshall, Shani McCullough, Stephanie Robertson, and Richard Yocum

Other Agencies Involved:

Altadena Mountain Rescue Team, Antelope Valley Search and Rescue, Kern County Search and Rescue, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue, Malibu Search and Rescue, Montrose Search and Rescue, Ojai Search and Rescue, Orange County Search and Rescue, San Bernardino Mountain Search and Rescue, San Bernardino Cave and Technical Rescue Team, San Bernardino Bear Valley Search and Rescue, West Valley Search and Rescue, San Bernardino Rim of the World Search and Rescue, San Diego Mountain Rescue Team, San Diego Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, San Dimas Mountain Rescue Team, Sierra Madre Search and Rescue, Tulare County Search and Rescue, Ventura County Fillmore Search and Rescue, LA Fire, and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department



Mountain Rescue Association

mra.org



The Mountain Rescue Association (MRA), established in 1959 at Timberline Lodge at Mount Hood, Oregon is the oldest search and rescue association in the United States. MRA is an organization of teams dedicated to saving lives through rescue and mountain safety education.

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

We do so by improving the quality, availability, and safety of mountain search and rescue.

With over 100 government authorized units, MRA has grown to become the critical mountain search and rescue resource in North America.

RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS



David Altenburg - Winchester | Trygve Anderson - Loma Linda
 Chad Becker - Indio | David Bever - Temecula
 Coby Brown - Hemet | Pete Carlson (MRA) - Blue Jay
 Kase Chong (MRA) - Pasadena | Alexandra Cochran - Hemet
 Mariah Doran - Fallbrook | Marisa Evers - Hemet
 Kalie Fletcher - Newport Beach | Matt Frenken - Eastvale
 Edgar Gelabert Jr - Idyllwild | Michael George (MRA) - Riverside
 Donny Goetz (MRA) - Idyllwild | Kyleen Gonzalez - Winchester
 Joshua Gould - Wildomar | Shana Gutovich - Temecula | Andy Hayt - Fallbrook
 Glenn Henderson (MRA) - Hemet | Eric Holden (MRA) - Temecula
 Dave Kosmal - Temecula | Jeffery Leisner - Orange | Geoffrey Marshall - Orange
 Benjamin Mata - San Diego | Shani McCullough (MRA) - Temecula
 Tobias Moyneur - Calimesa | Robert Newton (MRA) - Hemet
 Guillaume Plateau - Del Mar | Blake Rankin - Twenty Nine Palms
 Vinay Rao - San Jacinto | Stephanie Robertson - Angelus Oaks
 Ryan Roleson - Menifee | Solan Watts - Palm Desert
 Ray Weden (MRA) - Murrieta | Richard Yocum (MRA) - Idyllwild

Support Members

Steve Bryant (MRA) | Joe Erickson (MRA) | Gary Farris (MRA)
 Beth Jeffery | Grant Nelson | Brad Scott | Ty Wittersheim

ABOUT RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

FOUNDED 1961

MEMBER MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION 1963

GOVERNING BODY: RIVERSIDE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

MEMBERS: ORIGINAL: 6 | CURRENT MEMBERS: 42

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

MISSIONS: TOTAL OVER 2,000 | AVERAGE PER MONTH: 3.8

RMRU BOARD MEMBERS 2025 - 2026

Richard Yocum - President

Ray Weden - 1st Vice-President | Matt Frenken - 2nd Vice-President

David Bever - Secretary | Eric Holden - Member at Large



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Your donation is deductible from both your state and federal taxes

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- ☐ Summit Club \$500
- ☐ Patron Club \$200
- ☐ Century Club \$100
- ☐ Supporting Club < \$100

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**Courage
Commitment
Compassion**

