

# Mount Shasta Wilderness

## 2025 Search & Rescue Incident Narratives

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### **March 7th, 2025 – Rescue – Avalanche Gulch, 9,700 feet – Solo Skier - Broken Leg**

On Friday, March 7 at approximately 1830, USFS Mount Shasta Climbing Rangers were notified late in the day of an injured skier at 9,700 feet in Avalanche Gulch. The solo skier reported feeling their leg snap when he caught his ski tip and crashed in the crusty, breakable ski conditions. Three Forest Service climbing rangers responded from Bunny Flat on snowmobiles (a helicopter was not available for this mission due to time of day) with Siskiyou County Search and Rescue (SAR) coming up behind on skis and snowshoes. Climbing Rangers arrived on scene at around 2045. Once on scene, rangers assessed and stabilized the leg, treated the patient for hypothermia, and packaged the patient in a skiable toboggan. Rangers descended from the accident site on skis with the toboggan, linking up with Siskiyou County SAR at 7,800 feet. Together, the team descended to Bunny Flat. All personnel were off the mountain by 2230.

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### **Siskiyou County Press Release**

On Friday, March 7th, at approximately 6:17 p.m., the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office Dispatch Team received a call from a skier that had injured his leg in a skiing accident at approximately 10,000 feet on Mount Shasta.

The reporting party, a 39-year-old male, was an experienced backcountry skier from Canada and had spent the prior two days summiting and exploring the mountain. During his final descent through Avalanche Gulch Friday evening, he crashed and sustained a serious injury to his lower leg. Unable to move, the skier, who had been traveling solo, managed to call 911, prompting a rescue effort.

The Siskiyou County Search and Rescue Team (SAR) and US Forest Service Climbing Rangers were then mobilized to respond to the Bunny Flat parking lot from which they launched a series of hasty teams, including skiers, a snowmobiler team, and a snowshoe team. When rescuers reached the injured skier, they determined that he had suffered a broken tibia/fibula but was in otherwise stable enough condition to be skied down the mountain in a litter. At approximately 10:32 p.m., the Climbing Rangers and

SAR team arrived back at Bunny Flat with the skier and delivered him to an awaiting ambulance.

This incident underscores a few important reminders about backcountry travel, particularly in wintertime:

➤ First, avoid skiing, climbing, snowmobiling, or even hiking alone, especially in high consequence terrain such as the upper elevations of Mount Shasta. Having a trusted partner with you in the backcountry is critical to making sure someone can call for help, render first aid, and provide feedback regarding the potential hazards of your route.

➤ Second, always wrap up your outdoor recreation activities when there is still plenty of daylight to hike or ski out of the backcountry. Nighttime not only makes snow travel and navigation more difficult, but it can also complicate or delay rescue efforts. For instance, the skier in this incident did not begin his descent until twilight, so by the time his accident occurred, a swift air rescue was no longer possible.

➤ Third, always check the avalanche forecast and snow conditions for the area in which you plan to recreate. Although this skier's injuries were not caused by an avalanche, that critical information should always factor into your wintertime trip planning and route-finding. Ensuring that your group is carrying avalanche beacons, probes, and shovels is a must if you plan to travel through avalanche terrain. You can find that daily forecast here:

<https://www.shastaavalanche.org/advisories/avalanche-advisory/#!/mount-shasta>

In closing, we'd like to thank the USFS Climbing Rangers and our SAR volunteers for their fantastic work to retrieve the injured skier swiftly and safely.

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## **May 24th, 2025 - Memorial Day Weekend – 2 Rescues**

On the morning of May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, two consecutive rescues occurred on different routes on Mount Shasta.

### **Mouth of Hidden Valley / Cascade Gulch - Slip/Fall - Broken Leg**

**41.22.59.9 / -122.14.12.3** – Not much is known about this rescue. A climber took a slip and fall somewhere along the last traverse toward the mouth of Hidden Valley. This is a steep section of the route that, in firm conditions, has produced slips and falls in the past. The slope terminates into Cascade Gulch. The climber suffered a broken lower leg. California Highway Patrol helicopter H-14 conducted a hoist rescue with their crew of three and the injured climber was transported to Bunny Flat and an awaiting

ambulance. USFS Climbing Rangers and CAL Fire crews were staged for additional support, but were not utilized except for patient transfer into ambulance.

### **Left of Heart, Redbanks, Avalanche Gulch - Skier Crash - Broken Ankle**

**41.400055 / -122.203148** – A female skier got her skis crossed up in the funky snow conditions and suffered an ankle fracture. This call came in just after the first rescue, and therefore the CHP helicopter was already in the area. The helicopter was able to quickly pick up a USFS Climbing Ranger, who happened to be at 50/50 Flat, to conduct the rescue. The hoist rescue was quickly executed and the patient transported to Mercy Mount Shasta.

No other incidents occurred over the very busy holiday weekend.

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### **June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - Missing – Search – Lesner Cardenas**

Climbing Rangers assisted Siskiyou County S.O. with a search for a missing man, Lesner Cardenas of Redding, CA.

June 6<sup>th</sup>- S.O. ground personnel including FS Rangers and CHP air resources (H-14) conducted search of south side of Mount Shasta, Avalanche Gulch, Cascade Gulch

June 7<sup>th</sup> – S.O. ground personnel and FS Rangers conducted searches of McBride Springs, Cascade Gulch and lower elevation south side areas. (No air resources)

All parties were unable to locate the subject. Lesner Cardenas is still missing.

Media...

<https://www.sfgate.com/northcoast/article/mount-shasta-disappearance-lesner-cardenas-mystery-20383486.php>

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/man-survives-car-crash-then-decided-to-head-on-a-hike-now-hes-missing/ar-AA1GFI5x?ocid=BingNewsSerp>

- Police said Lesner Cardenas called authorities on May 29 about a traffic collision he was involved in, but had disappeared before officers could make contact with him
- Authorities said that Cardenas returned to his apartment but later vanished
- A cab driver told authorities he picked up Cardenas and took him to Mount Shasta

Authorities are continuing to look for a California man who went missing late last month after he was first involved in a car crash and then later took a cab to a mountain trailhead.

The cab driver told authorities that he picked up Cardenas and took him to Mount Shasta, located in Siskiyou County, where he dropped him off at the trailhead to Avalanche Gulch.

“At that time, Lesner was in possession of backpacking gear and made statements about trying to beat a friend’s time to complete a hike,” the Redding Police Department’s statement continued.

The police also said it contacted the Siskiyou County Sheriff’s Office about the investigation into Cardenas’ disappearance.

In a Tuesday, June 10, [update](#), the Redding Police Department said authorities canvassed Mount Shasta on June 6 and 7, adding that CHP Northern Division Air Operations assisted in the search with aircraft resources. However, those efforts were unsuccessful in finding Cardenas.

**Name:** Lesner Noe Velasquez Cardenas

**AKA:** Lesner Velasquez

**Age:** 21 years old

**Last Seen:** May 29, 2025

**Location:** Redding, California

**Status:** Still missing

### **Case Information**

21 year old Lesner Noe Velasquez Cardenas was last seen in Redding, California on May 29, 2025. He disappeared after taking a cab to go hiking on Mount Shasta.

### **Disappearance**

Around 10:30 am on May 29, 2025, Lesner Velasquez Cadenas was involved in a rollover traffic collision on Oak Run Road after avoiding a deer that ran into the road. Cardenas reported the accident to the California Highway Patrol, but was gone by the time officers arrived.

Cardenas was given a ride home to his apartment on Trudie Trail by a woman he knows. The woman said he seemed coherent and seemingly had no injuries, though when she returned to check on him around 3:30 pm he was gone.

Around 2:20 pm, Cardenas took a cab from the Wells Fargo on East Cypress to Mount Shasta's McBride Springs area, not a standard trailhead to climb the mountain, but still possible. Cardenas was equipped with backpacking gear, and told the cab driver he wanted to beat a friend's hike time. Lesner hasn't been seen or heard from since.

## **Investigation**

The Shasta County Sheriff's Office began investigating his disappearance on May 31, 2025, but the case was turned over to the Redding Police Department on June 4, 2025, as Cardenas was a resident of Redding.

Cardenas had his phone with him when he disappeared, though police have been unable to trace its location. The last ping was in the Mount Shasta area.

"Lesner was in possession of a cellphone when he was last seen, but it has not been in service since the afternoon of Thursday May 29th," [according to an update by the Redding Police Department](#).

Lesner has made no contact with friends or family since he went missing.

The Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office's Search and Rescue team began looking for Lesner Friday, June 6. Searches continued the following day, but no clues as to his whereabouts have been found.

## **Appearance**

Lesner has brown hair, brown eyes, stands 5'7 tall, and weighs 145 pounds.

## **Investigating Agency**

If you have any information regarding the disappearance of Lesner Noe Velasquez Cardenas please contact the Redding Police Department at (530) 225-4200.

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**June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - Rescue – 50/female - Solo - Avalanche Gulch/Sierra Club Alpine Hut (Horse Camp) area - 41.371325, -122.227106**

## **CAL FIRE response and rescue**

A 50-year-old solo female climber attempted to climb Mount Shasta in a day. She made it to 13,000 feet before deciding to turn around. When she got back down to treeline near the Sierra Club Alpine Hut, she began having trouble breathing and called 911. Dispatch routed the call through CAL FIRE and they responded. Siskiyou County SAR was not available. USFS Rangers were available, but CAL FIRE response was already up at Bunny Flat and walking in. FS Rangers assisted with providing a toboggan litter

but were not involved with the boots on the ground. CAL FIRE resources were able to hike to the climber within about 30 minutes and safely assist them back to the trailhead without further incident.

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### **June 12th, 2025 – Rescue - Climber stuck on Shastina**

On the evening of June 12th, 2025, Siskiyou County Sheriff Arron Jacobson notified USFS Climbing Rangers of an individual caught in a “rock slide” on the south face of Shastina, and requesting help. No injuries were reported. The patient's phone died shortly after the initial call, ceasing any further communications. The climber had adequate clothing, food, and water to stay the night. Due to nightfall and poor weather, rescue operations were postponed until the following morning.

On June 13th, USFS Climbing Rangers met with CHP H-14 to go over the rescue. Helicopter and crew were able to locate the climber from the air on the south face of Shastina at 11,600 feet. A USFS Climbing Ranger (Falconer) was inserted and made contact with the patient. The patient was uninjured but suffering from moderate snow blindness after losing his sunglasses. The patient and climbing ranger descended Shastina into Hidden Valley where they were picked up at a suitable landing zone and flown back to Mercy Mount Shasta hospital.

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### **July 6th, 2023 - North Side – Hotlum/Bolam – Slip/Fall - Broken Ankle**

**41.418424, -122.197380**

A father and son (age 9) duo made a successful climb of the Hotlum-Bolam ridge route. Upon their descent, they veered off route, descending “the step” to the west (Bolam Glacier side) at 12,500 feet. While this variation can work, they encountered a steep section of snow that terminated into rocks and scree. The 9-year old boy slipped and fell, causing the father to lunge and try and grab his son, initiating the father's fall. During the fall, he broke his foot/ankle and was unable to descend under his own power. The son was uninjured. They called 911.

California Highway Patrol helicopter and a USFS Climbing Ranger (Meyers) responded and were able to safely hoist the father and son off the mountain without complication.

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### **August 10th, 2025 - Avalanche Gulch - Glissading**

#### **41.40095, -122.20171**

On Sunday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, a solo male climber lost control while glissading on snow in upper Avalanche Gulch near Redbanks, approximately 13,000 feet on Mount Shasta. This area is the steepest portion of this route. Glissading is a *controlled* sliding descent down a snow covered slope, often used by mountaineers for a quick and efficient way to descend. Typically, it involves sitting down and sliding on your butt, similar to sledding, while using an ice axe to help control speed and direction. When done correctly, glissading can save energy and time, but improper technique, too firm of snow and/or too steep of slope can lead to serious injuries.

The climber quickly lost control of his speed and his ice axe ripped out of his hands while attempting to glissade. He took a long, tumbling fall, several hundred vertical feet down the slope. He suffered a leg injury, contusions, scrapes and lacerations, rendering him immobile.

Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department notified US Forest Service Mount Shasta Climbing Rangers and California Highway Patrol air operations of the incident and requested assistance. The helicopter pilot and crew member were able to insert one Climbing Ranger who was able to successfully and safely hoist the climber off the mountain to Mercy Medical Center in Mount Shasta City.

#### **Glissading Notes:**

- Make sure the snow is soft
  - Do not glissade on too steep of a slope. Make sure you have a clear and visible run-out. Becoming out of control on a steep snow slope that terminates into rocks is very dangerous
  - Take off your crampons. This is very important
  - Use your ice axe and heels of your boots to control your speed. If you have past knee or shoulder injuries, glissading is not recommended
  - Go slow, control your speed at all times. It's still faster than walking
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#### **August 16th and 17th - Clear Creek Route – Fatality**

Siskiyou County Sheriffs Department: On Saturday, August 16th, a climber on the Clear Creek route of Mount Shasta, called 911 to report his 50 year-old climbing partner missing. The duo were returning to their base camp after a successful summit bid earlier that morning, and at approximately 11,000 ft elevation, they became disoriented when they could not locate the campsite. The reporting party ultimately located the

camp, but after waiting over an hour for his friend to return, he grew concerned, and reported his friend missing to authorities.

The Siskiyou County Search and Rescue Team and US Forest Service Climbing Rangers were mobilized to begin a ground search for the missing climber, but due to inclement weather, air operations were unable to assist. Temperatures dropped significantly that night, with snow and rain reducing visibility, but by morning conditions had improved enough to allow a helicopter from [CHP - Northern Division Air Operations](#) to search the mountain for signs of the missing man.

By 12:30pm on Sunday, August 17th, the CHP pilots located a man at the base of a cliff, wedged between the scree slope and an ice sheet. When the USFS Climbing Rangers arrived to render medical aid shortly after locating the man from the air, they were able to confirm that they had found the missing climber, and that he had sustained significant injuries, likely from a substantial fall the previous day. CHP helicopter was able to hoist the man alive off the mountain. He was transferred to a medical helicopter and flown to Mercy Redding. Unfortunately, Paul Ingrassia, 50, of San Diego, CA passed away two days later in the hospital due to kidney and liver damage from hypothermia.

Despite Clear Creek being the “easiest” route on Mount Shasta, it underscores that even one of the “easiest and safest” routes up the mountain needs to be approached with significant preparation and caution.

USFS Climbing Ranger Narrative: This is an unfortunate incident that could have been easily prevented. Two climbers ascended the Clear Creek route on Saturday August 16<sup>th</sup>. For the weekend, a well-known and forecasted storm was expected to bring rain to lower elevations and snow and strong wind to upper mountain levels. The pair of climbers were unfamiliar with the terrain and did not carry proper wet weather gear. They made the summit but ignored symptoms of altitude illness and extreme fatigue. While descending, they reached a rocky precipice and were able to see their tent. One climber decided to go one way, the other decided to go another, thus separating with one exclaiming, “See you at the tent!”. One made it, the other did not. The pair were able to talk on the cell phone together while separated. The climber safely at camp noticed his partner sounding disoriented and out of sort. His partner never showed up that night. Search and rescue resources responded during the night, but the storm made search efforts difficult. The next morning, ground crews and air operations commenced. The lost climber was located by helicopter at the bottom of a steep slope. The climber was found face down on rocks, unconscious, with no shirt on. Based on visible injuries, it appeared the climber had slipped and fallen down a steep, rocky gully above. Ground crews (USFS Climbing Rangers) were able to arrive on scene soon after locating the patient from the air and successfully hoisted the climber off the mountain alive. The patient succumbed from his hypothermia injuries a few days later.

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/timesofsandiego/name/paul-ingrassia-obituary?id=59314232>



### Contributing Causes:

- -Climbing during a storm
  - -Improper clothing/equipment
  - -Ignoring altitude illness/extreme fatigue
  - -Party separated with one showing altered level of consciousness
  - -Unfamiliar with terrain, poor visibility
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### **September 12th, 2025 - Clear Creek - Fatality - Slip and Fall - Wintun Glacier**

On September 12, 2025, at approximately 3:45pm, the USFS Mount Shasta Climbing Rangers were notified by the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office of a slip and fall incident on the Clear Creek route around 13,300'. The reporting party witnessed the individual slide approximately 200 feet, get up slowly, moan and then slip and fall again out of sight into the drainage of the Wintun Glacier. California Highway Patrol was also notified of the incident and were the first to survey the area with helicopter (H-14) below the point last seen. They were unsuccessful in locating the climber on their first flyover and headed to Mercy Mount Shasta to refuel. USFS Climbing Rangers (Clairmont/MacArthur) convened with CHP at Mercy for a secondary reconnaissance. During the second flight, a blue pack was spotted on a rocky outcrop midway down the Wintun Glacier. Soon afterward, a slide path was identified in the snow leading down a prominent gully to the deceased solo climber around 11,200'. Late in the evening with darkness approaching, a plan was formulated to return the following morning and insert both rangers for a successful recovery.

- <https://maraoz.com/mat/>
  - <https://www.sfchronicle.com/california/article/argentinian-tech-entrepreneur-mount-shasta-fall-21057106.php>
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### **September 13th, 2025 - Castle Crags – Lead Climbing Fall – Back Injury**

On September 13, 2025, at around 1200, a party of four rock climbers were ascending the popular Cosmic Wall, located in the Castle Crags Wilderness, when one climber took a fall leading the fifth pitch. While falling, the climber flipped upside down and injured their back. The party lowered the climber to the belay ledge and called for help. CAL Fire, Dunsmuir Fire, California Highway Patrol (CHP) Northern Air Operations, and USFS Mount Shasta Climbing Rangers responded. A CAL Fire technical rope team began hiking to the wall, while CHP helicopter H-14 located the patient. H-14 was able to instruct the members of the climbing party on how to package the patient from the accident site without further help. The patient was hoisted directly from the belay ledge and transported to an ambulance nearby. Rescue operations were complete by 1300.

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### **December 11th, 2025 - Green Butte Ridge/Avalanche Gulch - Hikers - Lost/Stranded**

Two teenage hikers from Redding embarked upon a day hike from Bunny Flat into the Old Ski Bowl. The boys carried light day packs and wore tennis shoes and jeans. They did not intend to climb the mountain. The snow line on the mountain was about 8,500 feet. Along the trail, another hiker they encountered told them that, instead of returning the way they came, they could climb up through the Old Ski Bowl, *over* Green Butte Ridge and come down Avalanche Gulch, making a loop out of their hike. This suggestion is true, but Green Butte ridge was covered in firm snow and ice, especially the west facing Avalanche Gulch side of the ridge. This traverse over the ridge in such conditions requires an ice axe and solid boots with crampons. There is no trail. The two boys gained the ridge and attempted the descent, but slipped and fell. Fortunately, they were able to arrest their fall (uninjured) on a mid-slope rock, but were stranded, unwilling to climb back up or descend due to the steep, icy slope and poor footwear. They called 911.

Siskiyou County Sheriffs Department SAR coordinator Jimmy Freitas called USFS Lead Climbing Ranger Nick Meyers to inform of the situation. Meyers placed a call to the hikers, attempting to give a “pep talk” to the boys. Meyers encouraged them to try and ***safely*** self-rescue since it was late in the afternoon and SAR response would not arrive on scene until dark. After a short time, the boys stated they were not able/willing to self-rescue, too scared to move from their position.

Two USFS climbing rangers responded from Bunny Flat with extra clothing and equipment (ice axe, crampons) to assist the boys from their perilous position. The rescue was successful, with all parties safely returning to Bunny Flat by 2230.