



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Victims Trapped In Victorville River Bottom Flood Waters Rescued

Date/Time: Thursday, February 14, 2019, 5:40pm
Location: Mojave River, Victorville
Incident: Multiple Swift Water Rescues #19-032550 #19-032627

Summary: This evening, San Bernardino County Fire responded to two separate swift water rescues in the Mojave river bottom near Eva Dell Park and north of the Cemex cement plant in the City of Victorville. Several calls were received for individuals trapped by rising flood waters. Ultimately, two separate incidents occurred back to back in different areas of the river bottom. The first incident involved one adult male who was stranded on vegetation surrounded by rising flood waters. The second involved two subjects in a similar situation however access and location proved difficult. Only resources with 4-wheel capability were able make their way to the river's edge. Significant vegetation, trees, and overgrowth in the victims' location also hampered initial identification.

The first incident was dispatched at 5:40pm. The initial area was only stated to be off the levy road near Eva Dell Park, First Street cross of E Street. A full swift water assignment was dispatched which included firefighters trained and equipped for this specialized type of rescue. One victim was located on a small buildup of branches and trees surrounded by moderate flow flood waters. Due to the depth a wade / walk in rescue was ruled out. Spotters were put in place up and down stream to watch for any debris and in case the victim ended up in the water. San Bernardino County Sheriff was contacted for an aviation asset to respond and assess for a potential night hoist. Once SBSB Patrol helicopter 40King3 arrived on scene, it was decided a long line rescue would be affected with a sheriff's diver. 40 King inserted their diver on a line where the victim was then contacted. He was secured with the diver and then both were moved over to awaiting firefighters and paramedics. Once evaluated the adult male was transported by ground to a local hospital. The 1st rescue was complete at 6:23pm.

As ground crews were attending to this victim 40 king provided recon to check for any additional people in the river bottom. During this time 3 additional subjects were contacted and rescued by sheriff's aviation and handed off to ground crews.

The second rescue occurred at 7:15pm up river north of the Cemex cement plant. Initially very vague information hampered location and rescue efforts. After ground crews searched each side of the Mojave river north of the 15, two victims were eventually located. Access was limited to 4-wheel drive only. Fire apparatus was staged and crews made their way to the river's edge. Again, SBSB Aviation was requested. Similar to the first operation, a long line with a sheriff rescue diver was flown in to make contact. Heavy vegetation and a significant tree canopy complicated effort. Multiple efforts were made by 40K. Ultimately one subject was extracted by the sheriffs helo. The second subject was uncooperative with the diver and unwilling to leave without his dog. At this point 40 king was released. Additional resources began to arrive from surrounding divisions. A secondary plan was developed to employ firefighters and a rescue boat in the water to remove the subject and his dog from the flood waters. Firefighters were able to negotiate the inconsistent shoreline and debris in a rescue boat where they made contact and secured the final victim and his dog. He was safely extracted to dry ground where he was then evaluated by paramedics. The final rescue was complete at 11:55.

In all, 6 victims were rescued by firefighters and deputies at the time of this release. There were no injuries to firefighters.

We recommend the public be aware of weather related notices and recommended evacuations. No matter where you live in San Bernardino County, flooding is the one natural disaster you are likely to encounter. Deserts, mountains, and the valley have all had their share of flooding. Heavy rainfall can cause normally dry washes and riverbeds to become raging torrents in a very short amount of time and it only takes as little as 12 inches of moving water to move a vehicle. Never cross a road that you can't see due to it being covered by water. Remember, "Turn Around, Don't Drown."

When heavy rain has been forecast – or when heavy, steady rain is falling – monitor the news, websites and social media sites for updated weather conditions. The phrasing meteorologists use is important; a Flood Watch means flooding is possible in your area, Flood Warning means flooding in your area is already occurring or is imminent, and Flash Flood is sudden violent flooding. Flash floods often come up quickly during heavy rain.

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