

Two climbers fall

July 16, 2000
Tahquitz Rock
2000-019

By Phil Thompson
Operation leader

RMRU was called out about 3:30 in the afternoon with a report that there had been a major rock climbing accident on Tahquitz rock with one climber dead, one injured and one hung up in their ropes. RMRU got on the location as soon as possible at Humber Park. A CHP fixed wing plane was already contacting climbers on the rock with their loud speakers trying to find the subjects of the accident, All dozen or so other climbers on the rock gave the ok sign to the CHP fixed wing. A hasty team was sent to the base of the rock with medical equipment and tech gear to try to locate the subjects. Hasty team #1 went to the right of the rock and started searching to the north around the base of the rock. The CHP plane spotted a climber that was not moving or responding to their hails and was able to guild the hasty team to him. When the hasty team got to the first subject and did a quick medical assessment it was quickly determined that the first subject was dead. The hasty team then started to search for the next subject. The second subject was found about 100 FT above the first and it was quickly determined that he was also dead. Shortly after getting to the second subject team # 2 arrived to assist team #1. A CHP helicopter was in route to assist us with the extraction of the two subjects by using a three hundred-foot long line, as there was no access to land. As the six rescue workers worked to get the subjects prepared for the extraction the helicopter worked as fast as possible to get the helicopter ready to go in. It was getting late in the day and we were running out of daylight fast. No day light no helicopter.

With great difficulty because of the very steep terrain the ground team was able to get one subject into the cargo net and the helicopter pulled him out just as we lost the day light. There would be no chance to extract the second subject by helicopter, he would have to be carried out by hand down the steep and rocky terrain. The rescue workers started the carry out at 9 PM and got to base camp



The CHP helicopter trying to finish the task at hand before loosing daylight.

at midnight.

Based on other climber's reports of the accident RMRU was able to put together what happened to the subjects. While climbing in the morning Kwan Kam, 59, of Glendale and Kevin Dahn, 49, of Northridge had an accident with one of them getting a broken leg. The uninjured climber was in the process of lowering the other down to the base of the rock when he ran out of rope. He then started down climbing without any protection whatsoever, even though he must have had at least \$1000 of tech gear on his rack. He then lost his footing and fell therefore pulling his friend to his death as well.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.