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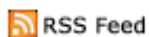
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BREAKING NEWS: Youth Killed in Plunge Down San Emigdio Mountain

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FRAZIER PARK, CALIFORNIA (April 22, 2009, 3:30 p.m.)—This letter was received at *The Mountain Enterprise* from Frazier Mountain High School Coaching staff on April 21:

We lost a fine and talented young man last night (Monday, April 20). The school, teachers, coaches and players are deeply saddened by Michael's death. The coaching staff brought the players together at lunch Tuesday so that we



Kern County Sheriff's Search and Rescue team members bring the young man's body up from approximately 700 feet below the cliff where he fell the night before. [Photo by Gary Meyer]

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could talk to them as a team.

All of the players know that the entire staff as well as every coach was there for them today and will be in the days to come.

Your sons were in pain today. They banded together as a team; as a family: Ohana.

The coaching staff was proud to see their compassion and their bravery in a time of such sadness.

We have planned a tribute to Michael which we will begin Wednesday. The ASB has a donation jar set up to help Michael's family and is also planning a special assembly for Thursday. That has been set for 2:20 p.m. on Thursday. It will last about 35 minutes. Falcon parents are welcome to attend. We will keep you informed.

The Frazier Mountain High School Coaching Staff

FRAZIER PARK, CALIFORNIA (April 22, 2009, 9:30 a.m.)—Reports being issued by a Bakersfield television station—saying that rescue crews had left 15-year-old Michael Manning alive on a mountainside overnight, then returned in the morning to find he had died—are untrue, according to Southern Kern Search and Rescue team member Mike Parker who was on-scene Monday night and Tuesday morning as the body was recovered. Parker told *The Mountain Enterprise* this morning that a search and rescue team would never leave a live person overnight without medical attention. The television station (KGET Channel 17) still had the incorrect information on its website as of 9:30 this morning. The true sequence of events, as reported to *The Mountain Enterprise* on-scene Monday night by Kern County Fire Battalion Chief John Smith and confirmed Tuesday morning by numerous Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue officials, is that Kern County firefighter paramedic David Whitman was first to reach the victim Monday night and found him with weak vital signs during the nine o'clock hour. The victim passed away shortly thereafter while paramedic Whitman was with him. The victim was never left unattended while he was alive, according to all official sources. Rescue workers stayed through the night and continued their efforts to recover the body at daybreak on Tuesday morning. [When KGET's website was checked on Thursday, Apr. 23 at 3 p.m., their story about Michael Manning had been removed.]

PINE MOUNTAIN, CALIFORNIA (April 21, 2009, 12 noon)—Recovery of the body of 15-year-old Michael Manning, who died in a fall down the north face of San Emigdio Mountain last night, has been completed. Kern County Sheriff's Search and Rescue team members brought the victim's body to just below the top of the mountain where family members were waiting with Pastor Roger Reece. After about 10 minutes, the body was brought up to the coroner's van where television news crews were waiting.

Treacherously steep terrain hampered search and rescue efforts throughout Monday night, causing county sheriff's officials to postpone the recovery until daylight for the safety of personnel.

Kern County Fire Department paramedic David Whitman had quickly reached the victim Monday evening, but became stranded. Fire crews spent several hours rigging trees with ropes and pulleys in order to free him from the steep ravine at approximately 11 p.m. Whitman was uninjured and, afterward, walked to the top of the mountain.

Twenty one members of Kern County's Search and Rescue (SAR) organization worked together Monday night through Tuesday morning to recover the body. SAR teams from Bakersfield, China Lake, Kern Valley and Southern Kern.

PINE MOUNTAIN, CALIFORNIA (April 21, 2009, 9 a.m.)—Recovery efforts are underway on San Emigdio Mountain to retrieve the body of a Frazier Mountain High School sophomore who died last night in a fall from a cliff at the north face. It has been unofficially confirmed that the youth is Michael Manning, a popular football player. His parents were informed last night, shortly after the accident.



Michael Manning
2008 FMHS yearbook

Teachers at FMHS were called for an early morning meeting to receive the news and formulate a plan to provide support for grief-stricken students. El Tejon Unified School District Superintendent Shelly Mason confirmed that two teachers and two counselors are on duty in the FMHS library to talk with students and to provide grief counseling. Students are writing messages to express condolences to the youth's parents and working together to plan a memorial in his honor, Mason said.

Updates will be posted as they are available, with additional information in Thursday's issue of *The Mountain Enterprise* newspaper.

PINE MOUNTAIN (April 20, 2009, 11:50 p.m.)—A sixteen year old Frazier Mountain High School student was killed in a tragic fall from the north face of San Emigdio Mountain north of Pine Mountain this evening. He was with four other youth when the accident occurred.

A 911 call at 7:21 p.m. was dispatched to Station 58 in Pine Mountain. The firefighter team with a paramedic rushed to the scene. The paramedic, Dave Whitman, reached the victim approximately [700] feet down a steep cliff of sand and rock. He radioed up that the youth was unconscious but still had vital signs. The young man passed away shortly after. Then the paramedic became stranded on the mountainside with the youth's body. Kern County firefighters worked for several hours to establish rigging and assist the paramedic to safety.

By 10:20 p.m. Southern Kern Search and Rescue had assembled on the mountain. They deployed a team to assess the route of approach for retrieving the FMHS student's body. Hall ambulance personnel were standing by to assist anyone who might be injured in this effort.

Shortly after 11 p.m. firefighters had rigged lines so the paramedic was able to climb back up to a ridge from which he could then ascend the mountainside.

Search and rescue command was concerned that attempts to retrieve the young man's body during the night would imperil other rescue workers. A firm wind rising up the north face of San Emigdio Mountain posed a problem for a helicopter, especially in the darkness of night.

Updates will be posted here as they become available.

[This is part of the [April 17, 2009](#) online edition of The Mountain Enterprise.]

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