

Three Hikers and Dog

**February 4, 2017
Tramway Skyline Trail
2017-004**

Written by Eric Holden

Six hours after the team had just finished our annual winter skills training at Grubb's Notch, we were called back out to Grubb's Notch. We were asked to assist with carrying supplies down to a State Park Ranger who was about 800ft down Skyline trail with 3 subjects and a dog. We had a great turn out of almost all the people that were at training earlier that morning.



**Eric Working on the Plan
Photo by Matt Jordon.**

Once on scene we were told the subjects and the State Park's Volunteer were all warm and comfy and that they didn't need our assistance. The plan was to hoist them out via Helicopter the next morning. Skyline right now is basically one big ice chute. Almost impossible to travel on without gear, and very difficult even with gear. When asked, what the plan was if RSO aviation couldn't do a hoist, the response was to get another

Helicopter.



**Members waiting at Tramway in case needed
Photo by Matt Jordon.**

Due to the steep terrain, the Skyline can sometimes be a very tricky place to perform a hoist so RMRU quickly came up with a backup plan. We would be staged at the upper tram with ~2,000 feet of rope, not to mention about 1,000f feet of webbing. If the subjects couldn't be airlifted out, we would rig up static lines from above the subjects all the way down to them. We would then be able to clip into the ropes using ascenders and safely hike up the last 800 feet.



Sunrise Calm and Clear
Photo by Matt Jordon.

Thankfully the expert crew of Star-9 was able to hoist out all 3 subjects, the dog, and the State Parks Volunteer. We gathered all our gear and headed back down the mountain.

We would later find out the entire story. Turns out one male subject, Justin, had decided to hike in shorts, t-shirt, and tennis shoes with his dog up skyline trail. No other mountaineering gear. A group of three mountaineers found him sitting in the snow, very cold. They gave him food, water, warm clothing and called emergency services. They decided to keep continuing up Skyline as it was getting dark. As they were going up only one of them could make the top and the other two retreated from the icy conditions to head back down the mountain. On their way back down they met up with State Park's Volunteer and they showed him the location of Justin. The four of them made a makeshift camp and bedded down for the night. The night started very cold as they had limited gear but RSO Aviation were able to drop two large duffel bags of gear filled with food, water, and warm clothing. After that they were all quite comfortable.

RMRU would like to give big thanks to Tony and Alex who gave up their Sunday plans to assist in this rescue. Also thanks to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway who let us spend the night with all the free coffee we could drink.

RMRU Members Involved: Gary Farris, Michael George, Eric Holden, Tony Hughes, Matt Jordon, Kevin Kearns, and Raymond Wenden.

Other Agencies Involved: California State Parks, Riverside Sheriff Aviation Unit, and

Palm Springs Aerial Tramway.

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.