



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Mark A. Hartwig**  
*Fire Chief / Fire Warden*

**DATE:** *December 31, 2015, 3:00 a.m.*  
**CONTACT:** *Tracey Martinez, Public Information Officer*  
*800-426-8689, pager #3307*  
*Ryan Beckers, Engineer/PIO, (909)744-2143*

### **SNOWSTORM STRANDS MOTORISTS ACROSS MOUNTAINS County Fire Employs SnowCats and Dozers to Reach Trapped Victims**

A cold winter storm that brought heavy snow to the San Bernardino Mountains crippled motorists traveling between the High Desert and mountain communities late Tuesday evening, 12/30/14, leading to a widespread rescue effort by firefighters near the communities of Crestline and Mt. Baldy that went on into early Wednesday morning.

Near Crestline, a total of 136 motorists in dozens of vehicles became stranded on the steep, snowy switchbacks on State Highway 138 from one mile north of Old Mill Road to Pilot Rock. As motorists quickly discovered they were stuck, calls came in to County Fire for rescue.

An incident command post was established, and County Fire crews from the High Desert, Crest Forest and Lake Arrowhead began to count the stranded and check for injuries. No serious collisions or medical emergencies were initially reported.

A total of 50 rescued persons were eventually sheltered at the First Baptist Church in Crestline. Some motorists were either able to eventually drive away as plows cleared snow on the periphery of the incident. Still others abandoned their vehicles and walked to shelter or were able to reach their homes.

County Fire Snow-Cat apparatus, similar to the machines often seen grooming ski trails, were used to navigate the snowy roads. Staffed with firefighter/paramedics, these crews began to retrieve the stranded. A shelter was established at Crestline First Baptists Church, where Red Cross personnel were eventually able to reach them to provide comfort supplies.

Near Mount Baldy, approximately 50 people were stranded in similar conditions, primarily in two separate locations. Near the Mt. Baldy ski area, approximately 25 stranded people were stranded; meanwhile, further down the mountain near Mt. Baldy Village, another two dozen motorists awaited rescue. Eventually a total of 40 persons were sheltered at Mt. Baldy Lodge. Others were shuttled down the hill to Fire Station 12 in San Antonio Heights as a more permanent shelter was established.

Rescue operations were completed by 3:00 a.m. Wednesday, 12/31/14.

San Bernardino County Fire reminds motorists to dress appropriate for winter weather and to carry additional food, water and blankets in their vehicle when traveling.

**###**