



Tacoma, WA - Tuesday, June 16, 2009

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Mission to Mexico goes nowhere fast

STACEY MULICK; The News Tribune

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What a surprise: Like the previous two, the third Mission to Mexico got off to a rough start.

Since leaving Saturday from Gig Harbor, the 22 South Sound residents driving 10 used emergency vehicles to Mexico have had two of them break down, stranding the team for hours.

And then there was the rain in the mountains. And the wrench in the transmission. All this and they were still in the United States.

Besides taking four patrol cars, a fire truck, an ambulance and four other vehicles, the group is toting medical supplies, soccer equipment, computers and other gear.

Pierce County sheriff's spokesman Ed Troyer has been Twittering from the road. Here are some of the 24 dispatches he's sent since they headed south on what's expected to be a nine-day trip:

9:51 a.m. Saturday. "We are on the freeway heading south after a rough start. We are passing through Morton."

Having fun was Jose Lopez, the Gig Harbor restaurant owner who spearheaded the humanitarian missions after a trip to his hometown of Ayulta four years ago.

12:59 p.m. Saturday. "Making good time. Will make up for the late departure. Jose driving fire truck. He's happy as a 5-year-old (on) Xmas morning."

Less than four hours later, the fire truck broke down near Grants Pass, Ore.

6:16 p.m. Saturday. "We are back up and running as a group thanks to a kid at the gas station who helped us after the mechanics failed."

6:52 p.m. Saturday. "Now we need to make up 3 hours on Grants Pass. Now should be in California by 7:30 if we get through the rain storm. Have great photos."

10:09 p.m. Saturday. "Bad news. Fire truck dead again. We sent everyone on down south. Jose, Hauge, Phil and I are stuck in a town called Weed for the night."

The truck got back on the road an hour later but Sunday morning, the air pump on the ambulance blew up. A crew found the parts to fix it, but they were 12 hours behind schedule.

12:55 p.m. Sunday. "Good news. The other 8 vehicles are a few hours away from Tucson and will be ready to go tomorrow for the border."

Meanwhile, the ambulance was getting fixed.

3 p.m. Sunday. "Well the mechanic started the ambulance. The problem was he left his tools in the engine compartment. A wrench wrapped around the transmission."

The ambulance and crew made it to Los Angeles on Sunday night.

10 a.m. Monday. “We are all up and moving about an hour from border. The fire truck is in shop getting fixed right. Gonzo and Phil stayed behind with truck.”

2:25 p.m. Monday. “At the border now. We are slowed down due to permits and the large amount of items we have. Being told that we may hit road at 7 p.m.”

2: 27 p.m. Monday. “The fire truck is here and running so it’s all good now but we are a day behind due to time this is taking.”

4:17 p.m. Monday. “Things are good, standing in another parking lot with no shade. About 87 degrees. That’s 105 Tacoma temp.”

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