

Hikers, bikers, swimmers keep SAR team busy

By Kathryn Reed

One fatality and multiple rescues have kept El Dorado County's search and rescue team out in the field much of the last week.

As the search team was getting one victim onto a helicopter Aug. 12, they got a call of a person having drowned at Eagle Lake. Because they were in the vicinity it did not take them long to locate the man.

"He was swimming out to the island and got into some trouble," Deputy Greg Almos, who is in charge of the department's SAR team, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Michael Christensen, 27, of Elk Grove was later pronounced dead at Barton Memorial Hospital.

The earlier incident involved another male tourist. The SAR team got the call at 11:15am Tuesday saying an unresponsive male was by Eagle Lake and not moving.

Almos said a trauma nurse at Renown Medical Center in Reno said when the victim regained consciousness he told the medical staff he had been caught in a flashflood on Monday that swept him down a drainage.

He had been lying there unresponsive for nearly 24 hours before someone found him. Almos said despite suffering traumatic injuries, the man – whose name has not been released – is expected to live.



El Dorado County search and rescue, CalFire and Lake Valley firefighters carry a cyclist off Corral Trail on Aug. 11. Photo/Provided

Afternoon thunderstorms contributed to a rescue on Aug. 11, too. A man not from Tahoe – whose name was not released – went down while cycling on Corral Loop in South Lake Tahoe.

The team had to carry him out on a litter in a downpour. He reportedly injured his pelvis.

The team almost was deployed to Pyramid Peak on Aug. 13 to search for a missing hiker when a follow up call came in saying the person had walked out safely.

A multiday rescue in Alpine County last weekend resulted in finding a West Sacramento man who had been lost in the wilderness for five days without food.

Mike Vilhauer, 58, went fishing by himself Aug. 8 at Lower Sunset Lake. He got disoriented when he left his campsite.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter spotted his vehicle last Friday, which gave rescue teams a good idea where to

start searching. El Dorado's search teams from Tahoe and Placerville were called Saturday to assist.

Scott Gabler, a veteran and decorated member of EDSO's SAR team, located footprints mid-afternoon Aug. 10. Tracking began and then Washoe County's Raven helicopter eventually found Vilhauer.

"He had spent two days where he we found him. He had written poems to his wife," Almos said, adding, that Vilhauer's condition had deteriorated. Vilhauer has recovered from his ordeal.

Almos said it's been a busy summer for search and rescue, though the year started off slow. From Jan. 1-April 20 the team responded to 16 calls. Normal is closer to 25. As of Aug. 15, there have been 61 calls for all of 2014.