

18-year-old trapped in abandoned mine shaft has 'very lucky' rescue

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EUREKA, Utah — One eighteen-year-old is thanking his rescuers after he was trapped in a mine for at least four hours.

Izick Garcia and his friend Moroni Oliveira were exploring caves and mines down in Eureka, when Garcia realized he had gone too far.

“It was his idea and I went along with and we had a blast, at first,” said Oliveira.

The two friends had explored a few other mine shafts and caves before reaching a circulation shaft for the Colorado #2 mine.

“We went in and I guess you could say there was a drop,” said Garcia.

About a 25 to 30 foot drop that Garcia rappelled down in his homemade rope harness.

“I was trying to climb up and as soon as I grabbed it, it just started crumbling in my hand,” said Garcia.

Moments later, the ground beneath his foot crumbled.

“I swung across the cave and after that I was like, I’m not going to do that again,” said Garcia.

Not able to climb out, Oliveira couldn’t pull him back up either.

At the top of the tunnel, Oliveira left to call for help.

“Surprisingly, I just see a ford truck pulling up,” said Oliveira. “It was like, wow, what a coincidence for the Chief of Fire to be out here.”

Search and rescue agencies were called in to help get Garcia to safety.

Corey Cluff, a volunteer with the Utah County Sheriff Search and Rescue said they had to monitor how stable the mine was before entering.

“Mines are always very unpredictable,” said Cluff. “There’s instability issues that you need to worry about secondary collapses. There’s also atmospheric conditions that can be very hazardous and deadly.”

Once crews knew they could move forward safely, they found a side shaft opening, leading to where Garcia waited.

“Even lower than hands and knees, it was kind of a belly crawl to just get into the entrance,” said Cluff.

When inside, Cluff said he was grateful Garcia had called for help because one wrong move could have landed Garcia deeper into the mine shaft.

“It would be like falling off of a four-story building,” said Cluff.

Police said Garcia and Oliveira did a lot of things right in this situation: they were together, they told others the area they were going to and they had some equipment.

Most importantly, when they realized they were in trouble, they called for help.

Nearly four hours after Garcia entered the mine shaft, he was pulled to safety.

“They were really nice, really cool people,” said Garcia. “It was really nice for them to come all the way out here.”