

Slew of rescue missions keep El Dorado SAR volunteers, deputies busy

It has been a busy week for the El Dorado County Sheriff's search and rescuer. Numerous backcountry visitors were caught off guard by the early season storm.

Approximately sixty 60 SAR volunteers, along with four deputies responded to 11 deployments between Oct. 19 and Oct. 24. Nine were in El Dorado County and two in Alpine County.

Events started Oct. 19 with the report of a sick hiker at the Lake of the Woods in Desolation Valley. A 17-year-old girl from Los Osos had been hiking in the Desolation Wilderness area with her 18-year-old girl friend when she acquired altitude sickness. SAR volunteers responded to the area and spent eight hours carrying the teenage girl out to safety.

On Oct. 20, SAR volunteers in South Lake Tahoe responded to an injured mountain biker in the Freel Peak area. The Berkeley man sustained a head injury and had to be carried out by SAR and Lake Valley fire personnel. He was transported to Barton Memorial Hospital. His present condition is unknown.

At approximately the same time SAR personnel responded to a report of two lost hikers on Mount Tallac. A CHP helicopter was utilized to locate the subjects and directed them back to a trail they could follow to get off the mountain. They were then able to find their way out without further assistance.

Also on Saturday, the sheriff's Placerville office received a report that a 58-year-old hunter from Sacramento was missing as he had not returned to his camp as expected. He had been hunting in the South Fork Camp area of the Crystal Basin Recreation area. SAR was deployed along with the assistance of

the U.S. Forest Service and a California Highway Patrol helicopter. After SAR personnel were deployed and initiated search efforts he found his way back to camp. He had a minor leg injury that was checked by SAR personnel, however he refused further medical treatment.

On Oct. 21, Alpine County requested mutual aid to search for a lost hunter. The missing subject was located while SAR volunteers were in route.

That night two girls, 12- and 13-years-old, were reported missing in the Wentworth Springs Campground area of Crystal Basin. While exploring near their campsite they became disoriented and did not return to camp as expected. SAR volunteers were dispatched to the area, however family members located the girls before the volunteers arrived.

Also on Sunday night, three fishermen from the Sacramento area were hiking in the Gerle Creek Reservoir area of Crystal Basin. When hiking back to their vehicle they had become separated and at about 4am on Monday two of the fishermen reported their friend missing. The temperature had dropped and it was snowing. SAR personnel responded to area and found the missing fisherman's tracks in the snow. SAR personnel began following the tracks. The tracks were headed out of the area and eventually lead to a snow covered access road. SAR personnel continued to follow the individual eventually locating him at 8am. He was in good condition with no injuries.

While conducting the search for the missing fisherman SAR personnel were contacted by the wife of a hunter. She advised that her husband had called her and advised that he had rolled his Jeep on an unknown snow covered dirt road in the Crystal Basin area. SAR personnel began looking for the subject and located him near Granite Springs. SAR volunteers coordinated a medical response for the subject, that provided him treatment for minor injuries.

On Oct. 22, a report was received that a personal emergency response beacon had been activated for a 39-year-old Pleasant Hill man and his wife. Information was obtained that the couple were hiking in the Lake of the Woods area in the Desolation Wilderness. The activation of the emergency beacon indicated the couple were in the area of Echo Lakes. SAR personnel were dispatched to the area and located the couple in a cabin on Upper Echo Lake, where they had taken refuge from the ongoing winter storm. SAR personnel assisted the couple back to their vehicle.

Then on Oct. 23, SAR personnel responded to a mutual aid request to assist Alpine County in a search for two missing hunters. A 40-year-old Calaveras man and his 14-year-old nephew had been missing since Sunday. They were eventually found in the Bear Valley area on Tuesday. The man was alive suffering from severe hypothermia. Unfortunately, the boy had passed away.

That night, just before 10pm, deputies received a report of an overdue hiker in the Desolation Wilderness Area. The father of a 29-year-old male reported his son, and his son's friend, had gone camping. His son (Nathan Sperring) hitchhiked to the Eagle Falls trailhead on Oct. 19. He planned to hike into Dick's Lake, in the Desolation Wilderness. They had advised they would return to Tahoe City on Oct. 23. As of this time they have still not returned. SAR personnel have responded to the area and are currently conducting search operations. Because of the volume of SAR details the volunteers have been handling, the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office requested mutual aid through the California Emergency Management Agency for this event. The U.S. Marine Corp Mountain Warfare Division has sent their Mountain Rescue Unit out of Mono County, to assist in the search.