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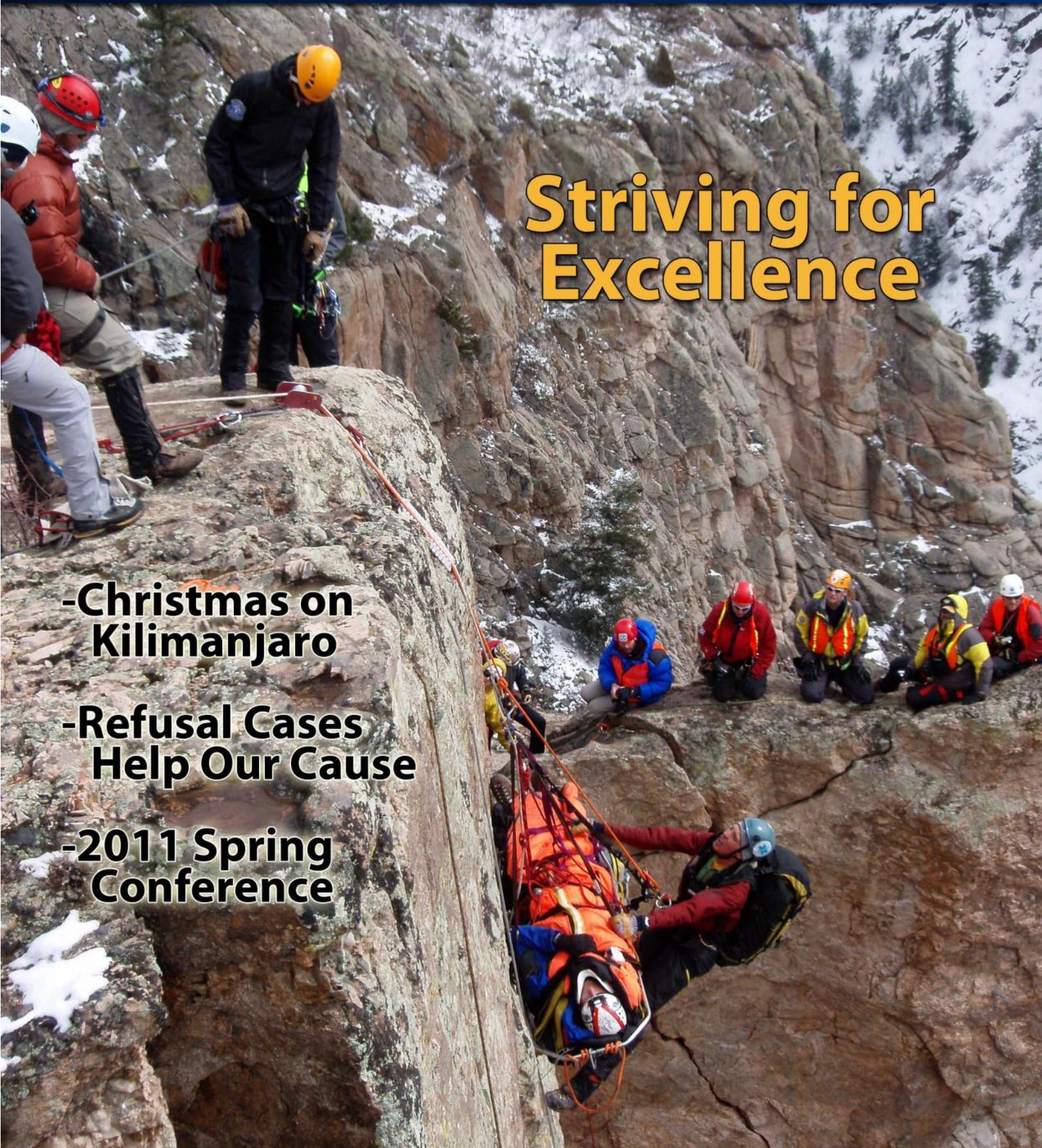
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Striving for Excellence

**-Christmas on
Kilimanjaro**

**-Refusal Cases
Help Our Cause**

**-2011 Spring
Conference**





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Cover Photo: Western State Mountain Resce Team during its 2009 reaccreditation exercise. Photo by George Janson of Larimer Conty SAR.

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Striving for Excellence

The Rocky Mountain Region works to strengthen its accreditation/re-accreditation process and participation in the association

By Greg Foley, Grand County Search and Rescue,

Paul "Woody" Woodward, Alpine Rescue team

George Janson, Larimer County Search and Rescue

MRA teams in the Rocky Mountain Region have a long history of working together to accomplish life-saving search and rescue missions. Recent examples include a [massive search](#) in Eagle County by Vail Mountain Rescue for a Chicago man who went missing in the Holy Cross Wilderness and a concentrated [two day search](#) for a missing hiker near Golden, CO coordinated by Alpine Rescue Team. And searches are not the only missions that require mutual aid between teams. In 2010 four Rocky Mountain Region teams received the NASAR Valor Award for a remarkable [nighttime rescue](#) of a climber with a broken leg in the Crestones of southern Colorado.

Backcountry avalanche response in the central Colorado ski country (home to Alpine, RMRG, Vail, Summit, Grand and Aspen) is preplanned between the MRA teams, ski area patrollers and Flight for Life so that avalanche dogs, snow techs and rescue team personnel can be quickly inserted by helicopter.

When joint missions like these occur in the Rocky Mountain Region integration of field and overhead teams is relatively seamless. One reason for this capability is the fact that teams work together often and occasionally hold regional trainings on specific topics.

Even more basic than this, teams have been reaccrrediting each other with a structured re accreditation policy for over 30 years. Every five years each team must demonstrate their baseline competency in three different areas as outlined in the national MRA bylaws. A team of evaluators from other region teams will provide five scenarios (High Angle Rock, Low Angle Rock, Avalanche Rescue, Winter Technical Rescue and Wilderness Search) over a weekend so that the testing team can demonstrate their skills. The whole A/R exercise procedure is detailed in the regional policies. These policies have been modified a number of times over the years to make the process fair and professional, with the goal being to provide a consistent competence test that would stand up to outside inspection. Recent policy changes made in 2010 include:

1. Scenario leaders performing as SL's for the first time must have a mentor, who is assigned by the lead evaluator.

2. A testing team will designate a member as a "liaison" to work as a single point of contact with the lead evaluator throughout the A/R process.



Evaluators observe a high angle scenario during Western States Mountain Rescue Team's 2009 A/R exercise. Photo by George Janson.

3. Changes to improve the integrity of A/R scenarios:

- The lead evaluator and testing team will discuss scenario options before the test, and decisions will be communicated to all participants during the briefing. If the testing team wants to have more than one scenario simultaneously or in rapid succession, they can, but this can only be done if they agree to it.

- The role-playing during scenarios should not distract from the primary purpose of evaluating the technical competence of the team.

- The lead evaluator and testing team will discuss how specific required skills will be demonstrated; this discussion should include the testing team's protocols. All decisions must be communicated to the participants during the briefing.

- Any concerns from testing teams may be submitted to the board at any time, and the board will address them in a timely fashion. Testing teams are also asked to submit an evaluation team feedback form to the region RVC after their exercise is over.

- A member of the current board will be scheduled to attend each exercise in order to assist in ensuring all of the above.

4. A passing vote is redefined as a 2/3 vote instead of a 3/4 vote, in order to align with the requirement for bylaw changes, removal of directors, etc.

With all the new national standards being configured, the Rocky Mountain region teams feel they are ahead of the curve when it comes to documenting competency no matter what the powers that be come up with. As a region, we are confident that our A/R process not only aligns with the current atmosphere regarding peer evaluation, but provides a solid basis for training and development of new techniques.

The bottom line for SAR operations is that teams and individuals have foreknowledge of

Grand County Avalanche Scenario

- RP + 2 skiers + 2 snowboarders went up boot pack (5 total)
- RP in bottom of bowl when rescuers arrive.
- Rescuers should park in West Lot. They will not be able to see slide path from parking
- RP saw avalanche
 - Did not know what to do
 - Saw all 4 in slide. Waited a few minutes
 - Tried to use beacon
 - Panicked, called 911.
 - Thinks all were wearing beacons
- 911 call made to SAR team
- Subjects:
 - Paul (tele skier from Denver)
 - Bob (tele skier from Denver)
 - Tom (snowboarder from Minnesota)
 - Tim (snowboard from Denver, RPs brother)
 - RP (from Minnesota, limited beacon skills, no avi training, a little excited)
- Not sure who was wearing what equipment.
- Came in 2 cars. Both in parking lot. (Need to be identified on day of scenario)
- Group went up boot pack. Went across slope to get over into trees
- RP was slightly slower to cross than others. Others were in groups of 2.
- RP does not know who was where.
- RP has transmitting beacon on body. Skill with beacon pretty limited.

each other's capabilities and limitations. Even though technical systems vary widely over the region, participation in accreditation exercises promotes an understanding of the safety and efficiency features of the different systems. Integration into ICS structure, cross team communication and incident planning and strategy are all enhanced. Teams know they can trust each other when the going gets tough. They can depend on judgment calls from field team leaders, riggers and incident managers.

At the regional meeting in December of 2010 a new set of bylaws were adopted by the Rocky Mountain Region by the required 2/3 vote. The new document was the result of a year of work by a three-person committee consisting of Greg Foley (Grand), Paul (Woody) Woodward (Alpine) and George Janson (Larimer) The committee was assigned by the region board to update the existing bylaws with a goal of supporting recent policy changes, provide for a more defined regional governing structure, extend the terms of some board members and strengthen the region and each team by requiring stronger participation and communication within the region. Input for the new bylaws was solicited during the year from all of the regional teams during several drafts, legal counsel was obtained from two lawyers and the final draft, submitted in five amendments, was presented in September 2010 to the 18 Rocky Mountain Region teams. A copy was also sent to the national MRA officers. Ninety days later at the winter region meeting in December, with all 18 region team represented, a vote was taken to approve these new bylaws.

Highlights of our bylaw changes:

1. The region chair and vice chair will serve alternating two year terms.
2. It is outlined that all region teams are expected to be represented at all semi-annual MRA membership meetings, and to this end, the region chairperson or designee is appointed as an alternate delegate to cast a vote for any team that does not provide a representative or proxy. The alternate delegate must follow any voting direction given by the team.
3. The definition of a team "in good standing" is expanded to include the following:
 - Must provide the region secretary/treasurer with a current team roster and contact information for their board of directors.
 - Must participate in intra-region communications by enrolling a minimum of three active members including at least one current board member on the region's email list server.
 - Must provide annual mission statistics, using the MRA form, to the MRA and the region for the previous year.
 - Must make timely payment of MRA dues.

The majority of the newly proposed bylaws were passed by 16 of the 18 regional teams. Two bylaw paragraphs that were voted on separately received the necessary 2/3 vote needed to be incorporated into the bylaws. These two paragraphs dealt with the participation on the regional list server and the authorization of the region chair to vote as the alternate delegate at national meetings. The committee and region board were satisfied with the results from this vote - a unanimous vote on something as broad as organizational bylaws by a group of mountain rescue units would be remarkable!

Our new bylaws ran into a snag, however, at the national MRA Winter Business Meeting this January. According to the national bylaws, regions are required to adopt bylaws, but they must be approved by the national board of directors. The national MRA board of directors consists of one voting delegate from each of the



Evaluators observe a winter evacuation scenario during Grand County SAR's 2010 exercise. Photo by Greg Foley.

63 regular member teams.

Prior to the proposed bylaws being submitted in September to the region, the Bylaw Committee requested that the national organization have an attorney review the document so that any conflicts could be resolved. This request was never fulfilled due to the fact that the MRA does not have a legal advisor. In order to get legal advice on this matter, the committee contacted the current legal advisor for the Colorado Search and Rescue Board who rendered the opinion that the proposed bylaws did not conflict with the national bylaws.

In advance of the winter business meeting vote, the newly adopted region bylaws were presented by region chair, Troy Nelson, to the national board of directors. In addition, opinions from two attorneys asserting that the region bylaws conform to the national bylaws without any conflict were also provided. Despite being adopted by 2/3 vote of the Rocky Mountain Region teams, the national board of directors voted not to approve the bylaws.

One has to ask, why would the membership of the MRA not accept a document that had the mandated 2/3 support of the region teams? A document that was written specifically to conform to the national bylaws? A bylaw document that provided the Rocky Mountain region with the rules to govern and accredit and function as a cooperative of progressive mountain rescue teams, each striving to provide the best search and rescue service possible? Why would the national organization want to prevent the Rocky Mountain Region from moving forward on a path of their choosing that fulfills the purposes of the region and the MRA?

The Rocky Mountain Regional board and member teams are committed to maintaining the integrity of our A/R process through our regional policies. In order to do that we need updated self-governing bylaws that define our teams as a region within the MRA. We'll be looking for the support of the national membership when we bring this item up for vote at the spring conference. It is important for our bottom line – the subjects we serve every time the pager goes off.

Refusal Cases Help Our Cause

Howard Paul continues the "no charge" crusade by collecting cases where subjects refused help

Climbers attempt self-rescue after dangerous accident--Boulder County, Colorado

Not long after the unprecedented media coverage of a search for missing skiers near Aspen, Colorado, a climber accidentally rappelled off the end of his rope and fractured his pelvis. Fearing the cost of a rescue as recently grossly mis-portrayed in the media, he and his partner did not call for help and tried to self-evacuate, resulting in additional injuries. Eventually the climbing partner went for help. Rescuers were exposed to added hazard and the difficulty of having to perform the rescue in the middle of the night.

Climber hobbles 3,000' down mountain without rescue--Whatcom County, Washington

A climber from Canada descending Mt Baker had an accident at 9500 feet, fracturing her ankle. Two nearby climbing physicians pronounced it likely fractured. When she asked them about a charge for rescues in the US, they told her it could be perhaps \$10,000. She decided she couldn't afford to be rescued. She took some pain medication, tightened up her plastic boot and slowly hobbled down the mountain. Alerted by another climber with a cell phone, members of Bellingham Mountain Rescue met her at the 6500 foot level. When told that the rescue team doesn't charge for rescues she collapsed -- admitting to considerable pain. The US Navy used one of its rescue helicopters in this real emergency to train its crew to rescue marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen awaiting rescue in mountains anywhere they operate.

Man miles from shore refuses rescue from lake--Utah County, Utah

A man and a woman were stranded in the water at night two to three miles from shore in Utah Lake. Either their boat sank or the watercraft quit. We found them at around 2300, and as we pulled along the woman and prepared to help her into the boat, the man, twenty feet away, shouted "DON'T TOUCH HER!" It wasn't until he was assured that we didn't charge for rescue that he allowed us to give them a lift. Both were incoherent; hypothermia would have set in within hours and they likely would not have survived the night.

Victim says "I can't afford help"--Summit County, Colorado

A climber on the south side of Quandary Peak (14,270') got stuck. She called 9-1-1 and the on-call SAR team coordinator made contact with her by cell phone. She repeatedly refused assistance and said she just "wanted to be talked out of this area." This particular area of Quandary is quite dangerous and it was after dark when she called. After going back and forth with her for some time, the SAR coordinator finally asked why she didn't want help and her answer was, "I can't afford it." Once he explained to her that there

would be no charge she instantly changed her tune and SAR went in and assisted her out.

Snowmobiler first calls family, not 9-1-1, for help--Boise County, Idaho

A stranded snowmobiler called his wife for help. She then called the SAR team. When the wife told her husband that she was talking to SAR, he told her to hang up. This was after recent media coverage of the local ski area charging for "out of area" rescues. After assurances that the SAR team does not charge, they finally asked for help. The marine/backcountry deputy that reported this instance said he is regularly asked by the reporting party if there will be a bill for SAR.

Man becomes hysterical over perceived cost of rescue--Los Angeles County, California

A rescue of a 20-ish man involved a technical rescue of 150'-180' to raise him up to a dam access road. The person was "borderline hysterical" because a county FD helicopter was present and he was afraid of being liable to pay for it. It was not until the rescuer with the person convinced him that there would be NO costs that it was safe to work with the victim on a 40°-70° slope.

Lost runner hides from SAR--Tucson, Arizona

A gentleman went for an evening run with his two dogs in the desert near his house. He had minimal clothing and took only a water bottle. He became lost and hunkered down with the dogs. One of the dogs ran off and was found by searchers, which led them back to the subject, who was now moving -- to avoid searchers. The man said he heard searchers during the night; however he was afraid he would be billed for the search, so he did not respond. The next morning he deliberately tried to avoid searchers while trying to sneak back to his house.

Overdue persons avoid SAR--Douglas County, Colorado

Two adult dirt bike riders were reported overdue after dark. A dirt bike passed a responding SAR team member on the highway, who turned around to follow the bike. The two pulled into the parking lot of a local establishment. Another SAR member was already there, briefing the proprietor. The rider was one of the two overdue persons. Somehow the two riders knew that SAR was en route; I'm guessing that when the riders got to a place with cell phone coverage, one of them called home and was told SAR had been notified. This rider rode back on a non-motorcycle trail in an effort to avoid SAR. He said that he was worried that he would be billed.

Missing woman tells SAR she is not the missing party--Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon

This search occurred right after Oregon passed a law allowing subjects of SAR missions to be billed. "Our assignment was to check beside the trail to the lake. On the way, we heard a radio transmission that a searcher thought he had found Linda. We

thought it was over, but a bit later he reported that the woman he saw had never heard of Linda. The search continued and we prepared to head up the trail toward our search area. Before we got on the trail we were asked to hold our position, so we spent about half an hour talking and waiting for something to happen. Then we found out why we were put on hold. A dog handler had a positive find. He had spotted Linda who was trying to hide, then had to chase her down to talk to her. It seems that the first woman was indeed Linda but had denied it when asked. Only later was the dog handler able to get her to admit that we had found our quarry."

Women searches for husband by herself for hours, dangerous weather arrives--Mt. Evans Wilderness, Colorado

A newly married wife dropped off her new husband for some high altitude hiking and he failed to return to be picked up. She said that on their way to the mountains, they had joked about which of their bank accounts would pay for "the \$10,000 rescue" if anything happened to him. Instead of calling for help, she drove the road for three or four hours looking for him, worried about the bill she anticipated. She finally called, but the search began late at night and by then the peak was enveloped in clouds. Searchers had visibility of a just a few feet and risked walking off the top of 600 foot cliffs.

Injured paraglider spends hours sliding down mountain to avoid SAR charges--Weber County, Utah

A paraglider was trying to land at his home but was caught in a downdraft that drove him into the mountainside. He sustained significant injuries that could become permanent spinal disabilities before reaching a hospital. He was afraid of being charged for SAR and had some friends come up to help him slide down (he was unable to stand). Repeated calls to his cell phone were required before he was willing to believe that SAR would not bill him and that he should allow SAR to come to his assistance. He was approximately 1000 feet above the nearest houses and two miles back, yet he was going to attempt to slide down scree slopes and work his way through thick oak brush in an attempt to avoid a SAR bill. In the process a rescue that could have been done in the daylight was not started until just after sunset, adding significant challenge and risk to the rescuers.

Afraid of a bill, family holds back information about missing father--Mt. Evans Wilderness, Colorado

During the early hours of a search for a high-altitude hiker, a SAR mission leader interviewed family members, by telephone, to gather information used to develop the search plan (a standard "subject profile"). During a telephone call back from the missing man's wife, he overheard her teenage son caution his mother to "not tell them about the other time Dad had to be assisted by SAR" because he thought "SAR would categorize his father as 'irresponsible' and he would be billed for the search." Such information is valuable, because it tells the search planners what actions the missing person had taken in a previous emergency. The man was eventually found deceased, having suffered a fatal fall.

Injured man's companion feigns ignorance because of fear of bill--Douglas County, Colorado

SAR was dispatched to a report of an injured bicyclist "somewhere" on the Indian Creek Trail system. A SAR member was sent to a campground to monitor its three trailheads for the trail system. A bicyclist was soon dropped off at the campground and the SAR member, in a uniform shirt and with SAR insignia on his truck, asked the man if he had been bicycling on the trails, explaining that SAR was searching for an injured biker. This person said that yes, he had been with the injured party and helped evacuate him to a house. SAR then tried to get as much info as possible, including the address and where the patient was taken; SAR command said over the radio something to the effect that the "fire department, Air Life and rangers are also out searching." The SAR trail monitor radioed back that the bicyclist, who heard the radio message, said all he knew was that he helped take an unknown, injured rider to a house with an unknown address nearby. From there an unknown Good Samaritan offered to take the injured rider to an unknown hospital. When SAR team ATVs, using red and blue strobes, arrived the bicyclist stated "I'm not the one who called 911, so I don't want to be charged or get a bill for having search and rescue and everyone else respond." SAR again explained no one would be charged or receive a bill from them. It turned out the bicyclist was actually the injured rider's partner. He eventually supplied the name of the injured rider, the name, address and phone numbers of the person -- whom they did know -- who took him to the hospital and the name of the hospital.

The SAR community needs to learn of additional examples, to illustrate situations in which subjects' or RPs' decision-making in an emergency was compromised by the fear of being unable to afford emergency SAR help. Please contact Howard Paul with any examples of which you have first-hand knowledge, at hmpaul@ecentral.com.



Christmas on Kilimanjaro

By Doug Pierson

About three months ago, my girlfriend Karin and I were talking about what we could do to take advantage of a rare window of opportunity around Christmas/New Year's when we could slip away on the next big adventure. At some point the South Pacific and other far-off, fair-winded locations were discussed--and why not? Who wouldn't want to be sitting on a Bora Bora beach at New Year's, sipping a Pina Colada? But the one destination that seemed most intriguing and kept popping back into our conversation involved a summit of Kilimanjaro via the Machame/ Western Breach Route. And so it was.

As many MRA members travel to the Kilimanjaro area to climb, typically via one of the five main routes, one opportunity of our visit was to establish ties with some of the more established groups and leadership in Tanzania. Any general search of a Kilimanjaro climb results in a confusing array of hundreds of tour operators and price tags. If we at MRA could maintain some sort of recommended road map for our members on a 'how to' of Kilimanjaro, it makes the mountain all that much closer and grows ties in an area that many of us travel to. Tanzanian law requires compulsory guide/porter support for any trekkers looking to climb Kilimanjaro, and our trip was no different. We researched local agencies and landed with the Marangu Hotel, which seemed to stand out above the others in what we were looking for in an operator. Guiding expeditions on Kilimanjaro since 1932, they have amassed a stellar reputation as a licensed operator, have strong ties with KINAPA (Kilimanjaro National Park Authority) and are one of six local agencies identified as a recommended supporter of KPAP (Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Program). KPAP was established in 2003 and focuses on improving working conditions for porters on Kilimanjaro through an equipment lending program, educational classes and establishment of pay standards. Before departing Seattle, the Marangu hotel director Desmond Brice-Bennett and I communicated regularly to select the route and discuss equipment, and also talked a bit about the MRA and what rescue equipment could better be used on the mountain by their climb teams.

We flew out on Christmas day, with the overly ambitious goal not just to climb the mountain but then to descend, traverse four miles across the saddle and scout Mawenzi-- at 16,893' the third highest peak on the African continent and only climbed once or twice annually. But while the Kilimanjaro climb was the primary

objective of the trip, we also took advantage of our time to conduct MRA International Committee outreach with local entities that are influential in local climb administration as well as mountain rescue policies and procedures in use on Kilimanjaro.

Standing on twelve acres of coffee plantation land perfectly situated with sweeping views of Kilimanjaro and Mawenzi, Marangu Hotel's main building used to be a farmhouse that dates to the 1900s and maintains all the old world charm and character you would expect of a colonial villa. From here, Desmond and his team watch over a stable of guides and porters who work solely for Marangu Hotel and this allegiance works both ways. The hotel takes the time to introduce climbers to their team before departing for the mountain (the chaos on the mountain makes this invaluable so you can tell



Photo by Doug Pierson.

who's who when on the trail and in camp) and also provides clear, concise guidance to climbers on guide/porter fees and tipping policies--thereby protecting their team, supporting KPAP and ensuring quality service. We walk through the hotel's briefing room, loaded with route and topographical maps, stopping briefly to look at signed posters and photographs by well-known movie producers, authors and climbers who have worked with the Marangu Hotel over the years.

Before departing on the climb, Desmond and I talked through hotel/park relationships and their well-established ties to KINAPA and mountain rescue practices and procedures. Desmond had coordinated in advance with park administrators to lock on the Western Breach Route and also the Mawenzi traverse for our team, and mentioned that outside coordination with KINAPA can sometimes be difficult if not done via a well-known intermediary.

When discussing mountain rescue and supporting techniques at the park, it became apparent that Marangu Hotel has been in the thick of it as well. Several years ago, Marangu Hotel and the now defunct Kibo Hotel were among the first groups to begin serious discussions surrounding mountain rescue practices at the park. The collective group of guides, operators and park authorities worked with KINAPA to develop formalized procedures that are now accepted by all in the event of an emergency. Some of these are effective, and some are stop-gap measures that can use improvement as almost all rescues on Kilimanjaro National Park are conducted by guides with loose park authority. This means that successful egress of stricken climbers off Kilimanjaro involves primarily the climbing team and guide service of the affected individual. KINAPA is made aware of the problem and will provide support, arrange ambulances once the subject is within reach of one of two service roads, or coordinate helicopter support, but high altitude rescue is routinely handled by the subject's team.

Teams do what they can with the support they can muster, collectively coming together for rescues when they occur. I learn from talking to our guide and others on the mountain that rescues are mostly altitude-related. The one-time \$20 rescue fee that every climber pays in their climb permit is primarily used for ambulances and administrative support, and not much beyond that. Two helicopter pads are maintained at Horombo Hut (Marangu Route) and Shira Cave Camp (Machame, Lemosho and Shira Routes), and when requested via a climb team, KINAPA will coordinate with a helo company in Moshi or as far away as Dar es Salaam or Nairobi. The evacuated client pays for this service entirely, and as such helicopters are not frequently requested.



Photo by Doug Pierson.

To egress stricken climbers by foot, stainless steel rescue litters/wheels similar to those used by MRA teams are staged at strategic locations along the main climbing routes: Kibo Hut, Horombo Hut, and at the top of an access road adjacent to Mandara Hut. Although having equipment at some locations positions it to support the two most traveled routes, having it in places like the head of the access road means use of these assets can be sporadic or time intensive depending on where the rescue occurs. Furthermore, having equipment lower on the mountain and not in places climbers are most likely to be stricken with HAPE means that response and reaction time are slowed considerably.

In order to adjust to this, leading teams like Marangu Hotel have purchased support equipment to aid their teams. Gamow Bags, promoted by KINAPA, are making a showing on the mountain. At \$2000+ per unit they are expensive and labor intensive once an affected person is placed inside the bag, requiring several people to aid in transport and continually pump air into the bag once inflated. Additional porter support is needed to haul the 15-pound unit, pump and backpack on the climb. As a result, Willie Benegas and I began talking with Desmond about oxygen systems in use on Himalaya and South America climbs. There, the "best" method involves a combination of Diamox, oxygen, and a drop in altitude. After discussion on type and use, Marangu Hotel is now looking at an Ambu Economy Regulator and medical grade oxygen cylinder (green bottle) with universal threads to replace Gamow bags as its altitude sickness solution. Cheap at \$180 and fairly lightweight at five pounds, the cylinder has universal threads and can be refilled

anywhere. The hotel is also exploring the potential to have a cache of bottles at various stages along the route and then just carry a mask and small dose of Diamox.

Other efforts are underway as well. The hotel administration, key players on other teams and some lead guides are pushing for a more established and visible Kilimanjaro mountain rescue team and have been in talks with the park to see if this is possible. Designated and supported by the park, this would require both Tanzanian government and KINAPA support as well as designated leadership and a governing body to enforce team policies, procedures and guidelines. Discussion has centered around how to identify minimum team entry requirements, an understanding of park approval restrictions and also supporting guidance/ outreach from other established entities such as the MRA. A Kilimanjaro mountain rescue team concept was well received and follow-on discussions are planned once pertinent leadership and KINAPA endorsement matters are discussed.

Our summit push worked out wonderfully. At roughly 10:00 am on New Year's Day we reached the crater rim and about an hour later, Uhuru Peak. Only twice on a day that involved eighteen hours of climbing, descending and moving across the saddle did Karin look at me and say, "You had to bring up Bora Bora." But we made it and have great stories and new friends as a result. Both the climb and the MRA outreach efforts were successful.

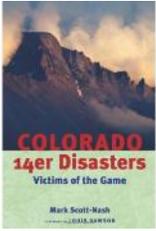
Kilimanjaro Summit Panorama:

<http://photosynth.net/view.aspx?cid=76cd8f57-17fa-4b6a-aed0-ed90c8809fd5>

Doug Pierson joined Seattle Mountain Rescue in 2007, and was appointed as the MRA International Relations Chair in 2010. His day job takes him internationally on a regular basis, and while in Seattle he works extensively on outdoor climb projects with Camp Patriot, a non-profit that supports combat wounded veterans. He routinely guides on Rainier in the summer months and has climbed three of the seven summits.



Photo by Doug Pierson.



Book Review: Colorado 14er Disasters

By Jules Harrell

Many of us have lost good friends to the mountains, the rivers, the cliffs. As years go by more good folks leave our planet while “doing what they love.” Colorado 14er Disasters, Victims of the Game by Mark Scott-Nash analyzes, in great detail, three attempts to climb and survive accidents in the vast wilderness of Colorado’s most famous over-14,000 foot high peaks. What makes this book particularly enthralling is that the author dares to venture into the sacred ground of discussing what the dead did wrong and why the rescue attempts failed. Unlike other rescue books, Scott-Nash doesn’t try to soften the blow to protect their memory. In “Flirting with Disaster,” he introduces TalusMonkey, a climber famous for traveling fast and never backing down from a climb. The author explains that it was most likely TalusMonkey’s overwhelming desire to sleep for the first time with his new girlfriend atop the peak that led to his ultimate demise.

TalusMonkey was an experienced mountaineer who should have known better when he traveled too light and tried to glissade with a ski pole. It’s a miracle his inexperienced partner managed to survive in the mountains on her own and go for help. The rescue mission itself was also bungled. “We busted our asses to get this guy and he basically died on us,” said one rescuer. “Nobody was in charge. There was a lack of overall mission coordination. No one knew who was doing what, where and when.”

Then there is the story of the solo climber who “wanted a taste of how bad things could get,” and spent several nights out in -60 degree windchill. Because of his desire for a personal challenge, he put many rescuers in the path of an avalanche. “Had the rescue been ten minutes later, Dylan and his rescuers would have been buried,” stated an irate rescuer. Dylan was an “unthinking neophyte [who] endangered not only himself but the dedicated volunteer mountain rescue team members...”

Finally, Scott-Nash details the sad story of two couples who didn’t really know each other well. They made the mistake of exchanging partners for a mountain climb since neither of their spouses were interested in 14ers. In this story, “Michelle is Missing,” Scott-Nash demonstrates how misplaced trust in a more experienced partner can lead to disaster. Eric, the leader, made a series of mistakes which would have normally caused a climber to turn around. These mistakes including taking the wrong trail, forgetting food and a water filter, not having a map and compass, and a strong desire for the summit. Due to this strong desire, Eric made the absolute worst mistake of all, separating from his inexperienced partner. This led to the loss of Michelle. Her body has yet to be found, much to the dismay of her husband.

In this unflinching look at what can and does go wrong in mountaineering, Scott-Nash casts an unblinking eye at the mistakes humans make. He also takes a stab at figuring out why they make them. Scott-Nash himself is a SAR professional who has participated in over 100 search and rescue missions. His book also includes vignettes of other climbing disasters throughout history, including those that happened in a similar fashion in the same areas. Colorado 14er Disasters is a fascinating read and should be on every rescuer’s short list.



About the reviewer:

Jules Harrell is a 50 year old ski patroller for both Jiminy Peak and Magic Mountain, a search and rescue volunteer, an animal tracker, and a former EMT/firefighter with the Bolinas Fire Department in Marin County, California. She has written three books: *A Woman's Guide to Bikes and Biking* (Bicycle Books, 1999), *A Woman's Bike Book* (Owl Publications, 2010), and *Tripping with Gabrielle* (to be released by Owl Publications, 2010). Please see her blog at: www.photonicgirl.blogspot.com and contact her at photonicgirl@gmail.com for more about life on the Iced Coast.

An Insider’s Perspective from a Colorado Mission Coordinator

Review by Dan Burnett

Colorado 14er Disasters is a greatly entertaining and well-written book, written for an audience of people aspiring to climb their first or a series of high Colorado peaks. From the perspective of a dedicated mountain search and rescue mission coordinator, it is frustrating but certainly valuable to revisit the unfortunate decisions made by a rescue subject.

The book consists of well-told stories with interconnections that push the reader to look for the nuances of a climber’s life and their often deathly decision processes. Maybe I was drawn in by the fact that my team (Summit County Rescue Group) ran the Mount Quandary mission and was also involved in the Holy Cross search in Eagle County, amounting to two of the three primary contemporary case studies in the book. Our team responds to between six and twelve Quandary Peak missions a year; this mission in particular was truly an indicator of mountain rescue excellence in two ways:

- 1) A window of barely acceptable weather dictated that the helicopter only had access to the area for less than one hour.
- 2) There was wisdom in pulling our team out of the avalanche terrain, only to have the very cold individual decide to move and subsequently fall several hundred feet down to the rescuers. It was inspiring when the entire slope slid within minutes of dragging him to a safe area.

I laughed hard when the author quoted Dylan, “I had a plan and was following it. If I hadn’t seen the helicopter I would not have stopped. I would have climbed back up that chute and gone a different way.” The rescuers’ version of the story and that of the lost, cold “cliffed-out” individual are very different. For Dylan to state that the searchers who looked all night and took substantial risk, including the aircrew, were to blame for his situation, is almost comical. By the end of the case study, the reader is convinced of the flakiness of this climber.

This is not a book about the intricacies of mountain search and rescue, but it is a book that anyone interested in search and rescue should read. I wish Mark could have mentioned how great the Vail Mountain Rescue team really is. We provided mutual aid to their county on a call similar to the “Michelle is Missing” mission this fall, with a similar tragic outcome of not finding the lost hiker/climber. VMRG is a spectacular team, having managed epic searches. When it comes to running big-time wilderness operations with helicopters, dogs, multi-agencies and hundreds of super valuable searchers, Vail Mountain Rescue is a great organization.

Dan Burnett is a 31-year veteran of the Summit County Rescue Group in Colorado. He has served as a mission coordinator for 25 of those years.



2011 Spring Conference: Eagle County, Colorado

The year's Spring Conference will be held in Eagle County, Colorado, on June 16 – 19.

Conference schedule:

Wednesday, June 15, Thursday, June 16: Pre-conference "Unified Command Workshop" - Dan Hourihan, instructor

Pre-conference hikes - Holy Cross summit (two groups, traditional route, Halo Route)

Friday, June 17, Saturday, June 18: Six real time field exercises will run over two days with opportunities for overhead command and field operations. Simulated missions may include: whitewater, slot canyon highline, cave, paraglider, aircraft

Field gear required for participants.

Sunday, June 19 - National Meeting

Fact sheet for ICS

Unified Command workshop:

The ICS Unified Command workshop is required for all command staff participants on a recent mission where Unified was used.

1. Lodging: Eagle lodge and Suites, Eagle CO, www.eaglelodgcolorado.com. Please call the hotel directly to ensure proper room size and cost. There is camping available close by, RV park seven miles away.

2. If planning on being a field troop bring all gear: boots, harness, rack, gloves helmet, etc. List to follow registration received.
3. Team gear needed: Rope rescue for two different scenes. Swift water systems gear including boat for six. Bring GPS, DLPIRS, etc. and radios that function on 155.160 or CO 800 MAC System.
4. Mapping program: We want to see how you do it. We are here to learn your methods; ours is not the only way.
5. Dan Hourihan and guests will be conducting the Unified workshop, and he will post required reading and experience necessary.
6. Law enforcement personnel are welcome and encouraged to attend. A special workshop rate will be offered.

Fact sheet for main conference:

1. Lodging: Eagle Lodge and Suites, Eagle CO www.eaglelodgcolorado.com. Please call the hotel direct to ensure proper room size and cost. There is camping available close by, RV park seven miles away.
2. Registration: Wednesday, the 15th at 1000 in lobby of hotel. Thursday and Friday each morning beginning at 0800, lobby. Saturday 0800 at 4 Eagle Ranch. You must register and pay before being signed in on 211.
3. Cost: MRA MEMBER, before May 1st 2011 \$149.00 Non-member, before May 1st, \$189.00 After May 1st all rates go to \$199.00, no exceptions.
4. Meals provided at Eagle Lodge for guests, small charge for non-guests. Lunch: there is a City Market grocery store right across the highway, we suggest you bring your own lunch as you will be in the field Friday and Saturday.
5. Friday night there is a barn dance with BBQ, bull riding, and BOOZE. First two drinks are included, get your tickets. Cost is \$30.00 per person, kids under 15, \$10.00.
6. Saturday night: a catered dinner and awards ceremony, the silent auction will also be held then. Place to be announced. Price yet to be determined.
7. Sunday Spring Business Meeting: place to be determined by number of delegates attending. Coffee and beverages available. Meeting adjourned by 1500.

For more information:

<http://www.mra.org/drupal2/sites/default/files/documents/meetings/MRA%20June2011.pdf>

Highlights From the 2011 Winter Business Meeting



Approximately 50 MRA team members gathered in Salt Lake City on January 8th and 9th for the MRA Winter Meeting. Saturday was spent revisiting the Association's strategic plan. The following topics were voted the highest priority topics for MRA:

- ◆ Accreditation/Reaccreditation
- ◆ Marketing
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Fundraising
- ◆ Safety/Risk Management
- ◆ National Representation

Of these six topics, four (marketing, education, fundraising and safety/risk management) were selected for further discussion and recommendations through breakout/focus groups. Each breakout session was given the task to bring back to the entire group both a list of general goals and objectives as well as a list of specific tasks and a work plan as to how those tasks would be completed. A number of exciting new initiatives as well as reinforcing the importance of ongoing projects resulted from these discussions, including:

- ◆ Fundraising presented the strategy to do lots of grant writing,

or rather to hire professional grant writers to get the money. The committee will vet requests and put out bids.

- ◆ Safety proposed writing up some MRA philosophy about member safety, as opposed to preventative SAR stuff for the public that we've focused on in the past.
- ◆ Education talked about revamping training materials to get them up to current standards with interactive video. The committee will build a wiki so they can start compiling an exhaustive list of all the training they want to build, then detail each item and prepare training materials and video scripts. Grant money will be available for producing videos.
- ◆ Marketing is asking to pay a professional firm to design the whole program - how to present the team to other organizations, fund raisers, etc. Past president Monty Bell gave an impassioned speech about how we've been talking about the exact same things for 15 years but not getting as much done as we might, due to the fact that we rely on volunteers.

On Sunday at the business meeting a number of action items were taken, including:

- ◆ Approving a change in regional boundaries between the California & Intermountain Region
- ◆ Accepting Douglas County (NV) as a new MRA member.
- ◆ Defeating the motion to approve new bylaws for the Rocky Mountain Region (see cover story).
- ◆ Approval of the 2011 budget after amending the proposed budget to add \$500 to "publications" for graphic design services for the Meridian, \$4,000 to "fund raising" with the intent to contract out professional grant writing services to generate funding for a variety of projects, \$20,000 to "marketing" to develop a marketing plan and other initiatives, and \$5,000 to "meetings" to provide assistance if needed for the spring 2011 meeting since there is no formal host team for this year's annual meeting.

Draft minutes of the meeting are available for viewing on the 'Members Only' page of the MRA website.

2011 IKAR MEETING REPORT

By Fran Sharp

The MRA is proud to be the lead agency, in close cooperation with NASAR, to represent the United States at the International Commission on Alpine Rescue. For those of you who may not be familiar with IKAR, their history parallels the MRA's going back to 1948 and their work has affected the improvement of rescue operations everywhere in the world. The IKAR has 31 member countries who meet regularly and whose activities are closely followed by the climbing and manufacturing communities in Europe and other countries.

The IKAR permits one voting delegate from each country on each of the four committees, **Terrestrial, Avalanche, Medical and Aviation**. Our delegates are expected to be at the top of their field and to bring to the conference their expertise as well as an open mind for new techniques. The purpose of the IKAR Conference is to provide an international forum to exchange expertise and lessons learned among member countries and organizations on mountain rescue.

This year's conference in Stary Smocovec, Slovakia was attended by Dale Atkins, Vice President Avalanche Committee; Ken Phillips, Aviation Committee; Ken Zafren, Vice President Medical Committee and Rocky Henderson, Terrestrial Committee. Beyond just attending, our representatives offered excellent presentations on new techniques and pertinent information for our European partners. They also provided for our MRA members' reports to be filled with the latest improvements on techniques, new ideas and solutions to common SAR issues. I encourage the instructors, as

well as the members, of my own team to review these reports to update their curriculum. We always gain new ideas for our own procedures. There is also a link to the IKAR video, an excellent visual companion to the reports.

Many thanks go to our corporate partners in the support of IKAR:

CMC Rescue: www.cmcrescue.com

The Goodrich Corporation: www.goodrich.com

Recco Rescue System: www.recco.com

Please visit the IKAR portion of the MRA website for the reports: <http://mra.org/drupal2/content/ikar-reports>

Fran Sharp

IKAR Committee Chair

Tacoma Mountain Rescue

MRA Past President 2004-2006

Cave rescue demonstration at the IKAR conference. Photo by Ken Zafren.





The total emergency response community in the United States is immense: federal, state, and local fire and EMS, law enforcement and emergency management agencies number in the thousands and trained individual responders number in the hundreds of thousands.

NASAR believes that a comprehensive emergency response conference is needed to serve this community. In accomplishing this goal, NASAR has developed a training forum which, we believe, cuts across the entire spectrum of contemporary emergency response activity, is innovative in its approach and will be attractive to a broad audience for its educational value.

Join your Search and Rescue comrades at the 2011 National Search and Rescue Conference in Sparks, NV! The conference site, John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel and Casino, is located in the majestic Sierra Nevada Mountains and the breathtaking Reno-Sparks-Lake Tahoe area is an incredible vacation or business destination. From the arts and the cultural splendor, to gaming and fine dining, Reno and Sparks are rich in tradition and fresh entertainment.

Make sure to join your SAR comrades at the 2011 National Search and Rescue Conference for a Search and Rescue educational experience like no other!

**2011 National Search and Rescue Conference • June 2-4
John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel and Casino • Sparks, NV**

Presented by:



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Social Media for SAR

By Anna DeBattiste, former member of the Summit County Rescue Group

For those completely new to the concept, social media is defined by Wikipedia as “a category of sites that is based on user participation and user-generated content,” like Facebook, U-Tube or Twitter. What does this have to do with mountain rescue? The short answer is that it has to do with everything these days. Social media is rapidly becoming the way people communicate, and we can get on the bus or we can miss out.

There are a number of ways that emergency services organizations are using social media:

To put out breaking news to the news media. This has the advantage that a PIO can stand at a trailhead with a smart phone, putting out new information in real time. It can increase the efficiency of a PIO operation; rather than emailing press releases for each incident, media outlets are directed to a central site that acts as the “hub” for a social media program, such as an online newsroom, and journalists can choose newsworthy posts from there.

A concept that Dale Atkins has put forth is using smaller specialty social media sites to enlist the public’s help in finding missing subjects. The key is to identify the appropriate specialty sites; sites that are used by local recreationalists who might be in the area of the search.

To create forums for communities of “fans,” people who want to read about what we do on a regular basis, either to educate themselves on backcountry safety, or simply because they’re interested. These sites can be used to put out backcountry safety tips, or to raise awareness for the group and its rescue activities. In both cases, these communities of followers may become donors to the group, or may already be donors and be encouraged to continue to donate.

To show support for a rescue-related cause. For example, a group of MRA and NASAR members created a “no charge for rescue” fan page on Facebook last year.

For “just-for-fun” internal communication and photo sharing within a team or group of teams.

The Summit County Rescue Group experimented with all of these uses in 2009 and 2010. The “hub” of our social media program is our online newsroom (<http://blog.scrg.org/>), which is set up like a blog, although we are not yet allowing comments by the public. The “spokes” of the program are our Facebook fan page, a Twitter account, and in certain limited cases, a number of specialty recreational sites we belong to such as Teton Gravity Research, 14ers.com, or a local snowmobiling group on Facebook.

Entries can be posted on the newsroom site for just about everything: rescues, PSAR events, fundraising events, awards, and

team social events. Our local media contacts have been directed to subscribe to the newsroom so that *they*, rather than *us*, can determine what might be newsworthy. Whenever the newsroom is updated, we Tweet the link and post it on our Facebook page. After about a year, our Facebook fan page in particular has grown steadily and now has over 500 followers; we anticipate that our following will continue to grow, and will increasingly be composed of people whom we have rescued or who have been involved in a mission as RPs, witnesses, relatives of subjects, etc. In this way we hope to impact our donation levels. And of course, we’ve all invited our friends and families to follow the group on these sites.

In several cases so far, we have posted links from our newsroom on specialty sites in order to advertise to a small local niche that we have a search going into a second operational period and we’re looking for clues. In the first case, we posted a message on www.14ers.com that we were searching for a subject on Quandary Peak, a local 14,000 foot peak. In the second case, we posted on a local snowmobile club’s Facebook group that we were searching for a lost snowmobiler. Although these postings did not turn up any clues for us in either case, we believe this is a practice worth pursuing that may eventually be helpful. It doesn’t take much time once your group is registered on the appropriate sites. We have a list of appropriate sites, grouped by recreational or locational category, that our mission coordinators and PIO can refer to during a major search.

Lastly, we have a Facebook group that is visible and accessible only to members of our group. We use it to share photos and discuss mission information that might not be completely appropriate for the public. We’re still very careful about patient privacy and group image on these sites, just in case of accidental “leaks,” but we allow ourselves to be a little more casual on the site.

Here are some of the things we learned in the process of implementing the program:

- Change can be uncomfortable for people and organizations, and especially for some traditional media outlets who may be struggling to survive in the current economy. Selling the benefits of the new program to them initially may be tough, and there may be some resistance. Focus on the advantages for journalists, such as quick and easy access to information, and the ability for them to determine what they’re interested in without waiting for the team to put something out directly to them.
- You may find out that the media is interested in a lot more of your team’s activity than you think. Missions that we once wouldn’t have bothered reporting via a press release are now being picked up from our newsroom by the local newspaper on a regular basis.
- It’s important to have policies in place for internal team use and to communicate them thoroughly. Make sure team members understand the dangers of posts that may violate patient confidentiality or represent the team poorly to the public. We have a posting policy on our Facebook group, and have reviewed it in team meetings. We counsel our team members that no one is ever to engage in debate with the public over issues like judging the wisdom or experience of a rescue subject or whether they should be charged for “stupidity,” etc.

- Taking baby steps may be the smartest way to go. In our county, the Sheriff preferred that we start with one-way communication and monitor the program for a while; in other words, that we not allow public comments on any of our sites in the beginning. This was easy to do on our newsroom, but it was not technically possible to disallow comments on Facebook, and we did have one incident so far. We added several administrators to the Facebook page so that we could quickly catch and delete controversial comments.

Interested in learning more about social media for SAR? Here are some resources:

<http://piosocialmediatraining.com/> This site is aimed at emergency services PIOs who want to learn how to start a social media program. There's a "boot camp" you can sign up for to have daily lessons emailed to you.

<http://www.wildapricot.com/blogs/newsblog/archive/2009/05/12/social-media-for-non-profits-26-great-slideshare-presentations-you-can-use.aspx> This site has Slideshare presentations that make the case for using social media for non-profit fundraising. We used this resource to get statistics and other information for our initial program proposal.

<http://mashable.com/2009/09/18/facebook-newsroom/> Good article on how to use a Facebook fan page as a company newsroom

<http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies.php?f=0> A database of social media policies from all different types of organizations

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/No-Charge-for-Rescue/234269130733?ref=ts> The "No Charge for Rescue" Facebook page

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Summit-County-Rescue-Group/176963528517?ref=ts> Summit County Rescue Group's Facebook fan page

<http://www.scr.org/newsroom.aspx> Summit County Rescue Group's online newsroom

<http://twitter.com/SCrescuegroup> Summit County Rescue Group on Twitter

Mountains Don't Care, But We Do

An Early History of Mountain Rescue in the Pacific Northwest and the Founding of the Mountain Rescue Association

By Dee Molenaar

Dee Molenaar, author of *The Challenge of Rainier*, has written fascinating accounts of the legendary mountain rescues and recoveries in the Pacific Northwest. In telling these tales of triumph and tragedy, he has also traced the formation and evolution of the mountain rescue groups that carried out these missions.

"The old master has done it again, pulling from personal experience and scholarly research, a vital and vibrant history of mountain rescue in the Pacific Northwest to celebrate the Mountain Rescue Association's 50th anniversary."

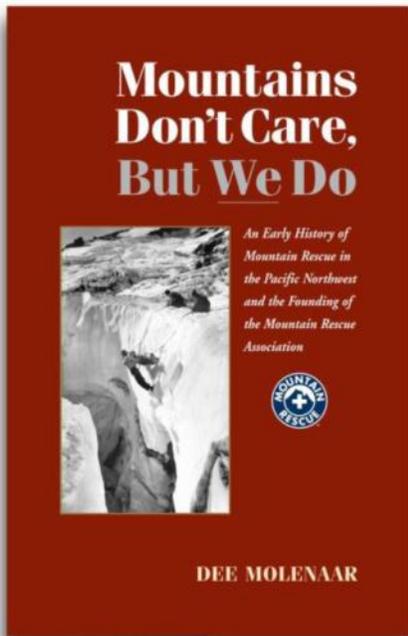
Tom Hornbein

"Mountains Don't Care, But We Do, by Dee Molenaar, is a must read for those who enjoy high adventure and want to know the history of the Mountain Rescue Association."

Jim Whittaker

"Mountains Don't Care, But We Do, is a modest way of saying 'thank you' to the hundreds of mountain rescue volunteers who have come before us. We hope that they would be as proud of today's groups as we are of them."

Charley Shimanski, President
Mountain Rescue Association



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