



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Death Valley National Park

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Death Valley National Park News Release

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Park Responds to Simultaneous Motorcycle Accidents

DEATH VALLEY, CA – Death Valley National Park staff and other agencies responded to nearly simultaneous reports of four different motorcycle accidents in the park on the afternoon of October 26. Two of the reports were false reports that pulled responders away from the two real accidents.

The first report happened around 4:30pm of an injured motorcyclist being transported in by a park visitor to Furnace Creek Visitor Center for assistance. A park emergency medical technician (EMT) and a park ambulance was dispatched to the Visitor Center, but no injured person ever arrived.

A few minutes later park dispatch reported an injured motorcyclist at Badwater. A park ranger was on site quickly and assessed her injuries as non-life threatening, but that she was in need of medical transport. The EMT and ambulance from the Visitor Center headed towards Badwater.

Soon afterwards, a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employee reported a severe motorcycle accident near the park's east boundary on CA-190. The park ambulance that was headed to Badwater (and had been initially dispatched to the Visitor Center) diverted to go to this accident. Mercy Air was also dispatched.

Meanwhile, a visitor reported a motorcycle accident 8 miles north of Furnace Creek on CA-190, so park staff headed toward that scene to assess. After searching CA-190 and Daylight Pass Road, park rangers decided this was an erroneous report.

The park's second ambulance, once cleared of the two erroneous reports of injured people at Furnace Creek and 8 miles north of Furnace Creek, headed to Badwater and transported the injured motorcyclist from there.

In yet another example of miscommunication, San Bernardino County medics from Baker were dispatched towards the park, before being turned around.

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The 71-year-old motorcyclist injured just outside the park's eastern boundary on CA-190 was transported by Mercy Air helicopter, but did not survive.

Death Valley National Park has only two ambulances and a work force of 90-130 people, depending on the season. However, only a fraction of these employees are trained EMTs, park medics, or ambulance drivers. Four simultaneous reports of injuries in different locations overtaxed the park's ability to respond to each one, and the incident commander was forced to triage priorities. The park greatly appreciates assistance from Mercy Air, the BLM, and San Bernardino County.

Concerned citizens are urged to be very clear about their location when calling in emergencies, as incorrect information can cause responders to go to the wrong location, delaying emergency assistance.

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