

Three Lost Hikers 7000' Skyline Trail

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Upper Skyline Trail
2011-002

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Written by Editor

At 6 p.m. we headed to the Lake Elsinore Area of the Ortega Mountains to [search for two missing hikers](#) in the rain. Then at 7 p.m. we were turned around and told to head to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway for a Skyline Trail mission in blizzard conditions. Three hikers (father, son, and the father's girlfriend) had left Palm Springs at 10 a.m. Sunday morning to hike the 10 miles and 8000 vertical feet to the Upper Tramway Station. The son had done this several times in the past so the hikers thought that they would be OK. But in the winter the upper part of the Skyline Trail is buried in snow and ice and is very hard to find if you do not really know the way. The subjects had called for help by cell phone, saying that they had lost the trail around the 7,000 foot level and were getting very cold.

While en route to the Tramway we got another call saying that an 80-year-old man had not returned from a day hike to the summit of Mt. San Jacinto. It was decided to first get the Skyline hikers out and then start searching towards the Peak.

It was 10 p.m. by the time everyone arrived at the Tramway, packed up, and rode the tram car to the Upper Station. Quickly Carlos, Paul, Matt, Dana, and Bill headed out into the night with temperatures nearing 20 degrees, winds gusting to 30 mph, and visibility often extremely limited. Meanwhile, Gwenda drove the rescue vehicle further into the desert so that she could run base and have direct line of site with the Skyline Trail.

The rescuers hiked from the tram station across to Grubb's Notch and gave a yell. They thought that they heard a response and immediately started down the Skyline Trail, leaving Dana on top to ensure radio communication with base. As it turned out, the three hikers had kept moving very slowly up the gully and the rescuers found them after descending only 500 feet in elevation. The female hiker was very cold and almost hypothermic because she was only wearing thin cotton pants and a light jacket. The other two hikers were cold but OK. Team members quickly got more clothing onto the woman and then started hiking everyone up the last 500 feet to the top. At times team

members almost had to carry the woman to keep her moving. By 11:30 p.m. everyone was inside the Upper Tramway Station.



Rescuers help subjects ascend to Mountain Station

The female hiker was put into a warm sleeping bag and given lots of hot liquids to warm her up. Once that was done Dana and Paul stayed at the Upper Tramway Station to run base for the [San Jacinto search](#). Carlos, Matt, and Bill went back out into the cold to start up the Sid Davis Trail to the Peak, looking for the overdue 80-year-old hiker.



Bill and Paul head back up the Skyline Trail

Team members present: Paul Caraher, Carlos Carter, Bill Delo, Matt Jordon, Dana Potts, Gwenda Yates

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.