Interagency avalanche rescue training: three years of lessons and learning in the Mt Rose area of Lake Tahoe, NV

Dallas W. Glass2 Mike Ferrari3,2 Bruce Hicks4 Paulette Schneider2
1. Mt Rose Ski Tahoe, Fairbanks, AK, USA; 2. Mt Rose Ski Tahoe, Reno, NV, USA; 3. Mt Rose Ski Tahoe, Rneo, NV, USA; 4. North Lake Tahoe Fire, Incline Village, NV, USA

Due to the overlapping of numerous emergency response areas, agreement to mutual aids, and abundance of ski resort personnel, Lake Tahoe can provide unique challenges to large scale avalanche rescues. Questions of incident command, preparedness of personnel, and safety of the rescue abound. In the winter of 2008 several agencies including two fire departments, the sheriff’s office, a medical helicopter, and two ski patrols, began to hold three large mock rescues as training for their respective personnel. Over the past three years the list of participants has grown tremendously and many lessons have been learned for training such a wide range of individuals. This past season over a dozen sessions were held training over 100 individuals in the fundamentals of interagency avalanche rescue. Material included available resources, incident command structure, transceiver and Recco searches, strategic probing and shoveling, and an introduction to snow science. Presented here is an evolution of large scale interagency avalanche rescue training from fire fighters in turnouts to trained avalanche rescue personnel. These lessons learned and practiced will hopefully result in a safe and efficient avalanche rescue in the Mt Rose Backcountry of Lake Tahoe, NV.