



## Tramway Hike to Peak

**February 26, 2017**  
**Tramway – San Jacinto Peak**  
**2017-011**

Written by Gary Farris

On Saturday evening a 911 call was received from two hikers taking refuge in the emergency shelter near the summit of Mt San Jacinto elevation 10,833 feet. After a series of snow storms during this winter season, snow several feet deep completely covered the established five miles, 2,400-foot elevation gain trail from the Tramway station to the summit. By the time RMRU was notified the Tramway was shutting down for the night, so the team met up the next morning.

The two men in their twenties had left the upper tram station late in the morning following foot prints left by previous hikers and reached the summit. As they began their late afternoon descent, following their ascent route proved difficult so they retreated to the emergency shelter. With nighttime temperatures dropping below 20 degrees without factoring in wind chill and their lack of crampons to handle icy snow conditions this was probably the best decision. Fortunately, they had one sleeping bag to share which at least made a very cool night tolerable. Fortunately as well, their cell phone had service from the summit and they were able to communicate with the 911 operation; something that is spotty at best.

Riverside County Sheriff's Department requested that RMRU send a team up to escort the 2 subjects from the emergency shelter back to the upper tram station in the morning. While Ray took charge of the operation from the upper tram station, Tony and I set out for the summit with our full overnight packs and extra gear for the subjects at about 10 am. We stopped by the Long Valley Ranger Station to check in with them and learned that they were about to send out one ranger, Sam to assist with the rescue. We thought it best to combine into a single team and the 3 of us headed to the summit.

Considering the heavy snow conditions which posed a potential avalanche danger following the normal trail, we elected to ascend adjoining and wooded Miller Peak to minimize the avalanche risk. The downside of this route was the steep icy slopes, 45 degrees in places which meant crampons and ice axes were critical tools for safe travel. While the day was beautiful and clear, we had a real concern of an approaching storm. In

fact, Sam's barometer dropped 100 points in only a matter of a few hours. Upon reaching the ridge line directly below the summit, winds reached about 40 MPH.



**Tony Heading up to Summit  
Photo by Gary Farris.**

The subjects were reached and found that between the 2 of them they had only a single set of snow shoes. This shoe show set's design was ill-suited for descending steep icy slopes which became apparent as we returned the same route we ascended on Miller Peak. Fortunately, Ranger Sam had brought an extra set of good snow shoes and I provided the other gentleman my snow shoes as I was using crampons.



**Subjects and Tony in back Hiking Out  
Photo by Gary Farris.**

We returned safely to the Long Valley ranger station with headlamps arriving in the dark. Great teamwork with the State Park Rangers and we enjoyed working with them and look forward to doing so again in the future.



**Ranger Sam Hiking back to Tramway  
Photo by Gary Farris.**

**RMRU Members Involved:** Gary Farris, Tony Hughes, and Raymond Weden.

**State Park Ranger:** Sam.

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.