



Recovery Fallen Climber

July 08, 2017
Tahquitz Rock
2017-032

Written by Pete Carlson

It was supposed to be a day of joint technical training on Suicide Rock with RMRU and DSAR (Desert Search and Rescue). We started hiking up the climber's trail to Suicide Rock at 8am with packs full of ropes, technical gear, and a litter. We had just reached the beginning of the dirt trail when we heard a helicopter circling over Tahquitz Rock. When we looked up we saw it was the Riverside County Sheriff's Star-9 and we knew it was be a mission. Sure enough when we made contact they reported a body had been found near the base of the rock and we would be needed to help with the recovery.

We returned to the Suicide Rock Trail head and move our cars up to the Tahquitz Rock Trailhead. Within minutes a Sheriff's Deputy arrived on scene and told us that two climbers had called 911 to say they had found a body at the base of the Trough. We did not know what gear we would need so we took everything that we had been going to take on training. Tony was assigned to run the mission and be basecamp. Ray stayed back to hike the Coroner in once they arrived at base.

A slow and steady hike of 35 minutes got us up to lunch rock where we meet the two climbers who had found the body. They led us over to the Trough where about 100 feet above the trail was the fallen climber. It was now 10am. The two climbers that found him had been to Suicide Rock for the first-time last week and this was there first time to Tahquitz Rock. They had been going to do the Trough today, but after finding the body decide they were not feeling like climbing today. We told them thanks for helping and to come back again that Tahquitz is a great place to climb.

It appeared that the climber had been free soloing and by the items that we found above him (first aid kit, hat, knife, food, and one shoe) that he had been at least 150-250 feet above where he was found. We guess that he was up in the fifth class climbing when he fell.



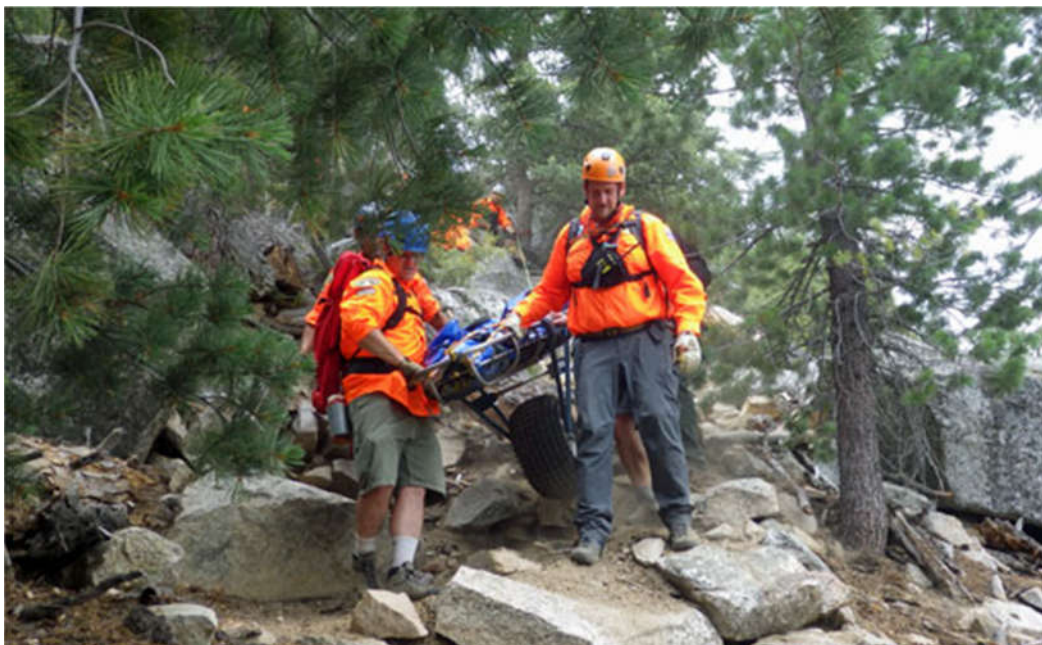
Wrapping a Tree as Anchor
Photo by Pete Carlson.

We set up an anchor on a tree and attached a rope and got the litter up to near the climber. We then had to wait for the Coroner and a Deputy who arrived around noon. Once on scene we belayed the Coroner up the Third-Class terrain to the climber where she examined the body and all the loose gear and took lots of photos. The Rescue members then gathered up all the loose gear into a bag. With the Coroner's help, we prepare the climber to be loaded into the litter.



Lowering down Third Class to Trail
Photo by Pete Carlson.

Then we belayed the Coroner back down to the trail and put the climber into the litter to be lower back to the trail at the base of the rock. Once on the trail the Coroner did detail check of the deceased and found a driver's license that identify the climber as George Wu. We then added a wheel to the bottom of the litter so we could wheel it back to the parking lot.



**Carry out down Climbers Trail
Photo by Pete Carlson.**



**Litter always on Belay
Photo by Pete Carlson.**

It always takes hard work to get the wheeled litter down the climber's trail, but with 15 rescue members to all take turns we were able to belay it down to the Ernie Maxwell Trail it about 1 hour. Once back at base we sorted gear and put it back into the rescue truck and then went to (Lunch-Dinner) at 3pm in Idyllwild before heading home. Our thoughts and condolences are with the family and friends of George Wu.

RMRU Members Involved: Cameron Dickenson, Pete Carlson, Corey Ellison, Gary Farris, Michael George, Donny Goetz, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Tony Hughes, Tyler Shumway, and Raymond Weden.

DSAR Members Involved: John Eddy, Sharon Ollenburger, Joe McEuen, and Jason Roberson.

Riverside County Sheriff's Involved: Aviation Unit, Coroner's Office, and several Sheriff's.

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.