



## Rescuer Drowning Fatalities Up

Rescue fatalities due to drowning will make 1997 long remembered as a black year. It began with the double drowning during a scuba recovery attempt in Washington state in the spring. Within a short time, a further three officers died during scuba operations in the east. In the late spring a young firefighter in Pennsylvania drowned after being swept under a car during a low-water crossing rescue attempt.

Finally, another volunteer firefighter drowned during an rescue operation in Oregon, though details on this incident are sketchy. That death brought the total—that we know about—to seven, and we have heard rumors of at least two more.

When added to the number of near-misses we continue to see on the evening news, and hear about over the

“grapevine,” it is clear that aquatic rescue and recovery operations, even with the proper equipment and training, continue to be the most dangerous.

Be safe, cautious, and thoughtful in the New Year. ➤

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## 5 Swept Away in Early El Nino Event

Instructor-Trainer Slim Ray sent us an AP article concerning five kids swept away in a flood channel near Rosemead, CA just before Thanksgiving. Instructors in southern California were able to give us further details.

The first big winter storm of the season brought gale force winds, two inches of rain, and a loss of power to nearly 60,000 households. On Wednesday morning, November 26th, five students (two boys and three girls) were walking to San Gabriel High School in the Alhambra Wash, located near the Whitter Narrows Dam. It had been raining steadily for several hours and a sudden flash flood of rain

water carried the five away. The group attempted to run to a ladder and climb out, but were too late.

County Engine 4 was the first to respond, and swiftwater rescue teams were toned out as well. A 15 year old boy managed to climb out on his own a short distance downstream. A 14 year old girl was carried more than three miles downstream into the Rio Hondo where she was rescued by a pre-positioned swiftwater rescue team. Two 14 year-old girls, and 17 year old boy were all found dead, trapped in strainers and debris piles. ➤

# The E-Mail is Buzzing

from Jim Segerstrom

I wanted to tell you all that one of the last of the nonbelievers has been converted. E-mail is not only an effective way to communicate, but has proven to save me hours of phone time each office day.



Since I started using it, we have built a very successful network for the Helicopter Rescue Working Group, exchanging information virtually everyday. Additionally, your International Rescue Instructors Association Board has been able to communicate readily. Also, I am “talking” to our instructors and agents in other countries.

If you get frustrated trying to reach me by machine or pager, please—if you have e-mail—try me that way. I return my messages at least once a day (when I’m in town).

Again, my e-mail address is: [rq3ops@mlode.com](mailto:rq3ops@mlode.com). Also, let the office know your e-mail address for the database. You can send them a message at [info@rescue3.com](mailto:info@rescue3.com).



## El Nino Preparations



Despite a drier than normal fall, California continues to prepare for potential El Nino-related events. Latest surveys show that the affected area of the Pacific has shrunk approximately 10%, leading some to believe that El Nino may be either not as severe, or may even bring drought conditions to California.

Meanwhile, however, the state considers the weather threat real. Most northern California reservoirs have been drained down to 30 to 50% of capacity. The levee systems have been repaired, and have been modified as well. Many are lower than before, and large areas of

farm land have been designated as relief areas to be purposefully flooded if need be. Many communities have been clearing debris, brush and trees from flood channels and urban streams—despite local protests that wildlife sanctuaries and natural habitat are being destroyed.

In-house instructors have been teaching Swiftwater First Responder and SRT I courses at a fast rate. Jay Bowdler has been doing Swiftwater Boat Operators courses. Two Aquatic Helicopter and Crew Chief courses were held in December and more are already scheduled for spring. Jim Segerstrom continues to move about the country teaching the Management of Moving Water Operations course.

The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services Swiftwater Committee has met once a month to finish the typing standards for swiftwater rescue teams. Additionally, the eight state OES swiftwater/flood teams have been put through four days of Boat Operators training and three days of Helicopter training, along with the California Highway Patrol, the Coast Guard, and the Army National Guard.

Now in early February, SRT’s on the east coast have been very busy. Charlotte, Asheville, and South Orange (all North Carolina). They were deployed last month and are deployed as of this writing. Instructor Jeremy Edmunds had an excellent rescue of a "rafter" who had tied himself to a raft and launched on the flooded French Broad River. Jeremy had to eventually call in a Pave Low helicopter on training in the Asheville area. The helo crew deployed the penetrator with no rescuer because they were working it with NVG in a very tight spot and needed all eyes to keep the main rotor and tail clear.

Instructor Robbie Harbin reports the death of a rescuer on a call in Carter County Tennessee. A mixed crew of SRTs and folks who had completed other river rescue programs responded to reports of people trapped in a mobile home park. Four guys launched in a 4 meter inflatable with a 40 hp engine. After checking a couple of homes the engine gave out. While trying to restart it, the crew drifted into the main channel of the Doe River (which was 15 feet higher than normal) and were pulled downstream into the main laminar flows. They were

*Continued on page 4*

# “Swiftwater Rescue - Staying Alive” Video Ready

Jim Segerstrom and Fireforce have been hard at work this fall producing a four part video program on swiftwater rescue. Jim says that, “This is the most complete water rescue video yet! This video series is indispensable for any emergency service wishing to respond to swiftwater rescue today. I’m going to urge all of our instructors to include ‘Swiftwater Rescue - Staying Alive’ as part of our national curriculum.” It also serves as useful review for all SRT’s.

The four part modular series includes four video tapes, outlines, objectives, and quizzes.

Module 1 covers:

- Philosophy and Absolutes
- Safety and Survival
- River Dynamics and Personal Equipment

Module 2 covers:

- Reach & Throw Rescues
- Shallow Water Crossings
- Entrapments & Vertical Pinnings


Module 3 covers:

- Boats and Boat Handling
- Line Crossings
- Technical Systems

Module 4 covers:

- “Go” Contact Rescues
- Low Head Dams
- Spinal Considerations
- Helicopter Rescue Operations

The videos feature Jim Segerstrom, Marshall Parks, Don Vilorio, Tom Marshal, Jay Bowdler, Tom Miner, Andy Spier, and several other instructors. The Rescue Source has the set available for \$295.00.

Jim Segerstrom and Fireforce are preparing to start the next joint video training project—rope rescue. More on this in the future. 

## Surfin’ the Web



- Check out Rescue 3 International’s completely revamped web site at <http://www.rescue3.com>. Current information, including class schedules are now available.
- Rescue Rocket has a nice web site with lots of product information on their line launcher. Surf over to them at <http://www.rescuerocket.com>.
- Another product that looks like it might be useful for water rescue is the Lifeboy Pro System. You can look at their site at <http://www.lifeboy.com>.
- FEMA’s site at <http://www.fema.gov> contains current FEMA-related news, storm watch information, El Nino articles, disaster tips and much more. A definite must-visit!
- Search team members will be interested in a research project concerning the lost person behavior of Alzheimer’s patients. Visit Robert Koester’s work on this subject at <http://galen.med.virginia.edu/~rjk5a/alzsar.htm>.

*"El Nino Preparations" continued from page 2*

trying to paddle to shore and were swept under two bridges, but didn't make the third. The boat flipped and everybody went into the water. Only one guy was wearing a wetsuit. Two managed to make it to shore. One SRT spent the night in a tree, tying himself in with his throwbag as he felt himself becoming hypothermic. At dawn he was located. A Virginia State Police 407 unsuccessfully tried a short-haul rescue with the Billy Pugh, but were unable to penetrate the foliage. They shot lines to the guy but he was too cold to hold onto them. Finally an unknown SRT from Carter County made it to him with a rope clipped to his live bait jacket, and they rescued him in the raft. The fatality was a Junior Godsey, of the Sullivan County EMS. His body was found several miles downstream in a strainer.

Near Salt Lake, a Lifeflight helicopter contracted from Air Methods of Colorado, crashed killing all onboard after landing to rescue the victim of an avalanche. The medic on board was a member of Salt Lake USAR TF 1. According to published reports the pilot was talking to the hospital on the cell phone (!) when impact occurred. This is the third crash for Air Methods in just over a month. They lost one taking off near Boulder in December due to a wire strike, also killing all on board.

In North Carolina a helicopter crashed in high winds while stringing high power lines from tower to tower.

## Calendar

- March 1, 1998. Deadline for nominations for Higgins-Langley award. (See page 7)
- March 15, 1998. Deadline for **RQ3 Instructors** to have all necessary paperwork on file in order to remain active. (See insert).
- March 16-22, 1998. FDIC Show in Indianapolis, Indiana.
- April 21-23, 1998. Fire-Rescue West '98 in San Jose, California.
- May 27-30, 1998. NASAR Response '98, Portland, Oregon.
- October 7-10, 1998. First Due Fire & Rescue Conference & Expo in Las Vegas, Nevada.

## Slim's Done it Again

Once again Slim Ray, internationally recognized swiftwater authority, has written a "must have" publication. The Swiftwater Rescue Field Guide is a tough, waterproof, 50 page field reference that is small enough to fit in a pocket, glove compartment or an emergency response pack.

If it has been awhile since you took your last swiftwater rescue course, you will appreciate having this handy pocket reference to topics like basic rescuer safety considerations, river hydrology, equipment, shore-based, boat-based, and in-water rescue techniques knots, rigging for river rescue, helicopters, incident command, and special situations like low-head dams and flood channel rescuers. It will be available in April at The Rescue Source and sells for \$14.95.

According to witnesses the main rotor hit a man on the tower, causing the aircraft to crash. In the helicopter two others were killed, and four on the ground were injured.

On the west coast there has been some good news: LA City and County were shown on the national news doing some righteous helo/swiftwater rescues. City did a hoist rescue of two people going down a flood channel, and County did a one-skid for a road crew worker on his inverted backhoe in a river. Very nice stuff.

In Calaveras County (CA) SRTs are searching for a missing 62 year old man who got out of his car to see if the flooded channel was too deep to drive across. As of this writing they haven't found his body; downstream are some nasty Class III rapids compounded by solid blackberry bushes.

With new storms predicted in soon, we are not certain that the worst is over! 

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## SRT's in the News

Pat Richardson of the San Diego Lifeguard Service headed up what eventually


became, a crew of 48 lifeguards performing safety and stunts during the making of the hit movie Titanic. The guards helped in multiple functions on the site of the 700' long, five story high, mock-up of the ship built by the producers near Ensenada, Mexico, according to Nancy Rigg.

Look for the guy getting shot and falling out of the lifeboat. That's Pat.

Tom Miner received mention in the newest issue of Fire Rescue Magazine for his frank and honest appraisal of his recent accident. Tom was rappelling from a helicopter and ended the evolution "cratering," thus fracturing his ankles. He commented that the accident was likely the result of complacency, combined with a weakened grip on the rope due to a recent hand and wrist injury. Tom Vines commented, "This is a rare and valuable account for rescuers and

others who use rope skills in potentially dangerous situations. It is unusual for an experienced person to go public with such a thoughtful and incisive account of a personal accident." Tom is an SRT I and II Instructor with the Pierce County, WA, Sheriff's Office.

Kim Little in Christchurch, New Zealand advised that having just completed an SRT I and II course, five local guides found themselves assisting the police because of a car off of a bridge in the river. The guides used the ICS system to organize the scene, and then proceeded to rig a raising system and secure the single victim into the litter for a trouble-free pull up to the bridge. They told Kim, "all this stuff actually works!"

Greg Toman, an SRT instructor from Australia, was honeymooning in the States with his new wife Debbie. After visiting the office they managed to cover the entire western U.S., finding time to visit with instructors Arnie Brockmire at Livermore Labs Fire Department in California, and Captain Jim Demello, an SRT and Helo instructor, with the Honolulu (HI) Fire Department. Greg is returning to Brisbane to start his rookie training with the Fire Brigade. In the late spring Barry Edwards will be heading there to teach a Low to High Angle Instructors Course. 




## Rescue 3 and The Rescue Source Moving

March 1st is the projected move-in date to our "new" building. Built in 1880, the remodeled facilities in the historical Old Town Elk Grove District will provide us with 7,000 square feet of office/warehouse space under one roof.

Here is how the building looks today with members of Elk Grove Fire Department's Swiftwater Rescue

Team and some of our office staff. It should be noted that the Elk Grove Fire Department will soon be 100% Swiftwater Rescue Technician 1 trained!



Our mailing address and phone numbers remain the same. The new physical address will be 9075 Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove, CA 95624. Drop by weekdays, 9 am-5 pm for a tour! 

## Helicopter Rescue '97

The conference went off with only the usual few hitches. Shortly before the start, STARFlight's 412 was down with a tail boom problem, and the part had to come from England, arriving in the nick of time. The weather cooperated and participants and speakers from six countries were in attendance.



As usual, the organizing committee tried to please everyone and generally succeeded, though some of the usual comments were there—"Not enough hands-on training; too many speakers." "Not enough speakers and classroom sessions—too much hands-on" "Safety procedures took too much time."

This year we had a surprising number of pilots. And while we allowed for pilot training tracks in the classroom, STARFlight would have allowed more of the pilots to actually fly during vertical reference evolutions if we had but known. To that end, Rescue 3 International, in conjunction with Intermountain Helicopters is now offering a vertical reference course for rescue pilots. For more information on this course please contact the Rescue 3 office, or Intermountain direct at 209-533-4374.

Helicopter Rescue '98 will go in late October, or early November but will be strictly training—Pilot's Course, Crew Chiefs' Course, and the Aquatic Helicopter Rescue Course. Helicopter Rescue '99 will return to the speakers format, and will likely be held in the eastern U.S. We are planning an additional Crew Chiefs course in early October in Las Vegas. 🚁

## Like, What an Ordeal for Two Valley Girls

*From Associated Press comes this priceless article:*

Los Angeles -- Two teenage girls thanked their rescuers Wednesday, one day after they were saved from a raging flood control channel.

"It's just like amazing. This is like the person who saved my life," 13-year-old Megan Cole said of her rescuer, city fire Capt. Timothy Quinn. He dangled from a helicopter and scooped Cole up as she was swept toward him.

"It's like wonderful," Cole added.

Jennifer Simpson, 14, hugged her rescuer, firefighter Dan Grahek.

The San Fernando Valley girls thought they would just dip their feet into the channel near the Van Nuys airport during the El Nino-driven storm Tuesday and were taken by the current.

"We're going to write out a little thing that we're going to give to all the students, like, that says, this could happen to you," Simpson added.

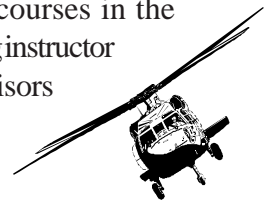
*Only in California!* 🚁

## Helicopter News

There will be two instructors courses in the spring, both in Sonora. The existing instructor cadre and the IRIA Board of Advisors have both combined their thoughts on the requirements for taking this very specialized instructors program. Among other requirements candidates will need to have a written recommendation from one of the cadre; and be part of an agency that is directly involved in aviation rescue—using either its own, or affiliated, aircraft. Candidates with a strong background already in aviation are preferred, and EMT 1 is required. Accepted candidates will have to sign an agreement and covenant not to compete for a five year period, and an agreement to abide by the IRIA Code of Conduct.

Further, it should be noted that being a helicopter instructor is expensive. Personal aviation equipment alone will cost an average of \$2500, including helmet, flight suit, water survival equipment, etc. With tuitions, travel, expenses, and time spent as a provisional instructor, costs will be even more.


A maximum total of 24 slots are available. For further details please contact Gaile at Rescue 3. 🚁



## N. American Helicopter Working Group

On another note, the Working Group is up and running, networking virtually every day. Recent discussions of accidents and techniques have benefited us all, and some are included here.

If you are interested in helicopter rescue, participating on a regular basis, but for one reason or another, don't feel the need to become an instructor, we encourage your involvement. We are working on a mailing list for this subject exclusively to be made available in the late spring.

The next meeting of the Working Group is set for the annual Helicopter Association International Conference in Anaheim February 16th. 

**I never got the Oct-Dec , 1997 issue of *The Rescuer!***


If this thought has crossed your mind, you are right. Due to an unbelievably busy fourth quarter (El Nino!) we simply never got this issue out. Those of you with paid subscriptions will get two free issues added to your subscription.

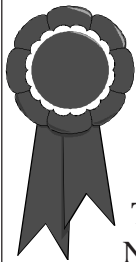
## New Twist on an Old Technique

by Alan Hartford

During a recent Swiftwater Team training exercise, we found ourselves in a narrow area of current reversal. Because of the confined area it was not possible to get alongside of the "victim" with a boat. We set up for a four-point maneuver using a Carlson board, but rather than approaching the victim nose first, we backed the board into the reversal. (This would work as well with a boat). The advantages are several. With a Zodiac-style boat it is usually easier to pull the victim in over the transom, versus the bow. With a Carlson board, pulling the victim in over the tail allows the rescuer to maintain more control of the board while avoiding the control lines.

With a Carlson board, there is a trick to getting the rescuer and board into the reversal area. The rescuer should ride on top of the board as opposed to hanging off the back like normal. By flattening out on top of the board and lifting the legs, the board easily rides into the backwash area by planing on the water. The backwash current is usually stronger than the outwash current that separates at the boil line. This means that as the boat or board with the rescuer and victim is pulled towards the boil line, the boat/board is best oriented to the strongest current. If the outwash current is particularly strong, use the boil line to make the transition to the shore.

Caution: In particularly high water, it may be very difficult to pull an IRB upstream against a very fast outwash with the transom oriented upstream and if it is difficult to launch ON the boil line there may be problems deploying the boat in this fashion. 



### Nominations for Higgins-Langley Award Needed

The Swiftwater Rescue Committee of the National Association for Search and Rescue is seeking nominations for the 1998 Higgins and Langley Memorial Awards for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Swiftwater Rescue.

The awards recognize outstanding achievement in the field of swiftwater rescue. In addition to individual incidents and acts of heroism, swiftwater rescue team efforts, those who have dedicated years of service to developing and implementing swiftwater rescue training programs, and public safety-media-education efforts, will be considered for nomination.

**The deadline for submission is March 1, 1998.** For more information and copies of the nomination forms, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Mr. Paul McMinn  
National Association for Search and Rescue  
Swiftwater Rescue Committee  
c/o South Bend Recreation Dept.  
727 Eddy St.  
South Bend, IN 46615  
Telephone (219) 235-9328 Fax (219) 235-5566

# RESCUE 3 INTERNATIONAL

PO BOX 519

ELK GROVE, CA 95759-0519

**Address Correction Requested**

## New Product Release

The Rescue Source is proud to announce a new line of rescue technical gear designed for professional rescuers and by professional rescuers. Marketed under the RQ3 label, each product is functional and strong but light.

- The RQ3 Q-Eight is a unique design. The ears are positioned on the side making tie off under load very easy and safe. Ears still prevent larks footing.
- The RQ3 Stretcher Rigging Plate is made of lightweight aluminum and features enough holes for all your lines.(not shown)
- The Stealth Rigging Plate was designed by Master Instructor Barry Edwards. Put the anchor on the point and the “wings” will rotate toward the load for a straight line of pull. (not shown)
- The RQ3 Edge Roller has more holes on the bottom and side plates for ease of securing in any situations. It even has slots if you need to use webbing.
- Finally the RQ3 pulleys have quality built into each one. The stainless bolts, washers, lock nuts, and oilite bearings stand up to the rigors of the rescuer’s job. Side plates rotate which allow the pulley to be attached to the rope at any point. Aluminum side plates make them lightweight yet durable. They come in two and four inch sizes and are available in standard or prusik-minding, single or double models.

