



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
COUNTY OF INYO

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HIKER RESCUED IN OVERNIGHT, MULTI-AGENCY MISSION

Individual was Pinned Under Boulder for Hours

A hiker pinned underneath a 6,000- to 10,000-pound boulder for approximately 10 hours was rescued December 6 after an intense, multi-agency effort that ran well into the twilight hours.

Inyo County's Search and Rescue Team, Sheriff's personnel, Naval Air Station Lemoore CHP - Inland Division Air Operations, Lone Pine Volunteer Fire Department, Independence Fire Department, and CAL FIRE San Bernardino/Inyo/Mono Unit were able to free the individual and load him into a hospital-bound helicopter shortly after midnight.

The Inyo County Sheriff's Office first received notice the afternoon of December 5 that a hiker was trapped with his legs pinned beneath a boulder in the Inyo Mountains. Sheriff's units responded and located the hiker below Santa Rita Flat near Independence. Inyo County's Search and Rescue Team was subsequently dispatched.

With the help of California Highway patrol Central Division Air Operations helicopter H40, two rescue team members were inserted via helicopter to Santa Rita Flat, while seven other team members followed in vehicles navigating a network for four-wheel-drive roads. Several other team members and Sheriff's coordinators supervised and supported the rescue from the SAR team's base in Bishop.

The SAR Team arrived at the hiker's location well after dark, finding the hiker in great pain with his left leg pinned beneath a large boulder on a steep hillside. Using a system of ropes, pulleys, and leverage, the SAR Team was able to shift the boulder enough to free the hiker and assess and stabilize his injuries. Due to the seriousness of the hiker's injuries and the difficulty of the terrain, it was decided to extricate the hiker – despite the darkness – using a helicopter from U.S. Naval Air Station Lemoore. No suitable helicopter landing zones were near the location, so a U.S. Navy medic rappelled from the helicopter to the scene, and the injured hiker and medic were hoisted into the helicopter and flown to Fresno for treatment after midnight. SAR team members returned to their vehicles and returned to Bishop, signing out at 4 a.m.

Challenges encountered on the mission included coordination of multiple agencies and resources; accessing an accident scene in steep, loose rocky terrain; using limited resources to move a large boulder; managing a severely injured patient for several hours while awaiting the helicopter extrication; and assisting in a nighttime helicopter hoist – all in chilly December darkness.

The Inyo County Sheriff's Office and SAR Team thanks Naval Air Station Lemoore CHP - Inland Division Air Operations, Lone Pine Volunteer Fire Department, Independence Fire Department, and CAL FIRE San Bernardino/Inyo/Mono Unit for their assistance in the successful outcome of this mission.

Inyo County Search and Rescue is an all-volunteer and unpaid professional non-profit 501(c)3 organization working in cooperation with and under the direction of the Inyo County Sheriff's Office. Providing search and rescue services to its visitors is only possible thanks to donations: inyosar.com/donate.