



Hikers Stranded by Darkness

November 23, 2014

Jensen Creek near Snow Creek

2014-046

Written by Eric Holden

At 8:30 pm I get a call with a heads up on a possible search. Making sure all my gear is ready to go, I get about 90 minutes of sleep before the official call out is made. Two Subjects had called 911 and said they were out of water, with no light source, somewhere on the slopes of Jensen Creek. The helicopter was able to spot them at about the 4,800 foot level but unable to reach them due to flight restrictions. They were able to get a latitude/longitude reading of their location.

The decision was made to head up the same route they went and ascend about 3,500 feet up the canyon. A 60 minute drive later and I was greeted by fellow RMRU members Cameron and Ray at the trailhead. This would be Ray's first mission in the field and turned out to be quite the adventure. We started up the canyon and quickly found that from the rains 3 days ago, the canyon had a good amount of flowing water. This made for...interesting... travel as we occasionally sunk calf high in mud. With Cameron leading the way, the next 4 hours involved boulder hopping, scrambling and even some short class 5 climbing up waterfalls. I love canyoneering, but most of the time its descending them, in the day, in warm weather.

During one of the climbs I was bringing up the rope to belay the Cameron and Ray when I suddenly found myself no longer on the rock face but falling backwards. "How did I fall? I was so secure" I thought as I took the 7 foot drop onto an old tree branch. Checking myself out I didn't have any large holes or broken bones and found that the hold I was standing on actually broke off the rock. Ok, time to try again, this time with less falling. I got to the top and was able to belay Cameron and Ray as they made the climb.



60 Foot Waterfall
Photo by Eric Holden.

It was about 4:30am and we needed to get a little rest before continuing on. At first light we packed up our gear and ascended till our route became impassable due to a 60 foot waterfall at about 4,200 feet.



**Cameron Hiking Up Creek
Photo by Eric Holden.**

We climbed the ridge line to shout down into one of the other canyons but were still unable to make voice contact. If the subjects were at their last known position, we should have been able to get some response. We came up with a plan to head back down to base and possibly try to come in from the Black Mountain Campground up above Jensen Creek.



Cameron and Ray waiting for Helicopter
Photo by Eric Holden.

Thankfully, even in gusty winds, the RSO Aviation Helicopter was able to land near us, pick us up, and give us a short ride back to base. The helicopter then had to return to base for the rest of the day due to high winds.

Cameron and Ray had to leave and the call was made requesting additional help. Soon Gwenda, Patrick and Kirk made it to base. While coming up with a new search plan and getting ready to summon more help from outside agencies, we got a ping from the subject's cell phone at a residence, not on the mountain. Turns out, the subjects had hiked out during the earlier hours of the morning and got a ride from a buddy back home. They never thought it important to notify the Sheriff and just went home to remodel their kitchen.....Glad the hear they are OK, but please, if you are lost, call 911 for help, and then hike out, let the searchers know...

RMRU Members Involved: Kirk Cloyd, Cameron Dickenson, Eric Holden, Patrick McCurdy, Ray Weden, and 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.