



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

August 19, 2008, 4:40 p.m.

Supai Canyon Successfully Evacuated—Eleven Unaccounted Individuals Located Safely

Flagstaff, AZ - The Coconino County Sheriff's Office is pleased to announce that the eleven individuals previously reported missing in the Supai Canyon flood area have been located and all are safe. As a precaution, Sheriff's Office officials are currently cross checking information with those who were evacuated with those who left the area through the exit checkpoint over the past few days.

As of today, approximately 426 people have been evacuated by helicopter from the canyon. Currently, no fatalities or serious injuries resulting from this incident have been reported to the Sheriff's Office. Some residents of the Supai Village chose not to be evacuated and remained in the canyon.

On Monday, a fly-over was conducted and officials found no one in need of assistance. Water levels in the area are still too high to conduct an extensive ground search, but search and rescue personnel from several agencies plan to do a more extensive search when the water levels subside.

As of 2:00 p.m. on Monday, campers and tourists evacuated from Supai Village and the campground had been airlifted to the Hualapai Hilltop area. Evacuees in need of services were transported to the American Red Cross evacuation reception center in Peach Springs, Arizona. Currently, the air evacuation operation has been suspended. Equipment and personnel are available in the event circumstances change.

The Red Cross reception center housed eight residents of Supai Canyon on Monday evening. An additional sixteen elders are staying at the local lodge and the Red Cross is providing meals for them. All of the evacuated tourists have left the area. Supai Canyon residents should be able to return to their homes today or tomorrow. All lifeline systems are currently operating in the canyon, including water, power and telephone services.

The Hualapai Tribe has received three truckloads of donated supplies from St. Mary's Food Bank and the National Relief Charities. Items include meal kits, blankets, water, Gatorade and hygiene products.

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Coconino County Sheriff's Office

Bill Pribil, Sheriff

The Red Cross Disaster Assessment Team will be flying down into the canyon today to conduct a damage assessment. Reports indicate that there has been damage to the campground and trail system below the campground.

Agencies involved in the evacuation, search and rescue, and relief effort include the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Havasupai Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Department of Public Safety, National Park Service, Arizona National Guard, Coconino County Sheriff's Office, Coconino County Emergency Management, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, St. Mary's Food Bank, National Relief Charities, U. S. Forest Service, Coconino County Community Emergency Response Teams, Mohave County Sheriff's Office, and Coconino County Search and Rescue.

Contact Information:

Anyone concerned about friends or family members who may have been evacuated as a result of this event may contact the American Red Cross shelter at Peach Springs, Arizona at (928) 769-2654 or 2652; or email www.redcross.org and click on "Registers" and "Safe and Well".

For inquiries regarding individuals who may be visiting in the backcountry of Grand Canyon National Park, please call the National Park Service river permits office at (928) 638-7884 or (800) 959-9164.

For BIA related questions, contact Warren Youngman, Assistant Special Agent In Charge/Public Information Officer, BIA District 3, at (602) 448-9537.

For information regarding visitation to the Supai Canyon area or the status of trails leading to and within the Supai area, please call the Supai Canyon Information Center at (928) 444-2121, 2141, 2170 or 2180. Information Center operators are currently working on flood-related issues, so the public is asked to keep trying these phone numbers.

For information on the status of emergency supplies distributed to the affected area, please call Coconino County Emergency Manager Sherrie Collins at (928) 526-2735; toll-free (800) 790-1990.

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