

2022

Mount Shasta Wilderness

Search & Rescue – Incident Narratives

2.26.2022 – Avalanche Gulch, slip and fall, rib fracture – male

On Saturday, February 26th, at 1208 hours, an on-duty climbing ranger on a patrol to Lake Helen received a report from the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department about an injured solo climber at Lake Helen. The report stated that the climber fell while descending and experienced a possible rib fracture. The climbing ranger was in Avalanche Gulch at 9,000 feet at the time of notification. The ranger contacted the injured climber at 1248 hours on the east side of the Lake Helen moraine. A patient assessment found left lower rib pain and tenderness. The patient was seated and in a significant amount of pain, especially upon movement. Breathing was adequate and vitals were stable. However, the patient stated that he could not descend under his own power. Due to these findings and a forecast for deteriorating weather and a lack of ground-based resources, a decision was made to fly this patient off the mountain. The ranger on scene prepared the patient's gear and identified and improved a helipad 100 feet from the patient, on snow. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) hoist-capable A-star helicopter was dispatched from Redding and arrived at Lake Helen at approximately 1400. The patient was loaded in the helicopter and flown to Mercy Medical Center in Mt Shasta. The climbing ranger on scene descended to Bunny Flat with the rest of the injured climbers' gear. The climber stated he had summited that morning and was tired and complacent, being so close to camp when he tripped and took his fall. Lack of experience is a contributing factor.

4.9.2022 – Avalanche Gulch, solo male climber, slip and fall, self-rescue

A solo climber, slipped and fell in Avalanche Gulch, injuring the side of his face (contusion) and shoulder. The male climber made a face time call to his girlfriend, who then called 911. Meanwhile, the climber was able to descend further down Avalanche Gulch on his own and ran into a Sierra Wilderness Seminars outfitter guide group at 50/50 Flat. The guide, who's group was about to head down due to high wind (1700 hours), assisted the injured climber further down the mountain. Mount Shasta City fire personnel and CAL FIRE first responders met the injured climber and outfitter guide group on the Horse Camp Trail, just below the Horse Camp cabin. The climber walked out under his own power almost the entire way off the mountain, with help near the end. A solid self-rescue none-the-less, considering it was getting dark, cold and windy...a poor night to be caught out.

5.15.2022 – Avalanche Gulch, Redbanks, false In-Reach activation

1000 hours - Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office called USFS Ranger Nick Meyers and informed of an In Reach Activation near Redbanks, Avalanche Gulch route. No other information was available, no cell phone call, etc. Ranger's Coots and Darby were ascending the route at the time and were near treeline. They continued up to Helen Lake, speaking to climbers along the way. Numerous mountain guides on the mountain at the time were contacted. Nobody reported a distressed party. Coots and Darby staged at Helen Lake for several hours into the afternoon, with no sign of emergency. The call was cleared, and rangers descended later in the afternoon.

5.21.2022 – Avalanche Gulch, Redbanks, slip and fall, head trauma, female/62

In the afternoon of May 21st, a mother and daughter pair were descending near Redbanks on the Avalanche Gulch route. They were unfamiliar with the route and attempted to descend the lookers left side of the Redbanks. The narrow chutes through the rock feature in this area are very steep and typically icy. They are climbed rarely, but never descended as it would require technical downclimbing in steep terrain. At some point, the two climbers fell together over Redbanks, a modest vertical cliff. The mother suffered major head trauma, was in and out of consciousness, vomiting, rales in the lungs and experienced severe bleeding from the head. California Highway Patrol helicopter was dispatched and inserted Ranger Coots to their location, climbers left of The Heart, 12,600 feet. Coots quickly packaged the patient in a Bauman Bag and the climber was safely hoisted the climber off the mountain. The patient was transferred to medical helicopter in the Old Ski Bowl and transported down to Mercy Redding trauma center. It is expected that she will make a full recovery. The daughter suffered minor injuries.

6.6 and 6.7.2022 – Four incidents, five injured, one fatality – Avalanche Gulch

A climbing guide died, and five other climbers were injured in four separate climbing incidents on Mount Shasta within a roughly 24-hour period beginning Monday morning, June 6th, 2022. All incidents occurred on the Avalanche Gulch route in between Helen Lake and Redbanks, the steepest section of that route. A late season storm over the weekend doused Mount Shasta with rain, snow, fog and freezing temperatures, creating very firm and icy climbing conditions. A warm, wet storm followed by freezing temperatures can drastically change the nature of the mountain. A route that is considered a novice climb 90% of the time can be very dangerous the other 10%. Steep snow slopes on Mt Shasta turn in to no fall zones when icy conditions are present like this. Icy conditions can last days, or just a few hours. The first incident on the morning of Monday, June 6th involved an outfitter guide and her two clients, tied together on one rope. The team was near "rest rock", below Redbanks in Avalanche Gulch when a team member slipped and fell, pulling everyone off their feet. The three slid and tumbled

approximately 2,000 vertical feet down the route, eventually stopping below Helen Lake in Avalanche Gulch proper. The two clients suffered major head and extremity injuries, but will make a full recovery. The guide, Jillian Webster of Redmond, Oregon, became unresponsive about an hour and a half after the fall. CPR was initiated by an outfitter guide client on a separate trip, who works as an ICU nurse. CPR was in progress and the patient was pulseless at the time of hoist off the mountain by USFS Climbing Rangers Meyers, Lazzeri and California Highway Patrol Helicopter (CHP H-14). The second incident occurred mid-day and involved a single climber, male, 34, who slipped and fell in the same area. Rangers Meyers and Lazzeri climbed back up the mountain from 50/50 Camp to respond. The climber was met by USFS rangers above Helen Lake, near the Upper Moraine, walking, but wounded. Rangers assisted him down to the CHP H-14 helicopter waiting at 50/50. Weather conditions prevented the helicopter from flying to any higher elevation landing zones. The climber had an ice axe and crampons, but no helmet. He reported that his crampons “slipped off” and caused him to fall. The third incident happened later in the day and involved climbers from the second incident party. After witnessing their partner slip and fall, two sisters were overcome by fear. They waited just below Redbanks for several hours but eventually tried to descend. One climber attempted to glissade and quickly lost control, sliding down the route and coming to a stop below The Heart. The snow was much softer at this point in the day (~1730 hours). Still, the climber was only responsive to pain. USFS Ranger Meyers was picked up at Horse Camp by CHP H-14 and inserted onto the Upper Moraine. A short climb and quick patient package commenced. The climber was hoisted off the mountain at 1745 hours, ending a busy day on the mountain for rangers, CHP and Siskiyou County SAR personnel. Her sister descended on foot with Ranger Meyers and were flown off the mountain from 50/50 Flat by CHP. Both sisters had never climbed the mountain before, did not have helmets and were wearing lightweight hiking shoes with micro-spikes. They had ice axes but were not familiar with how to use them. They said they tried to get better equipment but arrived for their climb too early in the morning (midnight) when The Fifth Season (gear rental shop) was not open. On the morning of June 7th, a solo climber, male, 31, slipped and fell in the same location as the other accidents, in Avalanche Gulch near The Heart, below Redbanks. Siskiyou County SAR notified USFS Rangers and CHP H-14. US Forest Service Climbing Rangers met the helicopter at Mercy Medical Center Mt Shasta and were inserted onto the Upper Moraine in Avalanche Gulch. Both USFS Rangers Coots and Darby quickly climbed up to the scene and packaged the injured climber, hoisting him off the mountain at 1330 hours.

8.10.2022 – South Gate Meadows, lost hiker

A female hiker in her late 20's took an evening hike from Old Ski Bowl to South Gate Meadows. She became disoriented near dark in Lower South Gate meadow. She panicked and called 911. Two climbing rangers (Meyers/Coots) hiked in and met her near Squaw Valley creek and assisted her out. It was close to a full moon with mild temperatures. She was unharmed and in good spirits. Meyers/Coots began hiking at approximately 2100 and were back to the truck near midnight. Total time of search/rescue was ~4 hours.

10.9.2022 – Clear Creek, possible medical, solo male climber

A solo male climber was attempting to climb the Clear Creek route on October 9th. The climber called 911 around 1430 hours and complained of appendicitis, self-diagnosed. USFS Ranger Coots was informed of the incident via Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department. The climber coordinates placed him at 13,000 feet near the Wintun Glacier. A California Highway Patrol helicopter was requested by Siskiyou County Sheriff's Dept and soon after, performed the rescue, transporting the climber to Mercy Mount Shasta. At 1600 hours, the rescue was complete. Total incident time was 1.5 hours.

12.6.2022 – Old Ski Bowl, fatality

A local, solo male snow shoer in his sixties was found frozen dead in a snowmobile track along the Everitt Memorial Highway, 1.6 miles past the Bunny Flat gate on the morning of 12.6.22 by two cross country skiers. The man was identified as Steven Hobbs and was missing since the weekend, out for a snowshoe hike. He did not have overnight camping equipment. This incident occurred during a period of winter weather with heavy snow and strong wind.