

Winter Business Meeting Summary

- A History of the Crag Rat Banquet-
- 2015 MRA Conference in Estes Park-
- Accidents in North American Mountaineering* Update-





MOUNTAIN
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Winter 2015

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MRA Winter Meeting Report

By Dave Clarke, MRA President

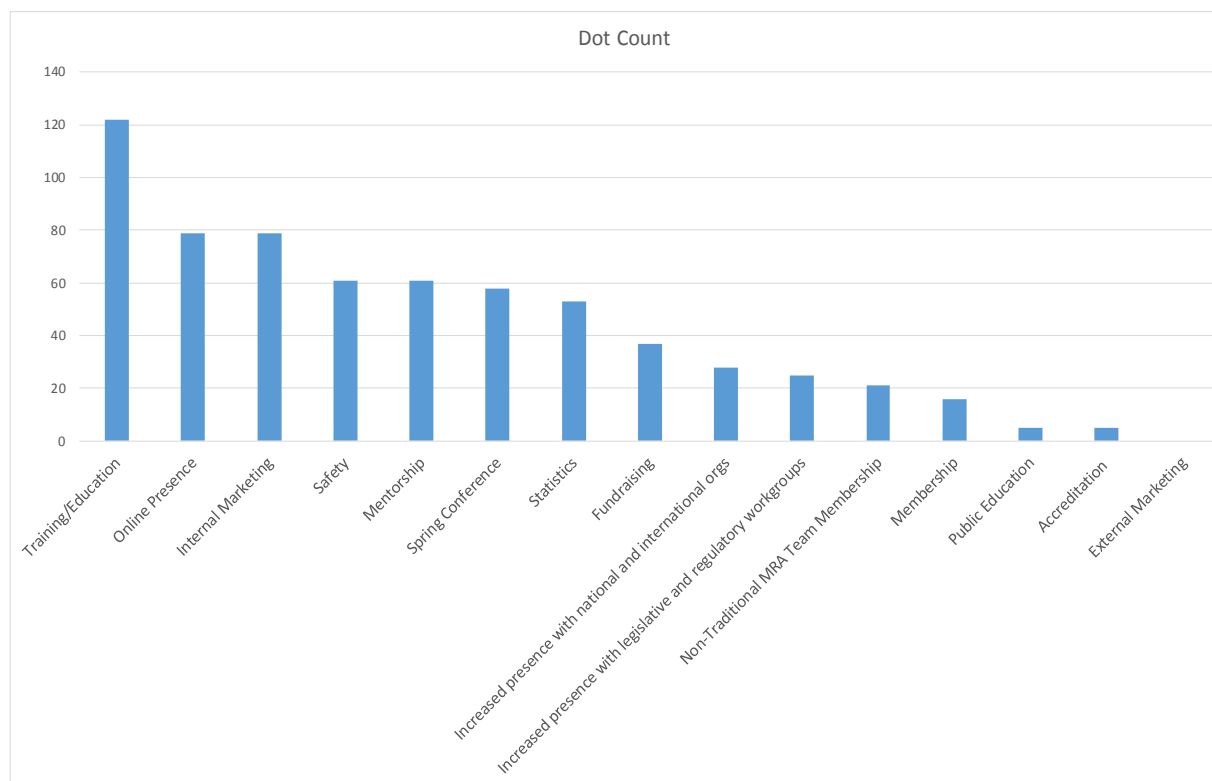
It's highly unlikely that anyone joins a mountain rescue team because they like going to meetings. Most of us would rather be out in the hills than in a meeting room. However part of running an effective team is getting people together to exchange ideas, assign work and keep members updated. It's just part of doing business.

This year's MRA Winter meeting was held Feb 7 & 8 in Salt Lake City. This is a brief report of the proceedings and major accomplishments hastily written to meet the deadline for this issue of the Meridian. For more detailed information look for the meeting minutes to be posted in the member's only section of our website, Home - Mountain Rescue Association, soon.

The MRA holds two business meetings each year, the February Winter meeting and the Spring meeting which is held on Sunday following our June conference. In recent years, the Winter meeting has been held in Salt Lake City but the Spring meeting moves around the Country to wherever a local team volunteers to host the conference. The format for the winter meeting is a Saturday work session followed by the official business meeting on Sunday where any voting and budget decisions are made. Several attendees arrive early and enjoy a day of skiing. This year we had an additional "extra curricular" treat. Petzl's US headquarters just moved into a fantastic brand new building a short walk from our hotel. Petzl has been a long time supporter of the MRA and just signed on as a bronze level sponsor. They invited us to tour their LEED platinum facility and it is incredible. Petzl designed it to be a training and testing center, as well as a warehouse and shipping operation. In the heart of the building is a 55' climbing wall, a drop tower and a slow pull machine. By the end of the tour we all wanted to apply for a job to work there.

This year's Saturday session included the following major topics: ICAR delegate policy; brainstorming and prioritizing our strategic initiatives; updates on our key programs like statistics reporting, fundraising and education.

The strategic initiative work was especially important because it essentially created our "to do" list for the next five years. The brainstorming session identified 16 initiatives. After much discussion to flesh them out, we ended the day by prioritizing them. Each of the 50 attendees got 15 sticker "dots" and each initiative had a flip chart page on the wall. Attendees then placed five dots on their highest priority choice, four dots on their second choice, and so on. At the end of the session we tallied the total number of dots on each page to get the priority ranking. The table, below, shows the initiatives and their priority ranking.



Because there was sharp drop off after the seventh item we dedicated ourselves to focusing our efforts on the top seven items which are our new "to do" list for the next five years. You'll be hearing more about how we're going to tackle these tasks, so stay tuned.

On Sunday the business meeting got off to an inspirational start with the presentation of a gold plated MRA belt buckle to Rod Knopp for 50 years of service to Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit. We voted on several changes to our ICAR delegate policy and discussed and resolved several budget issues. One new budget item was approved and I'm happy to report that each MRA region will receive \$1,000 to be used

as a scholarship to send members to our 2015 spring conference in Estes Park, CO. The stipulation is that the recipients have to be members who have never attended an MRA conference. The intent is to show new members what the MRA has to offer. Contact your region chair for details.

We adjourned shortly after noon as most attendees had to catch a flight home. The next time you see your team's or region's delegates to the MRA, be sure to thank them. These meetings are a lot of work and certainly aren't the glamorous part of mountain rescue but they are necessary to keep our organization functioning.

The History of the Crag Rat Banquet



Photo courtesy of the Hood River Crag Rats.

Wilson Applegren's speech delivered on Jan. 2004

It was on August 3, 1926 that Andy Anderson, the manager of Tum-a-Lum Lumber, invited around twenty young men that were residents of Hood River County to his home for the purpose of exploring the idea of establishing an organization to promote mountaineering and skiing. Sports that, at that time, were just getting going here in the Hood River Valley. At that meeting, not much occurred. The only memorable thing was that Delia Anderson, Andy's wife, jokingly suggested that if they did form an organization they should call it the Crag Rats. She said that they were a bunch of rats for leaving their families, almost every weekend, to climb around on the various crags in the area.

About ten days after that meeting, Mrs. Strong, a lady from Portland, brought her three boys up to Government Camp. She set up camp and planned to spend a few days in the outdoors. While her two older boys took off to go fishing, the youngest boy, 7 year old Jackie, decided to explore the forest around their camp. When dinnertime came, Jackie didn't show up and the family couldn't find him. Mrs. Strong contacted the authorities and a search was immediately started to try and find Jackie.

Andy Anderson and about twenty men from Hood River showed up for the Jackie Strong search. Being mountaineers, they searched higher on the mountain than most of the other searchers did. By the third day, there were about 250 individuals looking for Jackie. Mace Baldwin, Percy Bucklin and Jess Puddy of Hood River eventually found Jackie sitting on a rock in rather good spirits. He had survived the three days by eating huckleberries and whatever else he could find and spent nights sleeping in leaves, piled next to logs. When they brought Jackie down to Government Camp, the reporters from the various newspapers immediately descended on them and wanted to know who they were and where they were from. So, out of the clear blue sky, they said that they were Crag Rats from Hood River. "Crag Rats," boy, that name really caught the press and before the day was over, most of the newspapers from across the nation were telling the story of a mountain rescue group, in Oregon, known as the Crag Rats. There was only one hitch...there wasn't any organization, as they hadn't formed it yet! But, Andy Anderson and the group got together and within a month, they had drawn-up bylaws which proclaimed the Hood River Crag Rats as a mountaineering and ski club as well as a mountain rescue organization. This made them the first mountain rescue group in the nation.

It was the beginning of the following year, New Years Day 1927, that a group of teenage boys, from Portland, went up to Government Camp and climbed, with skis and snowshoes, up Little Zig Zag canyon to tree line. It was snowing hard and they decided to retreat. Calvin White, a boy of sixteen, was a better skier than the others and soon out-distanced his partners. When the group arrived back in Govy, they were surprised to find that Calvin wasn't there. He was lightly clad and had no provisions, so immediately a search was organized to look for him. After three days of searching, Bill Cochran, found Calvin White huddled next to a big rock in the canyon. He wasn't in very good condition.

Bill alerted the other rescuers, with yells and gunshots and they made a ski sled and brought Calvin to the Battle Axe Inn. Calvin White lived but lost a few toes to frost bite.

The following year, on January 3rd, 1928 Dr. White (Calvin's father) and Calvin came to Hood River and invited all the Crag Rats to be their guests at a banquet at the Mt. Hood Hotel. He continued to host this banquet for many years, while his health permitted. He eventually changed it to Portland and the Crag Rats drove down old highway 30 to the University Club. They did that for several years (1934) until Dr. White was no longer able to. But the tradition had been established and the Crag Rats continued to have the banquet, the first week in January, each year.

The banquet was eventually held at the original Crag Rat hut. It should be noted that one fierce winter all the roads, in Hood River, were blocked but they didn't cancel the banquet and members skied to the banquet, spent the night and skied home the next day. For many years, the banquet was a potluck and the wives prepared the dishes. In about 1938, the December minutes show there was a heated discussion regarding inviting the wives to the banquet. It was decided that since the wives were preparing the meal, it would only be courteous to invite them to the banquet as well. (At that time, the Crag Rats were strictly a stag affair.) Shortly after that, they began hiring a cook to prepare the dinners. This went on until after World War II, when the organization took on a lot of new members and out-grew the old hut. At that time, the banquet was moved to the Rockford Grange Hall where it was held for several years and eventually out to the Pine Grove Grange before the first banquet was held in the current Crag Rat hut in January of 1967. The minutes show that Mokie Taft put out a delicious prime rib dinner for the membership and guests. Then the membership began to get a little soft and would postpone the banquet when the roads were blocked. In fact, one year it was postponed until the first week of April! But the older members, eventually, put their feet down and the banquet was moved back to January, where it has been ever since.

Note from the current Big Squeak, Gavin Vanderpool: This last January the Hood River Crag Rats celebrated their 87th Crag Rat banquet.

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Message from the President

by Dave Clarke, MRA President

As volunteer professional rescuers we all know the challenge of balancing our family, work and rescue team obligations. Being recently retired myself with my children out of the house and on their own, I felt I had a little extra time to give and that was a big part of my reason for throwing my hat in the ring for the MRA President's position. However last month those family time commitments came back to me in the form of Don, my 91 year old father in law who moved to Oregon from North Carolina so that we could make sure he receives the care he deserves. Suddenly my time commitment went from our semi-annual visits to a daily obligation. We have remodeled to improve accessibility for Don, adjusted our schedules to help with 24-hour care, and wonder if this demanding schedule will become the new norm for our immediate future.

Meanwhile, my team, Portland Mountain Rescue, had three callouts in about a week and while I made two of them I was late getting to one and had to miss another. A couple of months ago I would have responded to all three, no problem. The call that I missed was a middle of the night search and my frustration was made worse by the fact that I now had time to sit in the dark and reflect on my new reality rather than race out the door and head for the mountain. Then it hit me. We all know that mountain rescue is a team "sport" but I had lost perspective and forgot that family is a team sport as well. It was OK for me to let my SAR teammates carry the ball. Needless to say, they did this quite well as always. The subject was found, rescued and everyone was out of the field by daybreak. There were no guilt trips or recriminations directed at me for not responding, except for those going on in my own mind.

This experience has been a reminder for me of how rewarding it is to be a part of a team of professionals and how part of the reward is letting my teammates carry the load when I can't. So now I'm trying to redirect my focus. I realize that since I can't be there all of the time for my teammates, whether it's my rescue team or family team, when I can be there I will continue to give my best effort. I will also try to be more appreciative of my teammates and recognize that we all give what we can in terms of time and we all have a full plate of obligations.

We use the words Courage, Compassion and Commitment on our MRA website banners to describe ourselves. In these days of 24/7 over the top marketing hype it is easy to just skip over words like these. Yet they are at the core of our values and represent exactly what makes MRA rescuers great. My recent experience brought these values back to the forefront of my mind. I hope you'll take a moment to think about them as well and appreciate yourself and your teammates as the courageous, compassionate and committed rescuers that you truly are.

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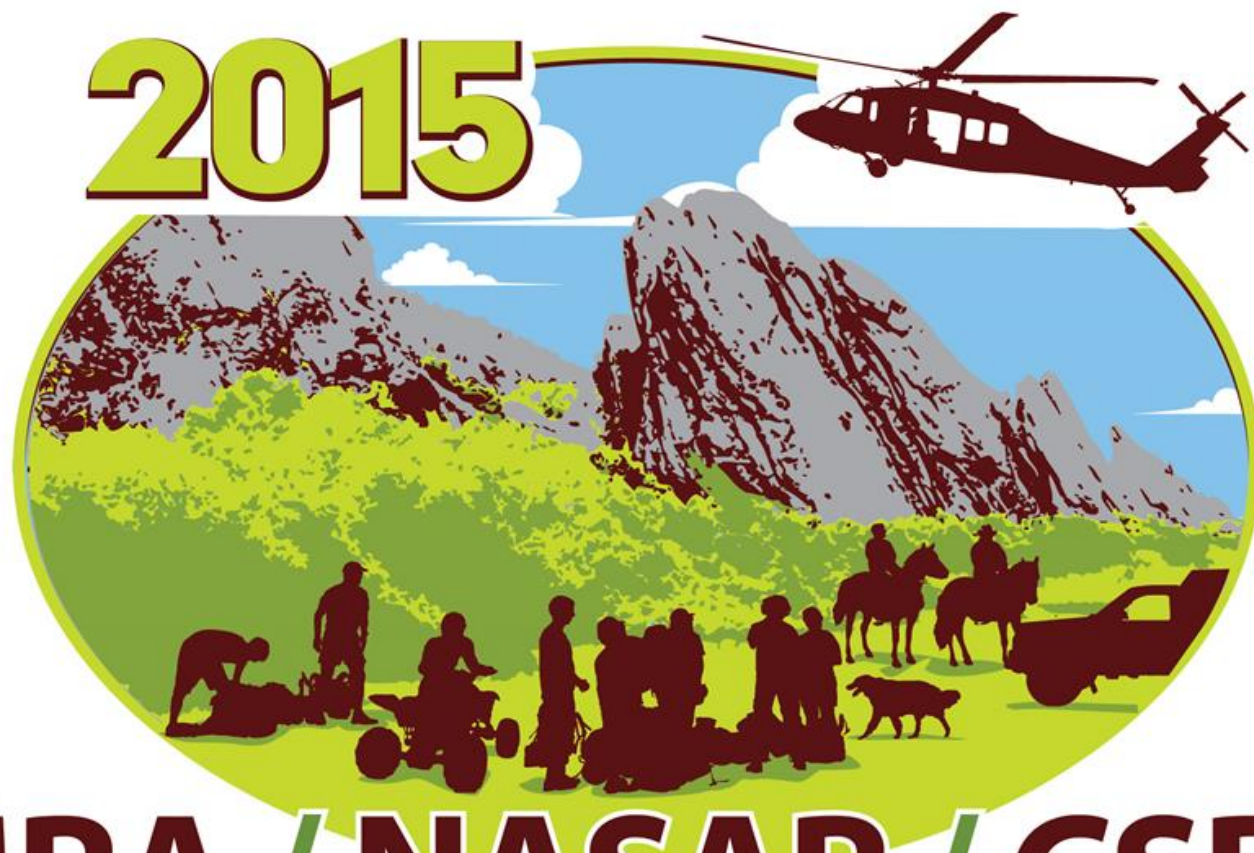
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MRA / NASAR / CSRB

National Search and Rescue Conference

June 4-7 • Estes Park, Colorado

SARCON2015 – the combined national SAR Conference of MRA, NASAR, and CSRB will be held in Estes Park, Colorado at the YMCA of the Rockies Conference Center from 4-7 June 2015.

There will be no pre-conference activities.

Conference activity tracks are Friday, June 5 and Saturday, June 6 with possible overflow to Sunday, June 7, during the morning (concurrent with MRA Business Meeting).

After a bit of a rough start, we have the education tracks under development, as are final costs for the event, though we expect to keep the total package cost (registration + lodging + meals) at about \$500.00 – details will be forthcoming as they are finalized. The registration web site will hopefully be operational before the end of January, which will only handle conference registration, as YMCA of the Rockies will handle the lodging and meals themselves (we expect to have a link to their system on our web page).

The current Conference Task Force is:

- George Janson, IC, LCSAR George.Janson@colostate.edu.
- For those of you who are interested in **presenting**, please contact Track Coordinator, Tom Wood twood@pmirope.com.
- For those interested in being there as a **vendor** please contact
- Vendor Coordinator Aaron Dover adover@pmirope.com.
- MRA's representative is Skeet Glatterer, glatterer@comcast.net.
- CSRB's representative is Paul "Woody" Woodward, woody@horizonadventures.com.
- NASAR's representative is Chris Boyer, chrisb@nasar.org.
- Past-conference liaison Bryan Enberg, bryan.enberg@gmail.com.
- Next-conference liaison John Meyers, bremmerjohn@comcast.net.
- PIO is Howard M. Paul, hmpaul@ecentral.com.

Hoping to see many of you in June in beautiful Estes Park and adjoining Rocky Mountain National Park!



Call for Speakers

SARCON2015

**National Search and Rescue
Conference**

**Presented by the MRA and NASAR and
CSRB**

**Hosted by Larimer County Search and
Rescue**

June 4-7, 2015

YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO

SARCON2015 is a multifaceted exposition featuring instructional tracks and trade-show that caters exclusively to decision-makers and SAR professionals involved in all aspects of search and rescue. Subject matter includes mountain rescue techniques and skills, search skills and management, use of canines, and other pertinent information. Session attendees will seek positive, practical input for a proactive approach to search and rescue. Attendees will include professionals, both paid and non-paid, in all aspects of search and rescue from throughout the United States and abroad. Attendees will represent many job functions, but will all share a similar concern: search and rescue.

Speaker Responsibilities

In an effort to keep the costs of SARCON2015 as low as possible, speakers are asked to attend the conference as regular attendees, and we will waive ¼ of the registration and lodging/meal package (ie: if the Conference costs \$500 we'll waive \$125 in consideration). Because the conference program is intended to provide formal instruction in a non-commercial setting, the distribution and presentation of commercial messages for business solicitation purposes are strictly prohibited in the classroom.

The deadline for submission is March 28, 2015. Please provide the following information for program consideration to the track coordinator: Tom Wood, at this link: [Track Coordinator](#).

- Presentation title
- Presentation length (60, 90 or 120 minute time slots are available) – workshops will be scheduled all day Friday and Saturday, June 5-6, with overflow slots possibly available Sunday morning June 7.
- A maximum 200-word synopsis of the presentation you would like to have considered. Please keep in mind this will serve as the basis for the abstract printed for publication in the registration brochure and conference program.
- Indicate the type of visual aids you will use in this presentation.
- Has this presentation been given before? If so, when and where?
- Your name, address, daytime telephone number and email address.
- Bio – not more than 200 words, paragraph form only (NOT RESUME FORMAT).

Peak Rescue Institute Looks Back at MRA/NASAR Conference

By Andy Speier, Peak Rescue Institute Instructor

When Bryan Enberg contacted Peak Rescue Institute's Operations Officer, Glenn Pinson, for us to be presenters at the June 2014 SARCON (MRA/NASAR Spring Conference), Glenn and I put our heads together and came up with a list of possible presentations and training opportunities. Classroom presentations are easy. You give the host agency a presenter bio and a short description of the topic. The participants can choose your lecture from one of several tracks offered. Logistics are a room of appropriate size and whatever audio visual aids are needed. The presenter arrives with a thumb drive and is good to go.

This would be a joint MRA and NASAR conference. These are people who "do" things. They want to be outside and put into practice the techniques we would be lecturing on. As instructors for the Peak Rescue Institute we felt like we had some techniques that would be beneficial to pass on to the participants. These skills and techniques are usually presented during our 7 day Technician and Specialist level classes that we conduct in Joshua Tree National Park once a year. Our organization is a bit unusual. Here is a little background on Peak Rescue Institute:

First and foremost there are no employees; everyone is a volunteer. The only person that we pay is the cook and he is worth every dollar as there is no running water in the park and it's a 45 minute drive to get out of the park into town. The instructors arrive 2½ days before the course to review the curriculum and turn the primitive campsites into a training compound. Tents are erected, and stakes are driven into the ground to secure the tents from dust devils that blow through camp occasionally. A metal structure is erected to give students an opportunity to hang and practice vertical skills prior to going on rope. Tarp and sun shelters are suspended to make shaded areas to work under. A trailer functions as a rescue gear cache that would make any rope rescue team envious of the organization and quantity of equipment.

The instructors are from all over the country. All are or were full time responders with their organizations. The instructional staff are Firefighters, Paramedics and Lifeguards. All of the instructors go through a multiyear apprenticeship program to work their way up to instructor status. All of the cadre have been through the program as students and then come back to assist as Technicians prior to going through the apprentice program. They attend a multi day instructor training seminar every other year and there is a de-brief and critique after each course. The technical committee reviews suggestions and there is back and forth dialog throughout the year about possible curriculum changes. As an organization, Peak Rescue Institute prides itself on the entire instructor cadre delivering the same information. During lectures there is an instructor following along with a lesson plan to insure that all of the information is delivered and that nothing has been missed.

The program is fully packed in order for the students to get the maximum use of time and daylight hours. There is a team of instructors always one step ahead of the class setting up for the next lecture demo and field session. This requires additional equipment, personnel and coordination, as at any given time there may be two Technician classes, one Specialist class and a group of Apprentice Instructors training in the Park. We like to joke that we work on schedule like the Swiss Railroad (rumor has it that their trains run on time). The instructional staff not only teaches together but they play together. Often times there is a post course bicycle or climbing trip. If not after the course then there is some sort of adventure planned later in the year. Instructors have gone on caving, canyoneering, multi day climbing trips, kayak trips and bicycle trips together. Not only are the trips fun, they lead to a better working relationship during the course.

Joshua Tree National Park is a unique and beautiful setting for the training. The weather is almost always sunny. Anchoring is a challenge for the students but it can be an issue in their own areas as well sometimes. If you can build anchors in Joshua Tree Park then you can build anchors anywhere.

Students and instructors camp in the Park in primitive sites with pit toilets and no water. Peak Rescue pulls a 300-gallon water trailer out to the park and refills it as needed so that there is unlimited water available for drinking and hanging shower bags. Our cook makes sure no one goes to bed hungry. Not only are the meals filling, they are also quite good.

Peak Rescue Institute also offers scholarships to the Technician level program (and they are now accepting applications for the 2015 program. You can find more information at [Scholarships - Peak Rescue Institute](#)). Even without a scholarship the tuition is quite reasonable and includes camping fees, all meals and all team rescue equipment. Students need to bring their own personal rescue and camping gear. The program does not run on tuition alone so the Board of Directors actively raises money to help fund the program. In addition the organization conducts a few contract courses during the year that help to keep the program funded. This funding allows us to conduct training classes such as what we did for the NJ SAR team several years ago.



Photo by Jim Gagne, Peak Rescue Institute. The "Show Rig" being used for individual skills practice in camp.



Photo by Jim Gagne, Peak Rescue Institute. Mini guiding line litter and attendant for demonstration purposes.

So, Glenn and I were putting our heads together about what to present at the 2014 MRA/NASAR SARCON. We would not be teaching a full rope rescue program. As presenters at the conference we wanted to be able to offer hands on training that would enable participants to try new techniques. However we couldn't assume that all of the participants would have the experience needed to perform the tasks. (This is always an issue with doing hands on sessions at conferences. You don't want to bore the participants with the basics. On the other hand you don't want to kill anyone.) We came up with a plan that would offer something for everyone: For hands on field sessions we outlined prerequisites and did a basic skills review for everyone to insure that everyone working on an edge or running a belay line was on the same page.

We received good feedback and didn't kill anyone so from my perspective it was a success. The discussion and lecture on mirrored or twin tensioned systems was well received and the field session worked through questions and issues that have come up with that technique. I was interested to find out that many teams have already adopted or have begun to experiment with mirrored or twin tensioned systems.

Solo Rope Rescue Techniques were demonstrated and the skills performed as part of an all day hands on field session at a Boy Scout camp. Though a bit of a drive each way, it was well worth the trip as access to the top of the wall was easy and there was a great vertical face that allowed for numerous rappel stations. A technique was demonstrated to deal with movement of an attended litter over a difficult edge. Rather than have the instructors rig the system the participants rigged it up as part of an instructor led exercise. As expected rigging often times takes longer with more riggers rather than less time. The bus driver was convinced to be the patient for the exercise and she was a good sport about it as she was lowered feet first over the edge in a litter and then transitioned into a horizontal position and lowered to the ground. She wasn't too traumatized and she was able to drive the bus back to the hotel. We sometimes forget that for many people getting lowered by a rope system is a bit unsettling.

At the auction during the banquet the Peak Rescue Instructors donated a position in the fall Specialist class at Joshua Tree NP. MRA President, Dave Clarke bid, won the position and participated in the weeklong training. It was great to have him and his wife Laurie out at the program. We enjoyed working with members of the NASAR and MRA Communities. As always, we left with a bit more knowledge than when we arrived.

On behalf of the members of the Peak Rescue Institute I want to thank you all for the opportunity to participate in the 2014 MRA/NASAR conference.

Thanks to Peak Rescue

By Dave Clarke, MRA President

As Andy mentions in his article, the non-profit Peak Rescue Institute generously donated a spot in their week long Specialist Class last October at Joshua Tree National Park. I was the successful bidder, the MRA was the recipient of the cash, and my wife Laurie and I got to spend the last week of our month long road trip at JTree.

I can tell you that the operation Peak has developed over the years is really impressive. There are probably 50 to 70 people in the camp and as many as five training classes going on simultaneously. With all of the associated logistical challenges you might expect to have some something go wrong or have to wait for someone who went to the wrong location. But nope, everything went off like clockwork from my perspective.

The training itself was challenging and the instructors do an excellent job of combining relevant lectures with lots of hands on team practice. Discussion of various techniques is encouraged but the focus is maintained on Peak's time tested curriculum. Our Specialist class had nine students and two primary instructors. Several other instructors rotated in throughout the week to present specific topics so we probably had presentations from six instructors. This is one of the best things about a Peak class, their great instructor to student ratio. Further, since all of Peak's instructors are volunteering their time you know they are doing it because they love to teach and to be a part of the Peak experience.

Along with the Peak class, I've also taken week-long rope rescue classes from Rigging for Rescue, and Ropes that Rescue. All of them are excellent classes and each has their strong points. I believe that anyone's rescue skills will improve after a week of daily training and practice. But no course that I know of offers the combination of a fun camp environment, a beautiful setting with endless training sites, great camaraderie with your fellow students and instructors, and quality instruction.

Recently Peak Rescue Institute donated a three-day Specialist level class for 12 students to the MRA. The response was overwhelming and we filled the class and waiting list in less than a day. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Peak Rescue Institute for their support of the MRA and their years of dedication to rescuer training.

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By Chris Van Tilburg, MD, Editor-in-Chief, NewsShare, International Society of Travel Medicine Editor Emeritus, Wilderness Medicine; Contributing editor, Outside Online and Backcountry

The one-ski quiver is difficult to pull off. So, I decided to go for two this year.

With complicated construction and shapes, boutiques to mass producers, picking out new skis can be perplexing. I work on Mount Hood, so skis must attack a huge variety of conditions—corn, windblown, steeps, ice, and pow—and varied four-season terrain. It must be light and compact for travel and mountain rescue missions, which sometimes last all night. The key: versatility. Of the multitude of skis out there, here's my skimo (ski mountaineering) gear for this season.

Skis: When a big winter storm hits, I reach for the pow slayer for backcountry tours and inbounds yo-yo laps during the height of the avalanche cycle. The Dynastar Cham HM 97 (dynastar.com) has a generous tip rocker, short radius, mid-fat underfoot, and light paulownia core. For one-day spring volcano climbs, spring corn, and the glaciers of Europe, I eyed the traditional-shape, 5.5-pound, 90mm-waist Black Diamond Carbon Aspect (blackdiamondequipment.com).

Binders: For 15 years I've been a Dynafit devotee: inbounds and out. Light, strong, simple, and time-tested. This year's I'm using Dynafit Radical ST 2.0 with brakes and ski crampons.

Boots: I really tried to love the low-volume, ultralight skimo race boots, but my feet got cold and the boots lacked the heft to drive a fat ski. The light, stiff Dynafit Vulcan TF (dynafit.com/en) with Intuition Pro Tour liners (intuitionliners.com) balance weight and performance.

Other gear: The precut, ski-specific skins are not quite as versatile to swap between skis in the Wallows or repair in a Chamonix hotel. This year I chose the Black Diamond Ascension skins: a bit heavier than mohair but better grip. I'm using Black Diamond Razor Carbon poles. For ski mountaineering, I have skied both the Haute Route and Ortler Circuit with the ultralight skimo-specific Black Diamond Raven Ultra Ice Axe, Neve Crampons, and Couloir Harness.

Avalanche: I'm using the Backcountry Access Float 36; after deploying it for air travel, I've refilled the canister—with some preplanning—in Chamonix, Davos, and Portland, Oregon (backcountryaccess.com). I'm using a Backcountry Access tour shovel, a CAMP Carbon probe (camp-usa.com) and a Mammut Barryvox beacon (mammut.ch).

I was able to test the new JetForce airbag pack from Black Diamond. The airbag, unlike others, inflates with a fan. The advantage, unlike other airbags using compressed gas canisters, is that there is no restriction with airline travel. In addition, after the airbag is deployed to hopefully prevent burial and trauma, the airbag has an automatic deflate function. This leaves an airspace, which potentially allows one to stay buried longer without asphyxia.

Head gear: I've got three helmets to test this year: the ultralight CAMP Speed; the warmer Smith Maze (smithoptics.com); and the burly Poc Receptor Backcountry MIPS, the new multi-impact protection system, (pocsports.com).

Now, let's hope for snow!



Washington Region MRA Teams Coordinate Rescue and Recovery

By John Myers, Olympic Mountain Rescue

The Washington Region had an active early winter with numerous missions. One noteworthy recent mission on December 2-3, 2014 involved a joint operation between the three MRA teams of Olympic, Seattle, and Tacoma Mountain Rescue on the slopes of Mt Rainier. As reported by the National Park's Incident Commander, Glenn Kessler:

"Late afternoon Tuesday, a 911 call was patched through to Mount Rainier Dispatch from an injured 61-year-old male hiker. He had broken his lower leg when he slipped on a steep icy slope and fell 50 feet just above Panorama Point coming to rest after hitting a rock hard enough to result in a compound fracture of both lower leg bones of one leg.

A group of skiers descending from Camp Muir fortuitously came upon the accident site and the injured hiker. The group was better prepared than the great majority of backcountry travelers and was able to radio park rangers with the GPS coordinates and other pertinent information. They then went to great lengths to protect, rewarm and care for the injured party for several hours of cold and windy conditions while mountain rescue resources were summoned to the park to perform a carryout. Teams from Tacoma Mountain Rescue, Seattle Mountain Rescue and Olympic Mountain Rescue were battered by high winds as they performed the late night evacuation by rescue litter. The operation included several steep-angle technical roped lowers down the icy slopes of Panorama Point. Rescue efforts continued into the wee hours of the morning. The injured hiker was transported by ambulance to the hospital."

Within a couple of days the family shared that their dad had two surgeries and was recovering nicely.

This mission highlights not only the continued co-operation between regional MRA teams, but also the involvement MRA has in conducting entire operations in our local National Parks, particularly in the shoulder and winter off-seasons when Park staffing is minimal. There were only two NPS employees involved in this particular mission, the IC and a ranger that drove the Park ambulance.

Given the conditions on the mountain that evening photography was difficult at best.

At the end of the month, December 29, the three teams listed above along with Everett Mountain Rescue conducted a search and recovery of a snowshoer at Mount Rainier who had lost his way in a winter storm and likely succumbed to exposure after taking a fall.



Photo by Seattle Mountain Rescue.

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Disinfection of Search and Rescue Equipment

By Skeet Glatterer, MD, FAWM

PURPOSE:

To determine the best methods to decrease the risk of acquiring infectious diseases from potentially contaminated rescue equipment and to recommend methods of decontamination, based on the best available evidence.

BACKGROUND:

Although research on transmission of infectious disease is available, none of it applies specifically to a rescue scenario. This research is directed towards health care workers in controlled hospital environments and has usually been done with biological contaminants on a dry, non-porous surface at a room temperature of 70 degrees F (1). These are conditions that apply to contact transmission, rather than respiratory spread. It is unclear how this information translates to an outdoor rescue environment, but we can extrapolate some information to make basic recommendations.

The “usual” bacteria, viruses, and fungal organisms are always present in the rescue environment and everywhere else. They do not generally pose a significant risk to SAR responders with intact skin and immune systems. Current MRA team methods of personal and team gear cleaning seem to be adequate to protect against infection. The larger concern is with transmission of blood borne pathogens (BBP) that have the potential for more serious consequences, such as hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). (2), (3). Although these viruses may survive for a few hours to a few days in controlled conditions, their ability to cause infections when found on surfaces is extremely low (4). Their viability is dependent on factors such as surface texture, temperature, amount of blood or body fluid contaminant, viral load, environmental contaminants, sunlight, and humidity. These viruses can generally only be transmitted from person to person via exchange of blood or body fluids (5). This will usually require a deep puncture wound from a hollow needle used to draw blood, or from a large volume exposure to blood contamination onto mucous membranes or non-intact skin. These viruses generally do not spread by other means, such as exposure of intact skin to personal or team gear.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The main risk in rescue is to those rendering medical care or otherwise in direct contact with the subject’s blood and body fluids. Use of the appropriate level of personal protective equipment (PPE) is mandatory. Most rescuers will likely already be wearing “work” gloves which will offer some protection, however, medical exam gloves should be used, either alone or in conjunction with other gloves as required by condition. Use of a hand sanitizer, e.g. Purell, or washing hands with soap and water is advised after removing gloves. Appropriate eye protection (glasses with side shields or goggles) and face protection (medical mask, or mask with attached shield) should be worn, and careful attention to rendering medical care and patient handling is necessary to avoid blood and body fluid exposure. In some cases (i.e. decomposing bodies) additional PPE may be required, such as whole body suits and respirators.

Methods of cleaning personal and team gear are based on the known fragility of the contaminants and their susceptibility to heat and detergent chemicals (7), (8). All grossly contaminated gear should be cleaned first by vigorously hosing with water, then cleaning with a stiff, non-wire brush and liquid dish detergent (e.g. Joy, Ajax, Dawn, etc.), and hosing off a second time. Contaminated personal gear can be washed per manufacturers’ guidelines with the highest temperature water allowed, and the addition of a detergent cleaner. If allowed, bleach should be added. Complete air or machine drying is needed. Appropriate PPE should always be used while handling contaminated gear. Dispose of all contaminated PPE and equipment appropriately. A local EMS agency or hospital may be able to help with disposal of biomedical hazardous waste.

Decontamination of team hard goods can be done in accordance with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations using a 10% household bleach mixture or one of numerous available medical cleaners (such as Cavicide or Lysol IC). Cleaned hard surfaces should be allowed to remain wet for 10 minutes and then left to air dry completely.

Decontamination of soft goods may be problematic according to a paper presented at the International Technical Rescue Symposium (ITRS) held in Golden, CO October 14, 2014 by Cedric Smith entitled “Disinfecting your soft goods: Cleanliness or regret?” There is a variable loss of strength for rope depending on water temperature, cleaning solution used and number of washing machine cleaning cycles. With some methods, rope cleaning should be monitored to prevent exceeding a predetermined level of loss of strength. This presents room for a monitoring error. Although likely only the last 1 – 2 meters of rope might be contaminated, shortening ropes to remove contamination could lead to disastrous consequences.

Team gear connected to or otherwise in proximity to the patient is at the highest risk of contamination. For smaller length soft goods: slings, webbing, prusiks, etc., appropriate disposal is a good approach. Smaller length soft goods are relatively inexpensive and don’t require much work to reconfigure.

Team ropes can be machine washed in cold water with a detergent solution (Woolite is recommended by several rope manufacturers.) in order not to degrade the rope. A large volume load selection on the washer and multiple rinses will help with cleaning. Ropes must be allowed to thoroughly dry before storage or use.

CONCLUSION:

Each team should have a plan to ensure all responders have appropriate PPE and well-defined decontamination and post exposure protocols, Local EMS, public health, and hospital systems may be able to assist the team medical director to provide guidance or equipment. Adherence to these guidelines should keep our risk of exposure to an extremely low level.

Skeet Glatterer, MD, FAWM; Alpine Rescue Team, Evergreen, CO; Chairman, MRA Medical Committee; MRA Member at Large

References:

- 1: Smith, S.M., et al, 1996. Survival of Nosocomial Pathogenic Bacteria at Ambient Temperature. J. Med. 27:293-302
- 2: CDC. Recommendations for follow-up of Health Care Workers after Exposure to Hepatitis C Virus. MMWR Morb. Mortal. Wkly. Rep. Jul 4 1997;46 (26):603-606
- 3: CDC MMWR Dec. 23, 2005/ Vol.54 No.RR-16/Pg 1-33 Post-exposure Prophylaxis with Exposure to Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)
- 4: Kramer, A., et al. 2006. How long do nosocomial pathogens persist on inanimate surfaces? A systematic review. BMC Infect. Dis. 6:130
- 5: WHO Guidelines of post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV. Dec 2014 supplement to 2013 ARV guidelines 27 Nov. 2014
- 6: Allerberger F., et al., Routine surface disinfection in health care facilities : Should we do it? Am. J. Infection Control 2002, 30:318-319
- 7: Rutala, WA, et al., Surface disinfection: Should we do it? J. Hospital Infection 2001,48:645-685 "Routine use of disinfectants to disinfect hospital floors and non-critical items is controversial"

GUIDELINES FOR DISINFECTION OF RESCUE EQUIPMENT

MRA Medical Committee (MRA MED-COM)

PREVENTION

PPE: - Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during patient contact or body recovery if there is any chance of exposure to blood or body fluids and while using, handling or cleaning contaminated equipment. For any exposure, follow the Blood Borne Pathogen (BBP) policy of your team. Exposures to BBP by sharp objects that break the skin or to mucous membranes should be evaluated by a medical professional as soon as possible to

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determine if post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is warranted.

- The type of PPE depends on the potential of exposure. This may be just medical exam gloves, eye protection (glasses with side protection or goggles are best) and face protection (medical mask or mask with attached shield).

- After removing medical exam gloves, use hand sanitizer (eg. Purell) or wash hands with soap and water. Dispose of all contaminated PPE and equipment appropriately. A local EMS agency or hospital may help with disposal of biomedical hazardous waste.

ALL EQUIPMENT:

On scene gross contamination may be mitigated by using pre-packed germicidal wipes (eg. Cavi-wipes, or Clorox wipes). Thoroughly clean all grossly contaminated equipment before disinfection by hosing vigorously with water then scrubbing with a stiff, non-wire brush and liquid dish detergent (eg. Joy, Ajax, Dawn, etc.) and hosing off a second time.

CLOTHING:

- Wash contaminated clothing per manufacturers guidelines with the highest temperature water allowed, and the addition of a detergent cleaner. Add bleach, if allowed.

- Machine dry completely or allow to air dry completely.

HARD GOODS:

- To decontaminate, use either:

A: A 10% solution of household bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water)

OR

B: A liquid medical cleaner (eg. Cavicide or Lysol IC)

- Allow surfaces to remain wet for 10 minutes and then allow to air dry completely before use.

SOFT GOODS:

- Short lengths (slings, webbing, prusiks) are best handled with appropriate disposal.

- Long lengths (ropes): Machine wash in cold water with detergent (Woolite recommended) using a large volume load setting on the washer and with multiple rinses.

- Allow to air dry completely before use.

Each team should have a plan to ensure all responders have appropriate PPE and well-defined decontamination and post-exposure protocols. Local EMS, public health and hospital systems may be able to assist the team medical director to provide guidance or equipment.

All medical articles for the Meridian are reviewed and endorsed by the MRA Medical Committee; however, this article is for general information only. The MedCom makes no representation regarding the medical or legal information provided, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the MRA.

As always, your suggestions and comments are encouraged – either directly to the author, to me, or via the ListServ to the MedCom.

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Accidents in North American Mountaineering Update

After forty years of editing the iconic publication, “Accidents in North American Mountaineering” (ANAM), Jed Williamson has stepped down. The MRA offers a heartfelt “Thank You!” to Jed for his service. It is impossible to know how many accidents have been prevented thanks to the information and lessons that have been shared in ANAM. Suffice it to say that mountaineering and climbing are safer for all of us thanks to Jed’s work.

We would also like to recognize Executive Editor, Dougald MacDonald of the American Alpine Club who is taking over the job of editing ANAM. Dougald reports that they have a new online submission form that people can use to report incidents. You can find it at <http://goo.gl/forms/mquCzDEHhP>. It’s also possible to search every incident ever published in ANAM at <http://publications.americanalpineclub.org>. If anyone has questions about contributing to ANAM, please contact Dougald at anam@americanalpineclub.org.

To learn more about ANAM or the American Alpine Club you can visit their website [American Alpine Club](http://AmericanAlpineClub.org). Membership is a bargain and includes up to \$10,000 of rescue benefits—a wise investment for any serious or aspiring climber.

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Behind the Scenes: a Thank You, a Welcome, and the Passing of a Baton

Thanks to Neil Van Dyke for his years of service as our MRA webmaster. Neil is a Past President of the MRA and long time Stowe Mountain Rescue member. He recently became the first ever Search and Rescue Coordinator for the State of Vermont. Neil chose to dedicate his time to his new job and scaled back his involvement as our webmaster. For a while Neil continued to take care of some of the webmaster duties and we paid our hosting company to handle the bigger jobs.

Then Mike Oxford from Santa Clara County SAR answered the help wanted add in the last edition of the Meridian for a webmaster. Mike has a great background in web design and quickly earned Neil's endorsement. He's only been on the "job" for a few weeks now but he's already up to speed and making updates and positive changes. Look for great things to come

Thanks Mike for stepping up.

Mark your calendar for the National MRA Conference
June 10-12, 2016 at the Red Lion Hotel in Port Angeles, WA

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Rescuer Spotlight

Interview with Gebhard Barbisch

To suggest someone for an interview submit his or her name to [Meridian Editor](#).

Gebhard Barbisch is the President of the Terrestrial Rescue Commission of ICAR, the International Commission on Alpine Rescue. This international organization convenes to create documentation, protocols, and research into best practices for alpine rescue. ICAR has four commissions: Terrestrial Rescue, Air Rescue, Avalanche Rescue, and Alpine Medicine.

At last June's ICAR Congress, hosted by the MRA, at Lake Tahoe, NV, Gebhard sat down to talk about what drew him into rescue, and what is important to him.

What was it that caused you to be interested in Rescue?

I began mountaineering in 1978, in Austria. There, it is all about learning how to help yourself and to help others—being comrades. Many start serving in mountain rescue at 18 or 19 years of age. Eighty to ninety percent of being a good rescuer is being a good mountaineer. The rest is technique and training. I trained to be an instructor, and learned that if you are hanging below someone you are training in technical rescue, you must trust them. If you don't, then you didn't do it right and you shouldn't send them out into the field. It is good to tell them to practice something again. Once you send them out, you must trust them, as they must trust you. He spoke of a friend who said that if a musician plays a wrong note, nothing much happens. But if a mountain rescuer makes a mistake, it can end with tragedy.

What do you wish you had known when you started that you know now?

I keep an open mind to be able to react to things as they arise. I train so I can respond correctly. You can't manage all the things around you; you must manage yourself with continuity.

Pulley systems and gear have changed a lot. They have become very technical. I remember seeing a Slovenian and Croatian using rescue systems that were very simple, but worked every time. Since then, I rarely use a winch. If ten people can use a rope well and fast, they can be more efficient than technical gear. If you can master the use, and the reason for using simple tools, then you will be good at understanding and using technical devices as well. But, I am in favor of keeping things simple. A tool that is easy to understand is best. If you have to look at it twice to understand it, you will make mistakes with it.

Do you have any hopes for future actions between MRA and ICAR?

There are good conversations between us. Directly working together is important for us. ICAR commissions will be working together more, and we must share our information as it changes.

What missions have taught you the most?

I learned the most when a team in Austria found a fellow 24 hours after he was buried in an avalanche and he was alive. And then, we found a person a week after they were lost. They were alive. I learned that a person should not be considered dead until you see they are dead. Don't be too fast with your decisions. If a mission was not successful, don't stop. Keep looking. It's important to the relatives. I have a strong view of working with relatives. Bring them near the search area, but not too near. Keep them away from the radios. You never know if the lost person will be your friend or neighbor—it was for me, once.

It's also important that every rescuer comes home and comes home healthy.

Is there anything you would like to express to MRA members?

Learn about ICAR, talk to your delegates! Respect Nature, trust your friends.

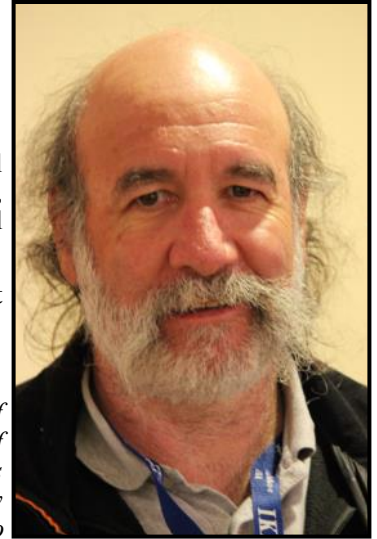
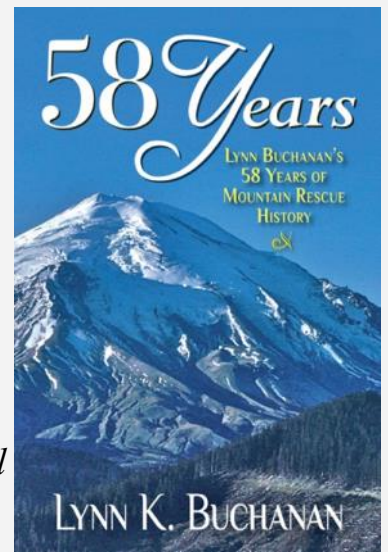


Photo by Laurie Clarke, Portland Mountain Rescue.

Lynn Buchanan was talked into joining the Seattle Mountain Rescue Council (MRC then, SMR now) in 1952, by one of the old heads, Ome Daiber. He then moved back to Yakima, WA, and helped start Central WA Mountain Rescue.



He has been fortunate to be able to go into the field to help others for 58 years, and after a couple of years of work managed to write a book. These are stories of missions, a few practices and over 100 color pictures in a standard size book with paper covers and a cover picture of a mountain that no one will ever get to the top of again.

Price: \$35 plus \$6.00 shipping if anyone is interested. (Checks, no credit cards). Lynn Buchanan, 115 West D Street, Yakima, WA 98902

Photo Gallery



Photo by Roy McCormick, Eugene Mountain Rescue Unit. Sometimes, dedication shows up in the form of showing up, despite what's coming down! EMR members gathered at Briggs Middle School in Springfield, Oregon, to practice their skills and test the waterproofing of their rain gear at the fifth annual Fall Academy. Trainers covered topics such as anchors, raising/lowering systems, and litter rigging.

Photo by Tom Baldwin, Eugene Mountain Rescue, Oregon. Members of Eugene Mountain Rescue practice glacier travel techniques during a training exercise on Mt. Hood's Eliot glacier, September 2014.



Note From the Editor—

Well, it finally happened. In an all-volunteer organization, there is always the concern that someone might not be able to complete what they intended. That's what happened to the main article for this edition. Feel free to come up with a great idea for an article you think all members would love to know more about for the Spring edition. April 1 is the deadline. Bring it on!

On top of not having a lead article, this edition is dominated by information from the Inter-Mountain, Oregon, Rocky Mountain, and Washington regions.

So, here is a challenge for those of you from the Alaska, Appalachian, California, and Desert regions to flood the inbox of the editor with articles, photos, updates, and announcements from your regions, for the next edition of Meridian.

Submissions can be sent to [Meridian Editor](#).

Submission deadlines are:

Spring - April 1

Summer – July 1

Fall – October 1

Winter – January 1



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