



Gennaro Brooks-Church/Special to the Sentinel

Bonny Doon firefighters pull Zachary Reese from cave after using power chisels to enlarge cave entrance.

Rescuers free boy stuck in cave

By JOHN ROBINSON
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SANTA CRUZ — Rescue workers used power chisels to free a 16-year-old boy from a cave near UC Santa Cruz early Tuesday morning after he was unable to squeeze through a narrow passageway.

The boy, identified as Zachary Reese, was shaken but uninjured by his ordeal.

According to rescue crews, Reese and three friends were exploring "Man Trap" cave on the Grey Whale Ranch property across from UCSC. The group squeezed through a narrow passageway into a small room in the cave but when they tried to leave, Reese was unable to fit back through the opening.

Firefighters said Reese managed worm his way back into the room but was trapped. Two

of his friends ran for help and rescue crews from the UCSC and Bonny Doon Volunteer fire departments and California Department of Forestry arrived at the cave shortly after 8 p.m.

Firefighters said Reese more than six feet tall and 200 pounds, was too large to fit back through the opening and found the only way to free him was by chipping away the rock.

"Gravity helped him down through the small opening, but some of his body weight shifted when he tried to go back through," said Ted Hensley, UCSC Fire Department operations officer.

Firefighters entered the cave and used small, hand-held pneumatic chisels to chip away the granite and sandstone rock of the passage. Reese was able to slide back into the cave out of

the way of the rescue work. Because of the hardness of the rock, it took about four hours for the crews to open the passage wide enough for Reese to fit through, Hensley said.

"Once we got a few pieces out it was no problem," Hensley said. "The boy was apprehensive but OK. But I don't think he'll be going back into that cave."

Reese was able to walk out of the cave area and did not require medical aid.

The Sheriff's Office will seek to have Reese and his friends, two boys, aged 15 and 16, and a 17-year-old girl, charged with trespassing and may seek to have them reimburse the county for the rescue costs, deputies said.

— Steve Perez contributed to this story.