



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park

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Grand Canyon News Release

Release date: Immediate

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Rescue Operation of Stranded Boaters Completed At Grand Canyon

Grand Canyon, AZ. – Late in the afternoon on Saturday, August 16, Havasu Canyon, a popular side canyon of the Grand Canyon, flash flooded as a result of heavy, localized, monsoon rains. That evening, the Grand Canyon Regional Communications Center received word that five unmanned rafts had been seen floating down the Colorado River with supplies and personal flotation devices aboard. Initial investigation by the National Park Service (NPS) indicated that these rafts belonged to a single, private boating party of 16 individuals whose itinerary would have put them in the vicinity of Havasu Canyon at the time of the flood.

At approximately 10:45 a.m. on Sunday, August 17, an NPS helicopter found the party of 16 stranded on a ledge at the confluence of Havasu Creek and the Colorado River. The NPS used a short haul rescue technique to move group members, one at a time, from the ledge to the shore of the Colorado River where they could be picked up by helicopter and flown to Hualapai Hilltop. From there, the group was transported by bus to a Red Cross shelter in Peach Springs, Arizona.

To ensure the safety of park visitors, NPS river rangers have been contacting groups who are still upriver from the confluence of Havasu Creek and the Colorado River to inform them of the conditions at the confluence.

Commercial river operators carry satellite phones which have been working well throughout this event and aerial checks of the Colorado River have occurred. No other reports of difficulties due to these flood conditions have been received within the park. Additionally, no park roads or facilities received damage; and all park facilities are open and fully operational at this time.

For more information on the effects of this flood in Grand Canyon National Park, please, contact the Public Affairs Office at 928-638-7958. For information on continuing efforts to aid those affected by the flood within Havasu Canyon and Supai Village, please contact the Incident Information Center at 928-679-4161. If you are checking on family members with permits to float the river or backpack in the backcountry of Grand Canyon National Park, please contact Grand Canyon's river information line at 928-638-7884.

-NPS-



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact: Gerry Blair (928) 226-5089

Date: August 18, 2008, 4:40 p.m.

Search and Rescue Efforts Continue in Supai Canyon

Flagstaff, AZ- As of 1:00 p.m. on Monday, August 18, 2008, an additional 85 people were airlifted from the Supai Village to the Hualapai Hilltop area. Individuals with personal vehicles drove to the American Red Cross Evacuation Reception Center located at the Tribal Gymnasium in Peach Springs Arizona. Transportation was provided for people who did not have vehicles parked at Hilltop. Air evacuation efforts resumed Monday morning, consisting of a total of seven helicopters from the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the National Park Service and the Arizona National Guard. A helicopter was on standby status today until 2:00 p.m., in the event any additional community members chose to leave the area.

Anyone who hiked out of Supai Canyon after this event and has not spoken with law enforcement officials is asked to call the Coconino County Sheriff's Office at (928) 774-4523. Rescuers will continue to focus on determining if there are any missing individuals and conducting an extensive air and ground search in an attempt to locate them. Due to existing conditions, Supai is currently closed to all campers and tourists.

It is believed that a number of weather related events contributed to the flash flooding conditions in Supai Canyon. According to the National Weather Service, the Coconino Plateau experienced significant rainfall on Friday afternoon, Saturday afternoon, and again Sunday afternoon. It is believed that the flooding in Supai late Saturday night and early Sunday was the result of heavy rainfall on Saturday afternoon. Water levels in the canyon remained high through Monday morning due to additional rainfall that fell on Sunday. Total rainfall for the period of Friday through Sunday was relatively light in the Supai area, but as high as six inches 20 to 40 miles upstream from Supai. A drying trend is expected through the week with only isolated showers expected.

Anyone concerned about friends or family members who may have been evacuated as a result of this event may contact the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org and click on "Registers" and "Safe and Well".

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