

News Release
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Effective Immediately

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**MOUNTAIN PRECIPITATION CAN LEAD TO FLASH
FLOODING IN DESERT CANYONS**
Visitors Should be Aware of Changing Conditions

TUCSON, AZ (January 7, 2008) – Rain falling in Southeastern Arizona’s mountain ranges can lead to flash flooding in downstream desert canyons. Such was the case on Sunday, January 6 in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area, where 61 visitors became stranded in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area and rescued with the assistance of helicopters and the Southern Arizona Rescue Association.

When rainfall occurs in the mountains, high canyons and drainages carry runoff to the lower elevations. Bear, Sabino, Ventana, Pima and other canyons funnels rainfall from the Santa Catalina Mountains to the Tucson Basin. When localized rainfall is heavy, large volumes of water can move swiftly downstream through them, sometimes as walls of water. Flash flooding occurs when there is a rapid rise in water which occurs in a short period of time following rainfall.

Visitors to natural areas should be aware of the potential for flash flooding during wet periods, and should avoid streams and washes when storms have been predicted upstream from their location. “We encourage our visitors to be aware of rapidly changing weather conditions in the mountains, and to avoid water crossings if rain is or could be falling higher up in the watershed,” said Stan Helin, Santa Catalina District Ranger.

Recreationists may notice stream levels rise quickly, or the water become muddy. A roaring sound upstream may indicate a flash flood moving in their direction. At any indication of rising water, people should seek higher ground to wait until after storms have passed and water levels have dropped. Weather forecasts can be obtained from the National Weather Service Tucson office 24-hour weather line at (520) 881-3333.