



*Supporting The Efforts Of Mountain Rescue Operations*

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Vail Mountain Rescue Group has had a busy 2 months. Following is one story from September and several from August:

## SEPTEMBER

Just after 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 22, 2018, a hunter high in the backcountry north of Vail Village sent an S.O.S. from a Garmin InReach GPS/Personal Locator Beacon. The text messaging indicated a member of his party had sustained a life-threatening injury and required immediate medical attention. VMRG's mission coordinator requested a Flight For Life Colorado (FFL) air ambulance from Denver which flew to the reporting party's coordinates, but was unable to land due to the ruggedness of the terrain. The FFL helicopter then inserted a VMRG hasty team (including two Eagle County Paramedic Services SAR paramedics) into the field approximately a mile away and 1,200 feet below the subject. As the hasty team hiked to the reporting party's location, another VMRG ground team left from the Piney Lake trailhead with equipment for a carryout should a helicopter hoist extraction be unavailable.



As this first mission was in progress, Vail Public Safety Communications received a 911 call initiating a second mission. In this backcountry emergency, a bystander two miles up the Pitkin Creek trail outside of Vail reported that a hiker had fallen and sustained possible head and shoulder injuries. Responding to this call, another ground team of VMRG rescuers began hiking up the Pitkin Creek trailhead with Vail Fire & Emergency Services personnel. Back on the first mission, VMRG's hasty team made contact with the injured party above lower Piney River. After assessing and stabilizing the hunter's injuries, SAR paramedics from VMRG's hasty team determined that the patient could not be extracted by ground and they requested a helicopter hoist extraction

VMRG tasked a UH-60 Black Hawk from the Colorado National Guard High-Altitude Army National Guard's Aviation Training Site (HAATS) in Gypsum to evacuate both the injured hiker on the Pitkin Creek trail and the wounded hunter above Piney River. After loading two members of VMRG's Hoist Rescue Team at Freedom Park in Edwards, the UH-60 proceeded to extract the injured hiker from the Pitkin Creek trail to an ambulance staged in Vail Village. The HAATS UH-60 then flew to the location of the wounded hunter and hoisted both hunter and a SAR paramedic into the helicopter, evacuating them to an ambulance in Vail Village. Both rescue operations were concluded by 5:15 p.m.

## **AUGUST**

In the month of August, VMRG was paged out 24 times, assisting 29 individuals who experienced emergencies in the backcountry; these are a few of the most significant missions.

On Aug. 1, VMRG fielded a team of rescuers via ATV to assist Eagle County Paramedic Services (ECPS) personnel in evacuating a teenager who had been injured while horseback riding on a trail in Cordillera. The next day, VMRG dispatched a team of rescuers to assist ECPS backcountry medics and Vail Fire & Emergency Services personnel in evacuating another horseback rider who had been injured while riding on a trail near Piney River Ranch north of Vail.

On Aug 6., VMRG's Hoist Rescue Team responded with a crew from the Colorado National Guard's High-Altitude Army National Guard Aviation Training Site (HAATS) to assist Summit County Rescue Group in evacuating an injured trail runner who had tumbled 60 feet from a ridge between Peak 2 and Peak 3 near Frisco. After hoisting the trail runner into a hovering UH-60 Blackhawk, the subject was transferred to a local hospital.

Just before midnight on Aug. 7, VMRG's on-duty mission coordinator received a report of an overdue hiker who had separated from her husband earlier that day at the midpoint of a multi-day camping trip from Missouri Lakes and had not returned to the Cross Creek trailhead, the planned endpoint of the couple's trip. VMRG dispatched more than a dozen rescuers in seven teams, including two dog teams, many of which were inserted into and extracted from the field via a UH-72 helicopter flown by the Colorado Army National Guard from Buckley Air Force Base. On the afternoon of Aug. 8, as VMRG rescuers searched the Cross Creek trail, Martin Creek trail, and an alpine meadow near where the subject was last seen, the lost hiker contacted her husband via text message and reported that she had taken a wrong turn and was descending the Missouri Lakes trail; another ground team dispatched to the Missouri Lakes trail intercepted the subject and escorted her back to the trailhead. Rescue operations concluded at 9 pm on Aug. 8.

Friends of Mountain Rescue would like to thank all of the personnel from the many agencies that responded to these missions, including the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, the Colorado Search & Rescue Board (CSRB), Eagle County Paramedic Services, Eagle County Sheriff's Office, HAATS, Vail Fire & Emergency Services, and Vail Public Safety Communications. We would especially like to thank the volunteer members of Vail Mountain Rescue Group who are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and never charge subjects for a rescue.

Thank you for continuing to support Vail Mountain Rescue! With great appreciation,

*Thomas Howard*

*President, Friends of Mountain Rescue*

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