

AVALANCHE RESCUE: ORGANIZATION, TEAM TRAINING

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Introduction

Rescue is the business of being organized long before anything happens. The all important factor in avalanche burials in the back country is time and that requires that a team be prepared to look after itself.

Organized rescue groups are often required, however, and the number of people and organizations becoming involved in organized rescue is increasing. Because of this, any given area needs a rescue co-ordinator who has an overview of the entire situation. The right equipment which everyone can handle is an essential, as are fit, trained personnel. Training in any or all weather conditions is very important, so that the team is prepared when an actual situation develops. The avalanche dog is an important rescue tool.

Three other things needed by a member of a rescue team are willingness, competence, and confidence. Willingness to keep going when things get tough, competence so that he can help himself or someone else in any given situation, and confidence to know how far he can go with his team. The first rule of any rescue is: "Don't create a bigger accident than already exists." The leader's first responsibility is always to his team. A confident, competent team enables the leader to distribute some responsibility.

The major problem today is cost. Among the sixteen IKAR (International Commission of Alpine Rescue) nations, with the exception of Switzerland which has insurance available, the government ends up paying the bill one way or another.