



Overdue Hikers Stranded on Skyline Trail

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Grubb's Notch, Skyline Trail

2010-009

Written by William Carlson

I welcomed the sound of my pager at 0330 in the morning. Hoping that the call-out from the night before might be aborted, I rolled over and looked at my phone. Through blurry eyes I read the text stating, "Reminder, all members meet at lower tram parking lot 0530." All I could think is "WHAT, who is up at this time... I still have 15 minutes before I have to get up!"

The previous night RMRU was called to aid two hikers on the Skyline Trail who had become disoriented and stranded shortly after nightfall. A few attempts were made to reach the two men by helicopter. All were unsuccessful. It was now 4:00am as I strolled toward my truck. The temperature was surprisingly warm on this spring morning and the air was dead calm. The stars shone bright and I was slowly beginning to forget the comforts of my nice warm bed. The sound of my truck broke the silence as I turned the key and headed for the Palm Springs Tramway.

My thoughts bounced around like a pinball. Concentrating on the road and pondering what may be in store, I focused just enough to enjoy the predawn colors and air. "I wonder where these hikers will be?" "The usual location, or are we going to encounter a new area?" "How much snow is really left up there?" As I made the turn into the parking lot I took a deep breath.



Rescuers Search Along Skyline Trail

I arrived in the chilly parking lot of the Tramway and met fellow members Nick Nixon, Les Walker, Pete Carlson, Chuck Springer, Lee Arnson, Roger May, David Webb, and Carlos Carter. All were gearing up for the unexpected. Looking up at the snow-covered slopes of the North Face of San Jacinto we added ice axe and crampons to the cluster of gear. One minute the floor looked like an earthquake hit an REI store tossing gear everywhere and the next 10 neat packs were lined out ready to go. We loaded the tramcar and began our ascent to the upper station.

For the first time all morning our minds were at ease. Training had kicked in and we began to make small talk and catch up on family life. For a brief moment we were able to detach and enjoy what the day had to offer. Clouds to the East provided a spectacular sunrise. Arriving at the upper station there was no place any of us would rather be.

Two teams went to work immediately. Walking to the top of the Skyline Trail we realized that we had been fooled. The snow in this particular area had nearly melted completely. The trail down, although weathered, was clearly visible. We gave a shout. We briefly began to enjoy the suspenseful silent waiting period that had driven many searchers mad, when two voices called back from 200 feet below us. Lee's response, "Ahhhhh, the sweet sound of voice contact in the morning."



RMRU Escorts Subjects Back to Tramway

The two overdue hikers had found the trail at first light and because it was so cold began hiking to stay warm. We provided water and food before making the quick trip to the Tramway. It was another one of those good missions with a lot of preparation and a great outcome.

Some things to keep in mind whenever you head out on any trail. Be prepared! This means plenty of food, water, and clothing to keep you moving and warm. Take a headlamp even if you don't plan on staying out past dark. Know the weather forecast for your starting and ending location. If you are unfamiliar with the route ask more than one person for advice. Also, take a map and compass and know how to use them. And lastly, if you do get into trouble, don't hesitate to call for help. If you try to get yourself out of a bad situation you might end up in a worse one.

Having completed another mission, members returned home to their families, to work, or to vacations as I did. See you tonight! William Carlson

Members present: Lee Arnson, Pete Carlson, William Carlson, Carlos Carter, Nick Nixon, Roger May, Chuck Springer, Les Walker, and David Webb

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

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