

Lost Hikers Tramway

December 05, 2014
Tramway Area – Shangri-La
2014-047

Written by Pete Carlson

At 7:15 pm we get the call for two lost hikers near the upper Tramway. The Sheriff's Helicopter had flown over and spotted the two, but due to blowing fog on the ridge they had to leave. They did get co-ordinates for us so we knew where to find the two hikers. I arrived at the Lower Tramway at 9 pm and got my gear together for an overnight mission. Even though we know where the people were, you never know what will happen. So into the pack goes the gear: Sleeping bag, short thermo-rest, biv sack, (my jackets, hat, and gloves), extra (jackets, hat, and gloves for subjects if needed), stove, small food bag (Hot coco, soups, and energy bars), 3 liters of water, first aid kit, helmet, harness, small technical bag, 100 foot 9 mm rope, 2 headlamps, map and compass, GPS, Misc. Kit, and Team Radio. OK, now I have a 35-40 lb. pack and I head up to the Tramway to catch the next car up.

Up top are Glenn and Lew running Base, Cameron and Ray have just gone into the field to start looking for the subjects, and the Sheriff Deputy. After Glenn plots the co-ordinates onto the map and I put them into my GPS, I am set to go catch up with the first two searchers. After looking at the map I know right where to go, Shangri-La. It is just past the Ranger Station and the first trail junction. I make a right turn and head up the first drainage just past the trail junction. In 10 minutes I have caught up with Cameron and Ray. Together with my knowledge of the area we make quick time till we are looking out over the desert and the lights of Palm Springs.

We give a yell and hear a response in the distance up the ridge line toward Harvard Peak and on the desert side of that ridge. First up is a 200 foot cliff in our way. We look to see if going down and traversing under it will work. No, so we go around the mountain side of the ridge and head up as we traverse. It is a lot of third class scrambling and with heavy packs we are sweating hard. After 20 minutes of this we reach the top and I start down the desert side and give a yell. The subjects are still up the ridge and definitely down on the desert side. I try to traverse the desert side and run into class five climbing, so I turned back and yelled to the other two to stay on the mountain side and continue up

the ridge farther.

I come back and join them and in 10 minutes we are on top again farther up the ridge. This time the subjects are below us. We are able to find a third class route down to them after a couple of false starts and got to them about 11:00pm. Juan and Ruby are in good shape, dressed warmly, and still have some water left. They just got caught by darkness and had no idea of how to get back to the Tramway. Ruby had suggested that they just hike down to the lights below. Luckily Juan said no way and they stayed put and did not go anywhere.



Ray, two Subjects, and Pete
Photo by Cameron Dickenson.

We took a short break and we Rescuers eat and drink to keep up our energy levels. I did a short look around hike and found we could traverse up into a notch and drop back down into the drainage that goes from Shangri-La up to the Harvard and Yale Saddle. This was mostly a class two route with just a small bit of class three, so it was great for the subjects.

It was a beautiful night to be hiking with it being only one day from a full moon, it was easy to hike with no headlamp and see just fine. We made it back to the Upper Tramway Station around 12:15. We then put out our sleeping bags and sleep on the floor until 6pm when we could get a ride back down to the Lower Station on the first morning run.

RMRU Members Involved: Pete Carlson, Cameron Dickenson, Glenn Henderson, Lew

Kingman, 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.