



NEWS



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San Bernardino County mountain rescues continue in communities affected by winter storm

By Alexa Mae Asperin, FOX 11

March 5, 2023



SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, Calif. - Rescue efforts continue across San Bernardino County mountain communities where residents remain trapped in the aftermath of a powerful winter storm that dumped several inches of snow across the region.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department shared photos Sunday of the rescues involving several agencies including **San Bernardino County Fire**, Caltrans District 8, San Bernardino County Public Works, and CHP Lake Arrowhead.

"Snowfall of upwards to 10 feet has put significant weight and strain on structures, roof, trees, and even unsupported gas meters," the sheriff's department said. "As a rule of thumb, snow weighs approximately 20 pounds per cubic foot, this can cause breakage of pipes and connections on your gas meter."

Officials encourage residents to use a broom or brush to clear snow away from meters only if it is safe to do so. Do not use a shovel or hard object to remove the snow because this may damage the meter, officials said.

According to SoCalGas, there are no system-wide gas outages or interruptions in the area. Residents are reminded that falling snow and ice could potentially damage meters.

If you believe your gas meter has been damaged or smell gas, contact SoCalGas at 1-800-427-2200 immediately.

<https://www.foxla.com/news/san-bernardino-county-mountain-rescues-continue-winter-storm>

Digging out from a Natural Disaster – Avoiding a Financial Disaster

By Staff Writer, KBHR NEWS

March 6, 2023

Big Bear Lake, CA – Big Bear News – **San Bernardino County Fire** and CalTrans are reporting that efforts are continuing to focus on Highway 38 to get this route open to Big Bear residents first and foremost. County Fire tells KBear that Highway 38 will open sooner than later and they will reevaluate during a meeting scheduled later tonight.

Highway 18 between Big Bear and Running Springs is a different story. Although there are crews working on that section of the highway the challenges are much greater and will take longer to complete the work but a spokesperson from CalTrans has assured that this section of highway has not been forgotten. They recognize that Snow Valley is still cut off with workers unable to return.

“We are concerned for the safety and livelihood of our employees” says Wade Reeser, General Manager for Big Bear Mountain Resort. “Opening the highways is something we need in order to avoid adding a financial disaster to the natural disaster. Aside from the resorts and our employees there are sport shops, equipment rental companies and restaurants that depend on visitors and they can’t survive if that revenue is cut off”.

Unless the US Mail trucks are turned away for unknown reasons there will be additional deliveries leading to a big sorting process at the post offices. Some mail has been delivered and they anticipate that to increase in the next handful of days. As updates are provided we will provide them to you.

<https://kbhr933.com/weather/digging-out-from-a-natural-disaster-avoiding-a-financial-disaster/>

Trapped Californians rescued from snow, helped by neighbors

By Staff Writer, ASSOCIATED PRESS

March 5, 2023



Snow blocks the kitchen doorway of Jennifer Cobb's house in Lake Arrowhead on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023 in the San Bernardino Mountains of San Bernardino County, Calif. (Jennifer Cobb via AP)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Multimedia journalist Jada Montemarano spoke with a Lake Arrowhead resident and the battalion chief of **San Bernardino County Fire** about emergency and rescue efforts. Click the arrow above to watch the video.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Search crews have rescued Californians stranded for days in multiple feet of snow after back-to-back storms plastered the state's mountain communities and trapped many in their homes.

What You Need To Know

- In the San Bernardino Mountains, sheriff's authorities on Friday rescued a pair of 17-year-olds who were dropped off five days earlier to hike a section of the Pacific Crest Trail and hadn't communicated with their parents for three days
- A sheriff's helicopter flew over the trail and landed in heavy snow to rescue the teens, who were hiking in four to five feet of snow drifts and limited visibility that made it tough to stay on the trail, the county sheriff's department said in a statement
- The dramatic rescues come as California is struggling to dig out residents in mountain communities from as much as 10 feet of snow after back-to-back storms battered the state
- Gov. Gavin Newsom has declared states of emergency in 13 counties including San Bernardino County, where the massive snowfall has closed roads, caused power outages, collapsed roofs and trapped residents in their homes for more than a week

In Inyo County on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, volunteer rescuers tried for days to locate a man who was last heard from Feb. 24 before he drove out from the community of Big Pine. The California Highway Patrol identified a cell phone ping linked to the man Thursday and sent a helicopter crew that spotted a partly snow-covered vehicle with the man waving inside, sheriff's authorities said in a statement.

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who were hiking in four to five feet of snow drifts and limited visibility that made it tough to stay on the trail, the county sheriff's department said in a statement.

The dramatic rescues come as California is struggling to dig out residents in mountain communities from as much as 10 feet of snow after back-to-back storms battered the state. Gov. Gavin Newsom has declared states of emergency in 13 counties including San Bernardino County, where the massive snowfall has closed roads, caused power outages, collapsed roofs and trapped residents in their homes for more than a week.

Some residents could be shut in for another week due to the challenges in clearing out so much snow. The Red Cross has set up a shelter at a local high school and food distribution centers have been set up in several communities.

Katy Curtis, who lives in the San Bernardino mountain community of Crestline, said she hiked with snow shoes for five miles to get a can of gasoline to a family trapped in their house to fuel a generator.

"I'm healthy so I just thought well, I can walk and I did but it was probably the longest day of my life," said Curtis, adding the family had someone with a medical necessity. She said cars are completely buried in snow, and it is piled up to the roof of her home.

"We're just all so exhausted in every way," she said.

In Northern California, another strong storm is expected to dump yet more snow in mountain communities this weekend, according to National Weather Service in Sacramento. There is a slight chance of snow showers in the San Bernardino County mountains on Sunday, according to the National Weather Service in San Diego.

<https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/public-safety/2023/03/04/trapped-californians-rescued-from-snow--helped-by-neighbors#>

San Bernardino mountain residents grow worried as they can't access medicine, supplies

By Hanna Lykkke, SB Sun
March 4, 2023



Emergency vehicles and residents navigate through the snow-covered downtown area of Crestline on Friday, March 3, 2023, following heavy snowfall in the region. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

Stephanie Milika'a isn't sure when she'll get chemotherapy again.

Milika'a has breast cancer and was only two weeks into treatment when the blizzard hit her Running Springs home. While Milika'a is due for treatment Thursday, like many others in the San Bernardino Mountains, she's snowed in and unable to leave except on foot.

She contacted the Sheriff's Department who suggested she take a shuttle from a local shelter — which she'd have to walk to — but said it's not feasible as a cancer patient.

"I can't do that because my white blood count is so low that I was told to stay away from people," Milika'a explained. "That's not really an option."

Milika'a said she has already had delays accessing other cancer medications, but with the date for chemo nearing, she's growing increasingly uneasy — with few options left to access her care. And if she leaves home to take the treacherous journey down the mountain, there's no guarantee she'll be reunited with her husband.

"I don't want to be at some stranger's house after my next round (of chemotherapy) going through whatever it is I'm going to go through," Milika'a said. "I just want to be home in my own bed with my husband who takes care of me."

In nearby Lake Arrowhead, Rebecca Arrowood's diabetes supplies were due for delivery Saturday. But they never arrived.

She needs glucose sensors to keep track of her blood sugars, but roads piled high with snow mean no trucks can come through — and she can't get out.

Following the county's guidance, Arrowood called the local emergency hotline but described a cumbersome system that didn't leave her feeling clear about whether she'd receive help.

"I just kind of gave up on the county like it wasn't going to happen," she said.

After Saturday's missed delivery, Arrowood called again but still hadn't heard back — though the second go-around left her slightly more optimistic, she said.

San Bernardino County spokesperson David Wert said in an email that people who cannot access “essential medications or other medical care” should call the emergency hotline at 909-387-3911. **San Bernardino County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike McClintock echoed that guidance and urged using 911 for acute emergencies.

In the meantime, Arrowood is managing what variables she can.

“I'm being careful of what kind of food I'm eating,” Arrowood said. “To keep me from (needing) too much insulin, I'm eating less carbs, which is really sad but it's just what I have to do to conserve.”

Arrowood's neighbor Michael Wyatt, who has lived on the mountain for more than 40 years, is quadriplegic. He said he's running low on catheters to use the bathroom; without them, he's at risk of developing infections. He also needs water-resistant tape to prevent getting ulcers from showering.

“My medical supplies (didn't) arrive for the month of February because of the storm,” Wyatt said. Like his neighbors, Wyatt hasn't been able to exit his home for several days. And if he needed to leave, Wyatt explained, using a wheelchair outside wouldn't be possible in the heavy snow.

“They would probably have to put me a toboggan or a sled or something like that,” Wyatt said. “There's just no way my wheelchair could go. I haven't been out of the house since it started snowing.”

Linda Thoemmes said from her Runnings Spring home that she has been experiencing withdrawal from her antidepressant medications since she ran out Wednesday. She has felt a barrage of symptoms, including severe nausea and dizziness, but is trapped inside her home.

Thoemmes said she called the county's hotline and Supervisor Dawn Rowe, but hasn't received any assistance from authorities other than the fire department, which offered to take her down the mountain. That isn't feasible, she said, because there's no guarantee she'd be able to get back to her pets at home.

“Anyone who picks up the phone is nice, and that's all good and well, but there's no coordination to all these efforts,” Thoemmes said.

She called her local Walgreens for assistance with her prescription but was referred to corporate.

In the meantime, with few options left, Thoemmes said she has been making repeated attempts to clear the snow around her home. But the tough physical labor of plowing and shoveling is difficult with her symptoms. And with another dusting coming Saturday evening, the pileup only appears to be growing.

“I'm trying to sleep it off so I don't have to feel it,” Thoemmes said. “I feel helpless in a lot of ways.”

<https://www.sbsun.com/2023/03/04/san-bernardino-mountain-residents-grow-worried-as-they-cant-access-medicine-supplies/>

Southern California Residents Trapped by 10 Feet of Snow Could Be Stuck for Another Week. Here's What to Know

By Anisha Kohli, TIME

March 4, 2023



A man shovels snow off the roof of a store in Crestline on Friday, March 3, 2023, as buildings remain buried in several feet of snow from recent winter storms.

Thousands of residents of Southern California who have been stranded by up to 10 feet of snow since Feb. 28 could be stuck for another week, officials warned.

A remarkable blizzard tore through the San Bernardino Mountain region, east of Los Angeles, as much of Southern California experienced harsh arctic cold last week. With a population of more than 2 million, San Bernardino County is home to thousands of people living in isolated mountainous and forested areas, many of whom are seasonal visitors.

Across the region, rescuers are working around the clock to plow roads and open paths to buried homes and businesses. But, they are being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the storm, local authorities say. Highways leading up to the mountains have been mostly closed since the storm, opening intermittently for residents and to deliver supplies.

“There are snow plows everywhere and you are going to see direct relief coming to your doorsteps shortly,” San Bernardino County Sheriff Shannon Dicus told reporters on Friday.. “I’d love to give you exact times and dates to be able to do that, but it just isn’t possible at this point,” he said.

Response after the storm

California Governor Gavin Newsom declared states of emergency in 13 counties following the storm, which brought snowfall heavy enough to collapse rooftops and freezing temperatures that coated roads in black ice. A grocery store in the mountain resort town of Crestline was eager to help the community with supplies, but on Wednesday, the building collapsed under the weight of several feet of snow.

San Bernardino County officials had previously estimated that it could take up to two weeks to rescue everyone, but the estimate has since grown shorter. “Because of the state’s efforts and the equipment that’s coming in behind us we’re hoping to drop that down to a week,” Dicus said.

Authorities only received warning about the severity of the storm about a day and a half in advance, officials

said Friday, which was not enough time to prepare and get specialized equipment to plow and dig through the snow.

“We need better plans when it comes to severe blizzards. We need to have leases set up to allow us to get the equipment quicker. We need to have agreements set up to allow private contractors to come in,” **San Bernardino County Fire** Chief Dan Munsey said Friday.

“At the end of the day, we’re not going to be able to support the immense population that in some cases are just not prepared for this weather event,” he added.

About 80,000 people live in the city of Big Bear Lake, which sits at 6,700 feet of elevation, and smaller unincorporated mountain communities nearby. The area is popular for year-round recreation and is largely occupied by vacationing or seasonal visitors. Many of these people weren’t prepared for inclement weather, and have run out of food, water and other essentials, and some are no longer able to heat their homes, according to county officials, prompting authorities to take rescue efforts very seriously and respond rapidly.

In some locations, residents have been stuck even longer. Graham Smith and his husband, living in Blue Jay, were unable to leave their home for 10 days, and spent most of their time shoveling snow, trying to make sure their cars wouldn’t be buried, the Los Angeles Times reports. “Our backs are broken, everything aches,” Smith told the L.A. Times. “Whatever help is coming now should have been here days ago.”

The narrow windy roads through the mountains can be treacherous in the winter. Some people who tried to leave during the storm abandoned their cars on the impassable roads, adding a challenge for snow plows combing through the routes now, along with power lines and other debris brought down by the blizzard.

Rescuers are having greater success clearing roads and driveways with dump trucks and front-end loaders than traditional snow plowers, and according to the California Department of Transportation, crews have cleared almost two million cubic meters of snow from state highways so far.

Authorities closed access to the San Bernardino National Forest on Friday, until at least March 16, where response crews are working to plow the snowy roads.

Officials haven’t been able to estimate how many people are trapped yet, but they’re optimistic that the worst has passed. “The weather looks great for the next seven days, and that’s great news,” Munsey said.

<https://time.com/6260365/southern-california-snow-stranded/>