



Eight Hikers Stranded

May 12, 2008

Windy Point, near Palm Springs

2008-008

by Patrick McCurdy

On the morning of Saturday, May 12th, eight hikers, all in their early twenties, set out to hike from the top of the Palm Springs Tram down Blaisdell Canyon to a vehicle parked down along Highway 111. While a couple of them carried adequate water, most of them carried only one liter each - far too little for this time of year. Late in the afternoon four of the hikers became dehydrated, with cramps, and thought they could not go on. Leaving those four with most of the remaining water, the remaining four decided to hike out and get assistance. RMRU was notified at 7:30 p.m. and was on scene within forty-five minutes.

By the time we got there the party of four hiking out had found a cache of bottled water and two of this group hiked the water back up to the original four, while the remaining two continued to hike out for help. Shortly thereafter we were informed that all eight, possibly in three different groups, were hiking out and we could see headlamps on the terrain above us.

Two RMRU members, Pete Carlson and Lee Arnson, blazed overland (off trail) up to the descending hikers, while four others (myself, Jeff Toscas, Brad Scott, and Jeri Sanchez) all piled in Jeri's SUV to try to find a dirt road that led up closer to the subjects. Lee and Pete intercepted the descending group and were able to give us directions to a rough road from which we would be able to drive out all subjects and rescuers, so we (now joined by Michael George) returned to base for 4WD vehicles, found the road, and ferried everyone involved back to the incident command post (which was run by Gwenda Yates, Glenn Henderson, and Kevin Walker). The whole mission was wrapped up by about 11 p.m.

Lesson 1: The party had been warned not to try this trail this late in the year, but ignored the advice. This area can be quite hot and devoid of water this time of year, requiring extra precautions when hiking. They carried far too little water for a day-long hike.

Lesson 2: Headlamps are relatively cheap and very light. It's a good idea to pack one even if you don't anticipate being out after dark. I'm sure the one young man who hiked miles last night be the light of his cell phone will be packing one from now on!



Photo by Glenn Henderson

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.