



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DATE: December 26, 2019
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Crews Rescue Pair of Stranded Motorists from Snow Covered Forest

Date/Time: December 26, 2019 10:30am

Location: Lytle Creek

Incident: Rescue

Summary: This morning around 10:30 am, San Bernardino County Fire responded to a request by San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department to assist in locating and rescuing two stranded motorists in the San Bernardino National Forest north of Lytle Creek. Reports stated that the pair had called 911 reporting they were off-roading when they became lost and ultimately stranded due to heavy snow fall.

Unified Command was established with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. The Incident Command Post was set up at the U.S. Forest Service Fire Station in Lytle Creek.

Due to poor visibility and unfavorable weather conditions in the area, aviation support had to be aborted. Incident Command placed a request for off road capable fire engines, one bull dozer, two dozer tenders and one hand crew.

Sheriff's personnel were in contact with the lost persons via cell phone, however reception was poor, and the victims' phone battery was running low. The party was able to relay GPS coordinates of their location to rescuers.

Navigating by GPS, #SBCoFD dozer crews pushed over five miles into the forest, through terrain impenetrable to any other vehicle, to the last known location of the victims. Upon arrival at the reported GPS coordinates, crews were unable to locate the victims.

The dozer crew initiated a systematic search of the area and located both victims just before 2:30 pm. Utilizing off road vehicles, the victims were extricated from their location via a trail that had been blazed by the bulldozer and transported to the command post for medical evaluation. Both persons were evaluated but refused ambulance transport to the hospital. They were welcomed by relieved family and friends.

Just prior to the rescue, Battalion Chief Bryant O'Hara, unified commander for SBCoFD, stated that he was becoming very concerned about the time the victims had been stranded in the storm. He felt the victims may have succumbed to the elements had the rescue not been completed prior to nightfall. He attributed the success of the mission to the extra staffing in place for the winter storm. Furthermore, Chief O'Hara believes that the two parties survived their ordeal because of the coordinated efforts of SBCoFD and SBCSD along with the capabilities and actions of the SBCoFD dozer team.

San Bernardino County Fire would like to remind the public to plan accordingly for recreation and travel during inclement weather. Always be prepared with the proper safety gear; know the limitations of your vehicle. Let someone know where you will be and when you expect to return.

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