

## 2012 MRA/NASAR Conference

- The Heroism of Volunteers
- Honoring our Fallen Colleagues
- Colorado Mountain Rescue Museum





MOUNTAIN  
**RESCUE**  
ASSOCIATION

## Summer 2012

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## The 2012 MRA/NASAR Spring Conference Report

*By Dave Clarke*

This year's spring conference was held at Harvey's in South Lake Tahoe in Nevada on June 7-10. It was groundbreaking because we partnered with the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) to present the first joint national search and rescue conference. By all accounts this format was a great success. The broader scope of classroom and field sessions was a nice addition to our typical mountain rescue focus. Also, the increased networking opportunities were a huge bonus for all attendees.

The conference was organized around several "tracks" including: mountain rescue/technical rope, canine SAR, water rescue, SAR management, government interface, medical, and NASAR education. In all there were over 50 presenters and approximately 65 sessions on the schedule.

I split my time between several of these tracks and it was great to learn about the SAR world beyond the mountain rescue discipline. If I had one criticism of the conference it would be that most of the sessions were only offered once and it seemed that there was always more than one class that I wanted to attend going on at the same time.

On Saturday, after two days of classroom sessions, vendor exhibits, and hospitality suite networking it was time for the mountain rescue SAR games. This event was a blast! Participants were randomly grouped into six person teams and we set off to tackle a round robin course of SAR challenges. Douglas County (NV) SAR did a fantastic job of setting this up. We were able to partake in a navigation course, and a patient packaging and transport task where the last instruction from the judges was that the team was not allowed to speak. There were several rope rescues: a highline, pick-off, a litter lower and raise, and a really interesting "technology problem" where the team was given limited information and allowed to use a variety of computer and internet based tools to locate a search subject.

The banquet and awards ceremony was held on Saturday evening, and on Sunday morning we convened the annual MRA spring business meeting. I think everyone left on Sunday afternoon with some new knowledge, skills, friends, and a reinvigorated commitment to our SAR mission. Great thanks go out to our colleagues at NASAR for all of the work they put into making this conference a success and to Douglas County (NV) SAR for stepping up to host this from the MRA side. It was a fantastic conference.



*Photo by Boyd Dangtongdee.*



*Photos by Boyd Dangtongdee.*

A large advertisement for ARC'TERYX. The top half features a close-up of a red jacket. Below the jacket is the ARC'TERYX logo, which consists of a stylized bird in flight above the brand name. Underneath the logo is the text "Alpha SV Jacket - [propurchase@arcteryx.com](mailto:propurchase@arcteryx.com)". At the bottom of the advertisement is a logo for the "WE SUPPORT MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION", which includes a circular emblem with a cross and the words "MOUNTAIN RESCUE" and "ASSOCIATION".

## The 2012 National SAR Conference

By Howard Paul, Alpine Rescue Team

By all signs, the first collaboration of the MRA and the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) in holding a joint conference was a smashing success. The two largest SAR associations in the US met together in early June at South Lake Tahoe, California. The weather was orographic / topographic (ah, mountainous) as the week opened on Monday with snow and 27° at 6,300 feet, but it was sunny and pleasant by Thursday when the conference really took off.

More than fifty classroom and field sessions were held, running the gamut of SAR topics: basic, advanced, rescue, search, funding, technology, administration, dogs, research and analysis, medical and water. It did seem odd that no one in the slot machine halls paid any attention to fully equipped rescuers trudging through on their return to the hotel from field sessions; although some attendees were asked in the lobby and hallways, "What in the world is going on?"

This conference was unique. I have attended many NASAR and MRA conferences over the years and have helped organize national and state SAR conferences. By far this was the best I have ever attended. The people, the classes and the setting were outstanding. The networking, cross-pollination among SAR colleagues across the nation, food, comradeship, the meetings, the "bi-state" park - everything - made for a phenomenal event.

Twenty-nine exhibitors showed a very wide array of products and services that support SAR operations, from the communications technology of conference title sponsor Verizon Wireless, to sponsors 5.11 Tactical, CMC Rescue, Decisions for Heroes, ESRI, PMI, SMC, Sterling Rope and TechTrade.

The MRA's traditional silent auction raised \$2,400 and NASAR raised \$3,000 in raffle ticket sales.

Dale Atkins, the US representative to the IKAR Avalanche Commission said, "I experienced a synergy not felt before at an MRA or NASAR conference," and that says it all.

Past MRA president and current NASAR president Dan Hourihan said to the conference team, "The 2012 National Search and Rescue Conference was a great success! You prepared a program that attracted a diverse variety of SAR responders, which resulted in a very happy mix of participants. Your efforts up front were great, but your execution onsite was the reason this event is receiving a steady stream of accolades. Whatever role you played in this event, large or seemingly small, it is the total team effort that is significant. I congratulate you on a job well done and thank you with great appreciation. You raised the level of esteem for NASAR and the MRA to impressive heights. In turn, this provided inspiration to attendees to push further and longer in an avocation motivated by personal inspiration."

The conference social-media campaign was a huge success. Rob Brewer of Washington (NASAR), Bryan Enberg of New Jersey (MRA) and Paul Falavolito of Pennsylvania (NASAR) worked since the 2011 NASAR conference to publicize this year's conference on Twitter. The goal was to flood the social media giant with as much SAR publicity as they could tweet into it. The results were far better than anticipated. The hashtag #SARCON12 was tweeted 711 times by 51 contributors. Those tweets reached an impressive 26,909 twitter accounts around the world and also made 1,162,221 million impressions all over the twitter network.

Conference twitter followers were treated to a variety of conference updates including information on all of the educational tracks, outdoor events, tweet ups and conference contests. With this volume of messaging it is clear that social media works to help spread the word. You can continue to follow the following on Twitter @mtnrescueassoc @nasarhq @bryanenburg @brewer\_rob and @paulfalavolito. The outstanding and hilarious opening video that was shown at the beginning of the conference can also be found online [here](#).

**Check this video out NOW!**

The State Search and Rescue Coordinators Council (SSARCC) again held its annual meeting at the conference. SAR coordinators from around the nation and representatives from many federal agencies and military services discussed topics of national level interest, such as:

- Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) operations
- Disaster response support to the states
- Land SAR addendum to the National SAR Plan
- National Park Service's all-hazards credentialing and National SAR Academy
- National SAR statistics database
- Resource typing and credentialing

All the presentations made during the SSARCC meeting are available [here](#).



*Remember your early SAR training, when you were told, "All those boundary lines on your topo map are artificial and don't mean anything to a field searcher. They're on the map - not the ground" (meaning we ignore political boundaries). Well, it seems that is not always true. This actual boundary line from a map is in the field, on the road into Van Sickle Bi-State Park a few minutes from the conference hotel! Photo by Howard Paul.*

Special thanks go to NASAR executive director Megan Bartlett and the NASAR staff, the conference committee of 13 and Douglas County SAR Team for organizing a great event.

Thank you, too, NASAR board member Paul Falavolito, of White Oak EMS and SAR in Pennsylvania, for your great video for the opening session; to MRA past president Tim Kovacs for your remembrance presentation and to the MRA Honor Guard for all your superb work (regardless of the left face - right face hiccup).

*Howard Paul is a 27-year member of Alpine Rescue Team in Evergreen, Colorado. He was the founding editor of the MRA's first journal, Rescue Forum, and is a former director of accreditation for the Rocky Mountain Region. He currently serves on the NASAR board of directors and is a PIO for NASAR, Alpine and the Colorado SAR Board.*



## The Heroism of Volunteers

*By Jeff Lehman (reprinted with author permission from U-T San Diego News, April 2012)*

The call came about 1 a.m. on a January night three years ago, asking that I serve as part of the command staff to manage the search for a 19-year-old man who had decided to “hike to the snow” on Mt. Baldy, outside Los Angeles. I was joined by colleagues from several teams throughout the county in the pre-dawn hours as we began to interview the parents of the missing person and assign search teams.

That early morning muster is a staple in the world of search and rescue. It seems that folks get themselves into trouble in the middle of the night and in the worst possible weather. That day, at least, it wasn't blowing snow; the weather was quite nice. In the dark, I could make out ghostly figures and hear the characteristic clinking of gear as teams arrived and began sorting equipment for the day's assignments, the hushed tones indicating the seriousness of the activity.

This search was just like hundreds before it, but I was suddenly struck by the fact that I was surrounded by dozens of volunteers. These weren't casual volunteers who come and go only to participate when they feel the urge, but professionals who train at least monthly as a team, and weekly as individuals. These were people who are regularly roused from their sleep, school functions, jobs, anniversaries and myriad other activities of life in order to help those lost or injured in the wilderness.

What drives such people? They fly under the radar and hail from all walks of life. On my team alone there are teachers, computer programmers, physicians, lawyers, a truck driver and plumbers. Each has his own reasons for participating, but we are bound by a common love of the outdoors and a need to contribute.

Nearly all wilderness search and rescue in the United States is performed by unpaid professionals who are managed by their local sheriff's department. Searchers must maintain certifications in snow and ice travel, technical rope rescue, search techniques and emergency management. They are responsible for purchasing their own gear, and log thousands of hours and miles in performing their duties and in keeping their skills sharp. They must be diplomats in the workplace and home as they arrange to take time off in order to perform their duties.

The search that day for our 19-year-old was ultimately successful. Breaking the news to waiting family members that their loved one has been found alive makes all of the hours worthwhile.

The term “hero” is batted around all too routinely. One is not a hero by virtue of his chosen occupation. Hero status transcends vocation and can only be legitimately bestowed upon those who truly perform above and beyond the call of duty. My colleagues in the search and rescue community would definitely be in the running for hero status, but don't tell them that. They don't think so, and often go out of their way to avoid any attention. These men and women are just part of the many volunteers that characterize America and her long tradition of such service.

In 2011, 71 percent of firefighters in the U.S. were volunteers. Millions of children are coached each year by volunteers in a variety of sports programs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 64 million Americans volunteered in one way or another in 2011.

The U.S. is unmatched in her philanthropy. Americans donate more as a percentage of personal income than any country in the world. Volunteerism has been a part of America's fabric since “the people” predated “the state.” Alexis de Tocqueville recognized such during his analysis of American democracy in 1831 when he wrote, “I must say that I have seen Americans make great and real sacrifices to the public welfare, and I have noticed a hundred instances in which they hardly ever failed to lend faithful support to one another.”

You see, it isn't about “giving back.” Giving back implies some sort of exchange or contractual agreement. Philanthropy is guided by a sense of responsibility and duty that keeps no ledger.

As we reflect on the impact of search-and-rescue volunteers, maybe we can set aside thoughts of contentious legislation and election posturing for a moment and consider ways that we can get involved in our communities and take personal responsibility for our neighbors.

*Lehman lives in La Mesa with his wife and two daughters, teaches chemistry at Grossmont College, and is a 16-year member of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Cave & Technical Rescue Team.*



*Volunteers training for cave rescue. Photo by Ken Anthony.*

## Honoring our Fallen Colleagues

By Tim Kovacs

*Prayers, thoughts and strength to our fallen brothers and sisters and to those left behind in pain.*



**Aaron Beesley, Tactical Flight Officer**, 34, Utah Highway Patrol (non-MRA). 60 foot fall, Mt Olympus. Eurocopter AS350 B2. <http://www.odmp.org/officer/21317-trooper-aaron-beesley>

Trooper Beesley was assisting lost hikers, and while they were being flown to a safe location, he reportedly attempted to retrieve a backpack and fell 60 feet. Upon returning to the area, the aircrew could not find him, and later located him at the bottom of the fall. Trooper Beesley was laid to rest shortly thereafter in Utah, too quickly for the MRA to determine if they were open to the HG being present or to confirm which MRA units he had responded with on missions throughout Utah.

Trooper Beesley leaves behind brother Trooper Arik Beesley and wife Juli; father Robert; mother Laretta; wife Kristtie, sons Austin, Derek and Preston; and his UHP pilot that day, Shane Oldfield.

30 June 2012, in the line of duty

**Tony Stanley, Flight Officer-Paramedic**, 41, California Highway Patrol Air Rescue (non-MRA), Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Eurocopter AS350 B3

Officer Stanley reportedly de-planed his aircraft and walked upslope, walking into the main rotors of the B3. The victim, a USAF physician who had a fractured leg and other injuries from a fall, heard of the incident and dragged himself to the officer, joining some bystanders and administering advanced life support. The officer and physician are both recovering, although Officer Stanley was upgraded from critical to serious.

5 July 2012, serious injury



**Angie Nemeth, 43, and  
Beatrice Sorensen, 51**

of the Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue Station 12 (non-MRA), lost their lives when they were thrown from their water craft during training.

3 June 2012, in the line of duty

**Ray Shriver, K9 Handler and Trainer**

63, of Teton County Search and Rescue, WY (non-MRA) died in a helicopter crash (Bell 407) near Togwotee Mountain. The pilot and observer survived.

15 February 2012



## Honoring our Fallen Colleagues



### **Nick Hall, Climbing Ranger**, 33, Mount Rainier National Park, WA.

Climbing ranger Nick Hall, a member of the MRA member unit Mount Rainier National Park SAR, was in the process of assisting with the rescue of four injured climbers near the summit of Rainier and Emmons Glacier, at about 13,800 ft. He was working the tag line for the hoist cable under the Chinook for the delivery of equipment for extraction of the third patient when he slipped and fell to approximately the 11,400 foot level of the Winthrop Glacier.

The initial team completed the rescue of the climbers and continued to work on a plan to access Nick, who was not moving and not responding.

The injuries of the climbers were confirmed at the hospital as worse than first thought, and the patients were admitted for several days.

An incident command team was put into place to manage the recovery and subsequent memorial on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Local MRA teams including Seattle MR and Tacoma MR immediately assisted and supplemented crews and covered Paradise operations.

MRA officers arranged a flower wreath to be delivered (thanks to Fran, et al). The MRA Honor Guard was requested and, thanks to much support from local MRA teams and region chair Doug McCall, arrived to help with the memorial and coordinating with the IM team, NPS Honor Guard team leader Chris Figge and bagpiper/interpretive ranger Scott McLean. The memorial at the new visitors center at Paradise was not open to the public, as family requested it keep the focus of Nick's climbing and rescue life at the forefront. It was attended by family, rangers, the US Army Chinook crews, MRA members, and climbers and was streamed live where it can still be viewed at <http://www.dvidshub.net/webcast/2427>.

I'd like to add my thanks to NPS chief of emergency services Dean Ross, and memorial branch chief Rick Mossman for special calling us to participate and helping us with housing onsite.

Honor Guard members included Scott Sutton, Vail MRG, CO; Dana Potts, Riverside MRU, CA; Roy West, Weber County SAR, UT; and myself, as well as local MRA members Bill Rengstorf and Art Farash, who stepped up into spare HG uniforms.

The MRA presented memorial certificates and LODD streamers (gold lettering on red streamer, Nick Hall, Mt Rainier NP, WA, 12 June 2012) to the family and the climbing rangers. Mountaineering district ranger Stefan Lofgren, directly off the mountain with his crews from another attempt to recover Nick, mounted the third LODD streamer for Nick onto the MRA flag. A fourth streamer was also made for Chief Dean Ross to be mounted in the Washington DC office.

At the Longmire Education Center, a reception was held where many stories were told of Nick at the open microphone and symbolic toasts were held.

Our duties included being ready to ensure that once recovered, Nick's remains were greeted with honors and that he was never left alone until his burial.

We were all still under a "heaviness," to say nothing of the climbing rangers. Nick was still on the mountain. In the history of mountain rescue, I know of no incident where we did not have the body of our fallen brother or sister for the memorial/funeral. Knowing that your lost brother is up there, knowing where he is, and then having to divert your recovery efforts in order to have a memorial is a bitter pill that seems to contradict the healing process of a memorial. I know my head would have been buzzing still with every possible way I could find to get Nick off that hill. I would not want to stop for a memorial that cemented his being gone, when he was still not back!

The Mount Rainier climbing rangers dug deep and arrived together – somewhat disheveled and worn down because they just came off the glacier -- with the nagging reminder that Nick was still up there. They did every one of us proud, honoring Nick, his family and his profession... our profession.

Our boys recovered Nick on 5 July 2012 and the rangers were able to ensure Nick was never left without a ranger by his side. The boys from the US Army Joint Base Lewis-McChord, for whom Nick was working the hoist tag line, were there.

Nick leaves behind his dad Carter, his mom Mary, his brother Aaron, his brother's wife Sherri and two children, as well as his dog Grommit. A funeral service was to be held later in his home town of Patten, Maine with his family, friends and the Marine Corps Honor Guard.

The incident continues to be under review.

21 June 2012, in the line of duty



*For these brothers and sisters who died in the line of duty,  
always remember and celebrate them, their stories and their crewmates,  
and as the after-action facts come to light, always put into practice  
the lessons learned so they did not die in vain.  
Honor them in this way.*

### Can You Help the Honor Guard?

The Honor Guard desires and seeks to provide honors to all members who pass away, and to their families. Please don't hesitate to request us, to call or inquire about us, our services or even how we can help you provide your own memorial service with honors.

- If you are interested in joining the Honor Guard, we accept people who can commit to only scheduled or local events, as well as those who can occasionally or regularly respond to funerals out of their home state.
- We accept donations but also gifts of frequent flier miles when we travel to funerals. Please contact me to register your contact information.
- We have a complete handbook for Honor Guard details, as well as an insert-guide for all members of the MRA who wish to know what they can do before and when a member passes in the line of duty, during active membership but off-duty, and when retired.
- Help support the Honor Guard by buying a memorial t-shirt via our Facebook page, Mountain Rescue Honor Guard.

Tim Kovacs, Commander, Honor Guard

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### On a separate but related note...

As difficult and sensitive it is to bring up such matters at such a time, it also helps motivate us toward ways we can improve.

Working in and around helicopters during SAR operations continues to be the most common manner in which we die in SAR and mountain rescue, even for career helicopter crews, and yet it represents the lowest amount of time spent training for. While this is high risk--low frequency for some teams and high risk--high frequency for others, it does not change the risk involved.

This typically leads us to two points. First, we need to increase our helicopter operations training so that we are never just passengers, but wise users of these aircraft we occasionally or frequently get into or work under. Whether you use them all the time or only rarely, they are as much a tool of our trade today as your harness, ice axe, rope and litter and deserve as much attention.

Secondly, there is a proven statistical spike in crashes, injuries and fatalities in aircraft accidents at a couple of points in a pilot's/crew's career when they have LOTS of experience and time (5,000 and 10,000 hours) and make simple but deadly errors. We know this happens to us too, in mountain rescue, where comfort in having done it for so long makes us complacent and miss things that are routine, especially if they "never went wrong in all my time."

The MRA has three excellent programs that describe some of these complacency and mitigation issues in "Risks in Mountain Rescue," "Accidents in Mountain Rescue Operations," and "Situational Awareness in Search and Rescue Operations."

The MRA's helicopter programs also have very useful information, some specific to MR and SAR, but they are meant to be only a classroom introduction to entice you and to scratch the surface, NOT to be the type or length or depth of training necessary for mountain rescuers. A complete MRA team/ SAR team helicopter orientation and training program includes additional classroom time and review and dry equipment familiarization (MRA helo programs <http://www.mra.org/training/mountain-rescue-training> and the most excellent and topical US IKAR Air Rescue Annual Reports <http://www.mra.org/training/ikar-reports>, plus the DOI basic aviation safety B3 training and the S271 training for crew members--yes this is for you), and then a lot of repetitive hands-on training with and without rotors turning, under qualified SAR aircraft crew personnel, some from outside your own unit. Seek experts. Master your craft and your profession.



## Risk Management

By Mike Vorachek

Several years ago I read an article entitled *Preventing Occupational Fatalities: A review of findings from a recent industry forum* by Tracey L. Cekada, Christopher A. Janicak and Lon H. Ferguson (Professional Safety magazine, March 2009, pages 29-32).

There were a number of items identified that can be examined in the context of mountain rescue. The first section identified “opportunities and barriers” to a safe work environment. The three key items were: (1) risk taking, (2) inability to correctly assess risks, and (3) safety culture (or lack thereof). The safety culture item included three sub-attributes: lack of funding, lack of management support, and no accountability for safety.

The article continued by addressing some organizational weaknesses, including lack of understanding of the impact of risk-taking behavior; failure to hold safety as a core value; not recognizing effects of leadership on the safety culture; and limited or inconsistent accountability for unsafe behavior.

Although the article focused on an industrial work environment, think about how some of these items might affect your team. As SAR practitioners, we often take risks during training and operational missions. We all know there is risk associated with what we do. The question becomes – how much risk is acceptable? This decision has to be made at an individual and team level. Our environment is fraught with what are often called “error precursors.” Things such as lack of sleep, extreme work environments, physical and mental stress, and many other items all affect how we analyze our situation and make decisions.

Risk factors can be reduced and mitigated; however, we can never remove all risk. A team with leadership that pays attention to safety during all activities and fosters a true “safety culture” is going to be much more adept at managing risks. This means that leaders must be engaged, and not afraid of calling a “time out” or counseling a member who might appear to be accepting more risk than is necessary. There are lots of tools and techniques for building a strong safety culture – but effective leadership is the most critical factor.

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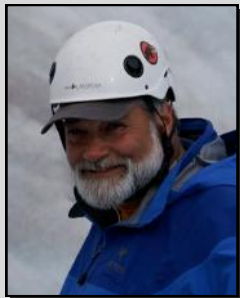


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## A Message From the MRA's New President

I have been a volunteer with Juneau Mountain Rescue for 20 years, serving as vice president of JMR until 2011. I continue volunteering as a board member for JMR and now serve as the training coordinator. I also volunteer with the Special Teams Unit of Capital City Fire/Rescue with the rope rescue and swiftwater teams. In the winters I volunteer with the Juneau ski patrol at Eaglecrest Ski Area. I am a member of the MRA Honor Guard and have served on the MRA Officers Committee as member-at-large from 2008 to 2010, and as vice president from 2010 to 2012.

This is an exciting time for the MRA as we work to improve member benefits, develop corporate sponsorships, and develop educational programs for both MRA members and the general public.

My goal during my term with the MRA will be to improve statistics and the reporting process of member teams. The MRA needs to make the reporting of statistics an expectation of each member team. We will be working with each of the region chairs and have established an ad hoc committee to make it easier and more effective for teams to report their annual mission statistics. The reporting of statistics will help the MRA with fundraising, education, and prevention programs for the public, as well as improve our lobbying efforts.

Other goals during my term are to improve our documentation of mountain rescue history and archives, and to continue working to establish the National Search and Rescue Week in May that promotes awareness and appreciation of the role SAR personnel play for their communities. I also hope to visit MRA teams in each of the regions to meet individual members, attend training and observe regional accreditations and reaccreditations.

It is an honor to be elected as president, and with that honor comes a duty to lead the MRA and move the association forward in accordance with the Mountain Rescue Association guiding principles of Professionalism, Integrity, Camaraderie, Dedication, Respect and Knowledge.

Doug Wessen



## Meridian Editor Change

Goodbye and thank you! I've enjoyed editing Meridian these last two years, and I'm sad to leave but it's time for me to go. My deepest gratitude goes to the contributors who have made Meridian a great resource for MRA members. I trust that you will continue to contribute and I know that you'll enjoy working with our new editor, Laurie Clarke, who is an associate member of Portland Mountain Rescue.

*Anna DeBattiste*

Hello from the new editor! A little about me: After leaving Massachusetts, I worked in Idaho for the US Forest Service, and then moved on to Oregon where I recently retired from a local college, as an academic adviser. I am excited to follow in Anna's footsteps, and hope I can do as wonderful a job as Anna has done in her tenure.

I can be contacted at [laurie.clarke3@frontier.com](mailto:laurie.clarke3@frontier.com) or (503) 319-8615. I look forward to helping you get your news out to the organization.

*Laurie Clarke*



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## Colorado Mountain Rescue Museum Exhibit

*By Dan Lack, Rocky Mountain Region Chair,  
Rocky Mountain Region MRA*

On the May 25, 2012 the Bradford Washburn American Mountaineering Museum, located in Golden, Colorado, opened an exhibit dedicated to the mountain rescuers of North America. After almost a year of work, and with rescue litters hanging above her head and information boards all around her, museum director Shelby Arnold addressed those gathered at the opening. "After working so closely with some of the local mountain rescue teams here in Colorado, I have almost been inspired to become a mountain rescuer. If only I had a stronger stomach for broken bones and the cold!"



*Photo by Shelby Arnold, American Mountaineering Museum.*

By the end of the evening it was apparent from the remarks of non-rescuers that those involved in developing the exhibit successfully shared the volunteer mountain rescuers' love and excitement of the work, their occasional despair, and the magnitude of effort often invested. For the members of MRA teams present, it was obvious that the exhibit also captured the true essence of volunteer mountain rescue.

The opening of the exhibit was attended by many members of Colorado MRA teams, and representatives of the Rocky Mountain Region of the MRA and the Colorado Search and Rescue Board, and friends and family of local rescuers.

The exhibit includes displays on all disciplines of mountain rescue, including avalanche, search dogs, technical rock rescue and search. There are numerous story-boards that draw the reader through real rescues and the emotions of rescuers and victims, and there is more than enough antique equipment to ensure that the rescue memory lane is in fact a busy highway! Alpine Rescue Team's Paul Woodward and Dale Atkins, and Rocky Mountain Rescue's Bill May and Steve Chappell (who together represent over 125 years of mountain rescue experience) spearheaded the consulting effort with the museum, and the Colorado MRA teams provided many items of old and new equipment for the displays. From an antique Austrian cable rescue system, to samples of rescue rope, to descriptions of the love of the job by rescuers across the country, the displays shared the depth and breadth of the roles of mountain rescue teams across the country. Statistics on who gets rescued, descriptions of the founding of the MRA in the Pacific Northwest, and the contribution of the Tenth Mountain Division soldiers returning from WWII all combined to provide an exhibit full of the respect to our field that is so genuinely warranted.

The exhibit will be open until the end of 2012. If any of you happen to be near Golden in the next few months, it is well worth a visit.



*Photo by Paul "Woody" Woodward.*

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## Safety Summit In Snohomish County

*By Oyvind Henningsen, Chair of Everett Mountain Rescue Unit, Rescue Technician, Helicopter Rescue Team*



Everett Mountain Rescue Unit (EMRU) was founded in 1954 and falls under the umbrella of Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue (SCVSAR). SCVSAR lists a base of 300 members composed of several geographic units and specialty teams: Helicopter Rescue, Water Rescue, K-9, Man Trackers, Mountain Rescue and others. Many of the members of our mountain rescue unit are also members of another unit or team.

In the operational period from May 10 to June 11, 2012, SCVSAR had a total of 25 SAR missions. The mission risk assessments varied from low risk (Green) to medium risk (Amber) to high risk (Red) in terms of exposure to the rescuers. These missions ranged from urban searches and pack-outs of injured hikers, to complex rescue rigging operations above a waterfall to save a stranded person, to a hoist rescue of a subject with a life threatening head injury.

Over the past few months we have experienced a number of events and close calls that could have resulted in catastrophic consequences. We have had a number of high risk missions recently that stressed our organizational safety culture. As a result we felt the need to collectively demonstrate our commitment to safety across the various units and specialty teams and to focus on safety specific training in critical areas.

The first annual Safety Summit took place on June 23, 2012. All personnel completed a safety survey prior to the event and answered questions about safety issues. The survey set the tone for the day and focused everyone's attention on why we were there. The day kicked off with a leadership meeting to get everyone on the same page with regard to the purpose, agenda, and timeline of the Safety Summit. We then divided all members into groups that rotated through four safety sessions.

Water Rescue Team leader and rigging instructor John Morton taught swiftwater safety and rescue rigging safety. John discussed how to analyze likelihood, consequences, exposure time, and the importance of making deliberate decisions about risk acceptance. We learned about risk mitigation in order to interrupt the chain of consequences in case of a mishap and the establishment of alternatives with preferred outcomes. In rigging and swiftwater missions it is important to establish your backup plans and safety margins in advance. Train, train, train!

Driving instructor and senior member of Everett Mountain Rescue John Wilson and Deputy Tim Durand discussed driving safety. More often than not, driving to and from a mission is the most dangerous thing we do. We recently had an Explorer SAR (ESAR) vehicle hit by a drunk driver. The driver of the ESAR vehicle claims that his participation in our extensive driver training enabled him to quickly react and maneuver the vehicle in order to avoid a head-on collision with possible fatal consequences. We viewed an eye-opening video of an accident in which a mother lost her two sons due to the reckless driving of an emergency vehicle. We were all reminded of the importance of slowing down, not fiddling with the radio, not texting or paging while driving, and taking a short nap before you drive home after a mission.

Chief pilot Bill Quistorf presented a session on aviation safety, accidents and human factors. Bill talked about the importance of taking a systems approach rather than a personal approach to accident prevention. The basic premise of the systems approach is that humans are fallible and errors are to be expected, even in the best organizations. The approach focuses not on changing the humans but changing the conditions under which we work. Human errors are seen as consequences rather than causes, and the focus is on upstream systemic factors. Defense barriers need to be created in order to avert errors or mitigate their effects. The unit's aviation safety program and accident prevention program, consisting of standardization and training, compliance and adherence to SOP, hazard identification, timely hazard reporting and hazard elimination, was used as an example of the efforts of a systems approach to risk management.

The fourth session was presented by long-term NPS employee and Type I all-risk incident commander Hugh Dougher. Hugh talked about the importance of using operational risk management and specifically using the GAR (Green Amber Red) process for assessment and management of the risk on an assignment, team, and mission level. Hugh stressed the importance of institutionalizing solutions and practices in all trainings and other unit activities so that they become habits and part of the organizational culture. He illustrated how improvisation is a major red flag on missions and he encouraged us to insist that all members are informed about, concur with, and positively reinforce the right of refusal in all our activities. Hugh told us to slow down, take the time to identify and mitigate risk factors, incorporate a GAR analysis for each assignment and place a safety officer on every team.

After the four sessions we re-grouped into small teams according to units and specialty teams. A designated facilitator in each team led a discussion and brainstorming session centered on safety concerns and potential solutions. All information was recorded and brought back to leadership for discussion and development of an action plan to address safety concerns, build future training sessions and modify operational procedures. The safety surveys were also incorporated into these results.

This was a full-day event that brought all members and specialty teams together and demonstrated everyone's collective commitment to safety. Its importance was driven home just one day prior to the Safety Summit when we learned of the tragic loss of a park ranger during a SAR mission on Mount Rainier. This day was an organizational reset, a way to re-focus behaviors and expectations. In Snohomish County the safety of our members is our number one priority. It is in our behavior, training, operations, gear, systems, policies and procedures. Safety is our culture.



*Photo by Oyvind Henningsen.*

# 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."*

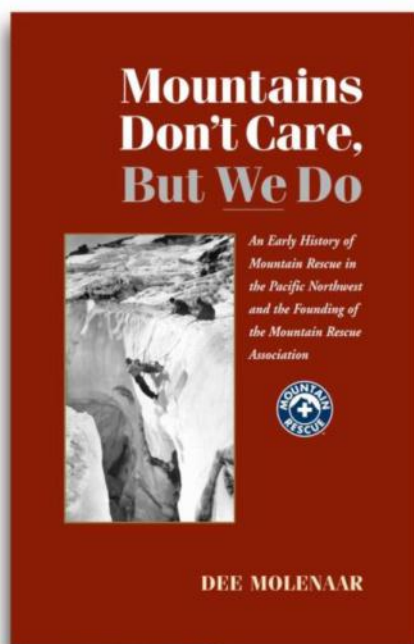
Tom Hornbein

*"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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