



AAC Publications

Stranded, Off-Route, Darkness, Inexperience

Nevada, Red Rock, Black Velvet Canyon

On July 3 around 8 a.m., two climbers visiting from Ohio made the approach to the base of Epinephrine, a 5.9, 15-pitch route located in Black Velvet Canyon. In addition to their climbing equipment, they had five liters of water. As the day progressed, they lost the route on several occasions. They consumed their last bit of water at 4 p.m. As the sun set, they began coming to the realization that they might be in trouble. By 11 p.m., they knew they needed help. They eventually found a ledge where they were able to get cell phone reception and made the call.

At 12:30 a.m. on July 4, our unit received the call, and five officers were immediately dispatched to the area. They assessed the situation and determined that a technical rescue was needed. Volunteers received the call at 2:30 a.m. and met at the Cottonwood parking lot. Officers began setting up systems while the volunteers were en route. As volunteers arrived, they boarded the helicopter and were flown to Black Velvet Peak. One officer was immediately lowered to the climbers, who were on a ledge approximately 400 feet below the peak. One volunteer was also lowered to help in recovering the two stranded climbers. Over the course of the next five hours, both climbers were raised back to the peak. At one point, sleet came down on the team, followed by heavy rain. Both climbers were safely delivered to their vehicle, having learned that five liters of water just wasn't enough and that route planning is crucial, especially in an unfamiliar environment. They did, however, do a couple of things right. They told people where they were going, and when they found they were in trouble, they stayed put and called for help. Even if they weren't able to get cell reception, their friends knew they were overdue, knew where they were, and would have been able to call for help on their behalf. (Source: Edited from a posting on the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Search and Rescue Unit blog: lvmpdsar.blogspot.com.) From a post on the same blog by John Wilder: "We're always happy to have a positive outcome! A fair number of people lose the route when they leave the top of the tower. If they had headed up the Original Velvet Route, then thought they were supposed to go straight up rather than up and right, that would get them to roughly 400 feet below the peak and in deep crap."

Images

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