

RESCUE HAS BEEN THE VOICE OF IMSARU SINCE JANUARY 1962

Founding Member: Mountain Rescue Association

Rescue

Web Edition

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Press on the calendar to see upcoming events

WINTER TRAINING – JANUARY 13, 2018 --ATTILA SIPICZKI

Nine members drove up to Mores Creek Summit in three trucks, and it was a good idea to carpool on this beautiful winter Saturday, as many others were using the parking lot for back-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling (leaving trailers behind.) We chose this area for our winter training for the sake of snow but there was not too much even that high and that far from the Treasure Valley. We made it work and used the circumstances we had; one of the best areas was the ploughed snow at the edge of the parking lot, which actually served as a great simulation of compacted avalanche debris. The focus of the training was refreshment of simple avalanche rescue and a good rundown on winter patient packaging. Our annual more detailed avalanche training is scheduled for February.

The first lesson and one of the main takeaways for any reader of this account who is possibly going to find himself/herself out in the backcountry in snowy conditions: Without digging a snow pit, checking crystal structure or doing a snow layer assessment and getting into deeper snow science, one can **do terrain management**. One simple element of that is to **stay off of slopes between 30 and 45 degrees** (in bad conditions 30-60 degrees) and away from their possible projection areas. We should all consider this one very simple and very effective risk mitigation technique before any personal adventure or search-and-rescue mission, especially on days when it is known that there could be an unsettled snow layer.

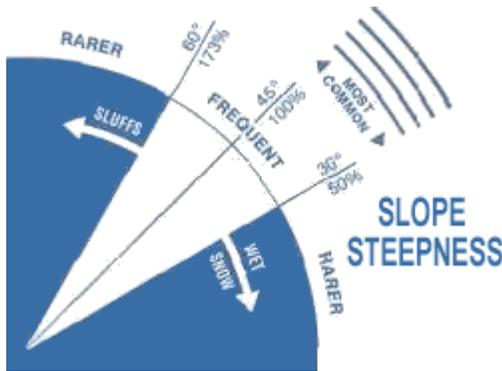


Photo by Attila Sipiczki

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At left: probability of an avalanche in relation to the slope angle. After the mandatory beacon check we had probing practice, shoveling and close grid technique exercises. Takeaway #2: **In case of team search** it is important that someone takes the lead and is in charge to **determine search mode and start the search. Then whoever gets the signal first will take the lead. Once a person is in the grid search phase, others should get ready to probe and shovel.**

In the afternoon we tried and practiced useful **winter patient packaging**. Gregg volunteered to be the patient in place of our test dummy (aka the Remarkable Returner Rescue Randy.) Some points worth noting after the experience:

- Constant, attentive **communication with the patient** will never hurt. In fact, it can be crucial.
- **The Hypo-Bag can raise quite claustrophobic feelings** in the patient. No doubt it can make one feel as cozy as a bug-in-a-rug, but if weather and other conditions allow it then we can consider not zipping, especially the hoody part or even leaving the hands on the chest area free for movements. Take weather, patient's condition, patient's clothing, time of evacuation and other means of packaging into consideration. Many times the Full Body Vacuum Splint and other blankets already provide more than adequate insulation and protection.
- **When tying the straps on the side of the SKED leave room for adjustment.** Leave the front ones longer than the back ones. That will provide room for both uphill pulling and downhill control, the attendants will not be in each other's way, and they won't be kicking snow into the face of the subject in the SKED.

Overall, it went really smoothly and Gregg enjoyed the ride in blankets..., in the Vacuum Splint..., in the Hypo-Bag..., in the SKED..., in our safe hands.

In the end we still had some time and inclination to try the "flag function" of the beacons and do some **"multi-victim search" practice**. The interference of the multiple beacon signals threw us all off. One visual way to illustrate this phenomenon is when you throw two rocks in a lake and the circumferential **waves amplify and quench each other where they cross**. I definitely recommend that everybody who comes in contact with beacons should try this out and train for it, as the inconsistent-appearing higher and lower numbers could be devastating in an emergency situation. Without the need of even understanding the physics behind it **the practical advice for these situations is to just pick one direction and decisively get a few feet away from the confusing spot; by that you give your beacon a "fresh start"**.

Thank you to the organizers and the instructors!

**VISITORS FROM THE UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
--JIMMIE YORGENSEN**

On January 24, IMSARU members welcomed a group of 24 individuals representing 21 foreign countries from various parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, Mexico, South American and the Middle East, along with representatives from Boise and Washington, D.C. These visitors were invited to the U.S. under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program, arranged by FHI360, which is a nonprofit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally-driven solutions.

The group's interest was in Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management as a Multi-Regional Project. They spent a total of 4 days here in Boise and, aside from a very busy meeting schedule, did manage a group afternoon trip to Idaho City.

The Department of State outlined some specific objectives for the project. Some examples:

- Examine U.S. local, state and federal approaches to disaster management, emergency preparedness and emergency response.
- Explore the importance of community-based partnerships and strategies for developing emergency preparedness and response plans.
- Demonstrate the variety of emergency preparedness and response structures at federal, state and local levels, highlighting current training practices and featuring the constructive impact of community input.

The program included visits, interaction and tours of a variety of state and local agencies to include:

- The State of Idaho Office of Emergency Management and various staff and leadership
- The Idaho Department of Lands
- The National Interagency Fire and Dispatch Center
- The Idaho Food Bank
- Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit

Our program/presentation included the history of IMSARU/MRA; our mission statement; our training, independence and fund-raising; plus some examples of missions and a plug for each of our specialty teams. As always, our visitors were interested and engaged with who we are and what we do. They had lots of questions; one of the first was whether we charged for our services. [Answer is No.] The session closed with comments and photos.

IMSARU participants were Gregg Rettschlag, Ken Swickard and Jimmie Yorgensen.

ASSIST IN VALLEY COUNTY - JANUARY 26, 2018 --BRANDON MART

At 11:19 I received a call from IMSARU President informing me that Valley County's attempts to locate a subject in the North Fork of the Payette had been unsuccessful, and that a sUAS (small unmanned aircraft systems—commonly referred to as “drones”) resource was requested.

This was right up my alley. Some people like building intricate technical rope systems. Others enjoy the delicate and detailed tracking of humans and animals. Some apply themselves to the huge dedication of training a search K9. For me, sUAS in SAR has been something I have been promoting, educating on, and lobbying for over many years. In fact, just days before receiving this call the IMSARU Board listened to me drone on (yes, pun intended) about sUAS protocols and testing standards required for a new Remote Pilot Team to be formed...so of course I couldn't pass this up. I informed my boss I would be gone for the day, packed up my gear, and left at around 11:45 a.m.

I arrived on scene at 1:20 p.m. The weather was steady at 30□, overcast, 2-5 mph breeze. Roads were wet and ice was a concern, especially with our base established in a pullout on the side of ID-55, south of Smith's Ferry, and northbound weekend traffic approaching.

A car had been located in this very pullout the previous day, running in idle with no driver around. Footprints were visible, walking down the snowpack to the Payette River, into the water and continuing out into the river...an eerie sight. The Valley County Sheriff and SAR were activated; family informed law enforcement that a suicide note had been left and that the subject had a long history of drug abuse. Valley County SAR had searched the area of interest on both sides of the river via vehicle and snowshoe, but turned up no further evidence, so I was requested to bring my sUAS.

This part of the river is wide with a few sandbars, the water mostly calm, slow-moving, clear and averaging around 1-3' in depth with a few deeper pools, before it narrows and turns into more turbulent rapids about a mile downstream. The theory was that the subject was somewhere between the LKP and the turbulent water.

Sortie 1: My plan before arriving on scene was to do a hasty search first, fly down the center of the river fast, and see if I could turn up anything. However, when I saw the conditions of the water, number of strainers near the edges and sandbars near the middle, I chose to do more detailed searching of the area near the LKP. It felt likely that he was nearby, washed up or caught in a strainer. I performed a fairly detailed search on the LKP area and to about 900 meters downstream, when my batteries were depleted. I uploaded the video data onto the OL's laptop in the command trailer, and prepared for my next sortie while LE and Valley County SAR members reviewed the footage. LE discovered a point of interest in the video, what looked like the shape/impression of a body in the riverbed silt, which became the area for the next sortie.

Sortie 2: We located that area, but it didn't seem of value, so the remainder of this sortie focused on following the footprints into the river for as long as possible and trying to uncover more evidence. Tracking footprints left in a riverbed with an sUAS was something I had never done before, and proved to be a very educating experience. We were able to track the subject to the middle of the river, at which point the tracks turned downstream and became untraceable approximately 160 ft. from where they entered the wa-

ter. The only evidence found was a distinct right handprint in the riverbed, pointed upstream, near where the tracks stopped, indicating that the subject may have started floating on the stomach with head pointed upstream.

Sortie 3: Feeling that we had thoroughly searched this area, the possibility of more strainers and bigger rocks downstream interested me. As I was the sole active field team member on the mission at this time, the OL drove me 1.17 miles downstream to an unplowed pullout, where the vehicle promptly got stuck in 18 inches of snow. I informed Larry that his embarrassment would not be spared and that his team would be informed.

While Larry dug out his vehicle and dignity, I flew upstream to survey the area between this pullout and the turn-around point from my first sortie. There were many strainers and boulders in this section, and I focused on searching them in detail. Approaching my intended turn-around point, physical obstructions were causing transmitter interference and my batteries were running low, so I gained altitude, turned around, and returned to the LZ.

Sortie 4: With no leads, I determined the only area I had not searched thoroughly was the area directly in between sorties # 1 and #3, so I made a flight plan to return to that area and do a more detailed search. While I prepped for the next sortie and warmed up my hands in the command trailer, the rest of the crew reviewed video footage from sortie #3.

I got up in the air and began tracking downstream. Knowing my objective wasn't very large, I detoured a few times along the way to investigate points of interest I thought I might have missed. Approaching my objective, I heard some commotion in the command trailer; moments later, the door opened and I was informed that the subject had been located in the last 40 seconds of the video feed from the third sortie. I returned the sUAS and we all met in the command trailer.

It turned out that in the moments immediately before recalling the sUAS to the LZ on sortie #3, I had captured clear footage of the subject on the far left side of the video feed. In hindsight, I likely missed such an obvious sight due to: (1) In my live feed from the sUAS, there are metrics and data shown in the heads-up display that appear around the edge of the screen, including the left side. (2) At the same time I was capturing the subject, I was experiencing transmission interference and my focus was on maintaining flight controls and radio contact rather than viewing the footage. It's quite possible I was looking directly at the subject on the screen, but my focus was on the telemetry provided by the HUD, so I didn't even see him.

I did another short and direct sortie to verify the subject's location in relation to the nearest access point, after which Valley County SAR, LE and I drove to make visual confirmation. Within 20 minutes we had verified the subject's location, the fire department was enroute, and LE was blocking a lane and managing traffic on ID-55. The subject was actually visible from the highway, and had been seen by the initial ground teams, but from the perspective at ground level the subject was indistinguishable from a rock breaking the water surface with snow accumulation on top.

This mission provided a lot of good experience for a burgeoning Remote Pilot Team within IMSARU, as well as some important take-aways: (1) Pilots can miss things on the live feed, which demonstrates the importance of recording and sharing the video footage. (2) As a remote pilot in command, consider turning your HUD telemetry off until you need it. (3) An aerial perspective in a river or water body search can provide unique advantages over the limitations of a perspective from the shoreline. (4) Given the opportunity, Larry can really move some snow!

McCALL ULTRA SLED DOG CHALLENGE, JANUARY 29-31 --JIM FINDLEY AND CHRISTINE KELLEY

This event is a qualifier for the Iditarod and was the first time it was held in Valley County, with a 237-mile out-and-back course in the Payette and Boise National Forests. Pre-events on January 27-28 were followed by the official race on January 29-31. IMSARU members responded to a request from Valley County SAR for help with this project.

Dave and Christi Kelley were up early on Sunday to help with the Ceremonial Start at Ponderosa State Park. Ten mushers each gave one 45-minute ride to the high bidders. (Jim's wife was one winner.) We helped mushers with sled prep, hooking dogs up to the sled line, and holding lead dogs out to the groomed trail. Once a ride was finished, we helped get the dogs back to their trailers.

At the official race start on Monday, Dave helped get sleds and dogs from trailers to the groomed trail, having to spin sleds and pull on lines to move dogs into correct position. Christi helped by grabbing sleds to slow them down as they approached the start line. They provided timed countdown and encouraged mushers. After the start, they joined with other IMSARU members and met Valley County SAR people.

The race began at Bear Creek Lodge, just northwest of McCall, and took a circuitous route to Lake Cascade State Park, with a stop at a checkpoint at the Platt Warming Hut near Donnelly. It then looped away from, and then back to Cascade, and returned to the finish at Bear Creek Lodge via the Platt checkpoint. At the Platt Warming Hut, Andy helped handle dogs, Dell and Colin assisted the vet, and Ted and Jim worked security and traffic control. Kristin was on the move, supporting Valley County SAR comms, initially at Platte, then at Lake Cascade State Park, then back to Platt.

Teams were originally scheduled to finish between midnight and 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday. As the race progressed, it was clear that the race was about 4 hours behind schedule, due to the soft conditions, moving our time slot to 3:00 a.m. until noon. We were able to assist the first team finishing at around 4:30 a.m. All other teams trickled in from about 6:30 to 11:00 a.m.

During the event, we learned some interesting facts: We were told that for an event like this, the dogs consume 9,000 calories a day! The sled dogs were a mixture of breeds, including German Shepherd and whippet. Originally left by the mining community in Alaska, dogs were crossbred by the indigenous people to create the best pulling dogs...and the ones that didn't pull well, became food!

The ten mushers from Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Utah competed with teams of 12 dogs. Jesse Royer, a 15-time Iditarod competitor (3 times in the top 10) was the winner.

IMSARU members assisting at this event were Jim Findley, Kristen Freeman, Christi Kelley, Dave Kelley, Ted Marx, Dell McNees, Colin Sesek, Andy Stehling,



Holding a team at start.



Sled dog team on the lake. (See story on page 6.)

Photo by professional photographer, who gave Christi permission to include it in this newsletter.

ARGENTINA CONNECTIONS

--DARRYL BEEMER

During a recent trip to Argentina, I got to meet the local SAR teams in the towns of Villa la Angostura and Bariloche. These groups are also volunteers and perform functions very similar to those of IMSARU. BRZA in Villa la Angostura welcomed me into their weekly meeting, where they were planning their support of an annual mountain trail running race, and they also practiced C-collar splinting with/on me. Club Andino in Bariloche also manages the mountain hut/cabin system and organized backcountry skiing, trekking, and rock-climbing expeditions for the local community. It was a great experience seeing the vast similarities between organizations while also hearing about the difficulties of getting funding for equipment and receiving helicopter support. Thanks to BRZA Angostura and Club Andino for their welcome!

REGIONAL K-9 TRAINING

--CHRISTI KELLEY

The Ada County Sheriff invited the IMSARU K-9 team leaders to attend a Regional K-9 Training at the Idaho State Fairgrounds in Garden City in January. In attendance were K-9 teams from the Ada County Sheriff's Department, Idaho Department of Corrections, Meridian Police and Twin Falls County. During the training, IMSARU K-9 members gained valuable information regarding training techniques and methods. There is hope that a working relationship and coordinated trainings can be developed between agencies in the future.

In attendance from IMSARU were Taylor Grisham, Christi Kelley and David Kelley. We were able to observe Apprehension and Narcotics dogs in training. Although the scent is different, the training methods are very similar, and stem from the same basic principles. Since IMSARU has Live Scent, Tracking, and Cadaver/HRD dogs, we are able to offer our services, if needed, as these types of training are not in our community enforcement departments.

CALENDAR

| | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Feb. 17 | SAR Field Training | Time and Place TBA |
| Feb. 20 | Medical Training | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| Feb. 27 | Business Meeting | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| March 6 | General Meeting (includes debriefs of any Missions) | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| March 7, 8, 9 | SAR Academy for new applicants | 6:00-9:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| March 13 | SAR Training | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| March 17 | SAR Field Training | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| March 20 | Medical Training | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| March 27 | Board Meeting [tentative; time to be determined] | |
| April 3 | General Meeting | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| April 10 | SAR Training | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| April 17 | Medical Training—Prep for Race to Robie Creek | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |
| April 20 | Set up base camp at Robie Creek | Late Afternoon |
| April 21 | Race to Robie Creek | ALL Day |
| April 24 | Business Meeting | 7:00 p.m. at the Compound |

NOTES: Field Trainings may be held on Saturday, Sunday, or both days

ALSO NOTE: Many activities are not listed on this calendar page. The specialty teams (Mantrackers, Mountain Bikers, K-9 Team and Technical Rescue Team) all do additional training, and various committees meet as needed, etc.

Many thanks to all who wrote articles for this issue, and my apologies for not being able to fit in the majority of photos supplied.

SPECIAL THANKS TO DELL McNEES FOR HANDLING THE PRINTING, ISSUE AFTER ISSUE, TO ROD KNOPP FOR UPDATING THE MAILING LIST AND PRINTING MAILING LABELS, AND TO DON FRIDRICH FOR POSTING THE NEWSLETTER ON OUR WEBSITE.

Check the Web calendar for updates, changes and additions at http://www.imsaru.org/?page_id=34

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