

THE RESCUER



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Experiencing the “Extreme” Change by Rick Wright

In recent years we have all become aware of changing weather patterns and the resulting natural disasters. I have seen more rain, hailstorms, and mass destruction caused by tornadoes and hurricanes in the last few years than I can remember in my lifetime (and I’ve turned the corner on middle age).

CNN and other television news networks see to it that these human dramas are played out regularly in our living rooms and in front of our families. There is no escape unless we live in a cave without cable access. We have become numb to disasters caused by extreme weather changes.

Nature has not been the only force causing change in our lives. Man has been doing a more subtle job in bringing about change in the way that we think. Advertising has changed many of our attitudes. Standards are being set for a more aggressive way of life resulting in the need to take greater risks to be accepted. As people respond to these new standards, especially the younger generations, all those involved in “rescue” services will need to be ready!

Recently, I reviewed a study of the Canadian Ground Search & Rescue. The more I read the more it seems that the behavioral characteristics discussed in this study applied to us, their American neighbors.

As you read through the next few paragraphs think about the changes that will be necessary in preparing to meet these new needs.

Risk-Taking Behavior

The emergence of the term “extreme” to describe sport and other adventure activities, combined with the availability of new technologies, is drastically changing the way individuals can participate in the outdoors. Alan W. Ewert (1995), author of “Current Trends in Risk Recreation”, suggests the growth in risk recreation is moving from the realm of the daredevil to mainstream. He also feels that young people within the age group of 15-24 years of age are greater risk takers than others and, within the next 5 years, will form the nucleus of the next generation of “risk recreators.” This should increase the need for SAR personnel because the “*risk recreators*” are not adequately prepared.

Have you taken the time to notice some of the new commercials lately? How about the beer commercial that shows a young snowboarder sailing happily over a precipice (and ultimately enjoying a beer at the close of a young macho fantasy). I was remembering the increasing number of young snowboarders who have died in recent years venturing off the marked runs looking for something more exciting, more extreme.

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There is an advertisement for outdoor wear that depicts a man, heavily laden with backpack, forging his way across swift water under the banner "bridges are for sissies." Commercials like these are attempting to glorify risk, targeting risk-taking populations, and pose an additional challenge in light of increasing participation rates in outdoor pursuits and the appeal of extreme sports to the younger population.

In a recent survey of the Canadian public, irresponsible behavior, carelessness, unnecessary risk taking, insufficient knowledge and training were all considered to be significant contributing factors in most SAR incidents. Similarly, the lack of subject knowledge, skill, appropriate equipment and the failure of victims to notify others of their intentions were reported by SAR planners and coordinators as causes for a number of SAR incidents.

Technology

With the growth and spread of media technology, including television, print media, virtual reality and the Internet, information on outdoor activities is more available to, and used by, more people than ever before. However, the overall level of awareness of users has not changed significantly.

Technology enables more people to participate in activities previously beyond their imagination. With the advent of the mountain bike, all-terrain vehicles, freeze dried foods, improved outdoor clothing and

the growing popularity of utility vehicles, individuals are now able to travel into more remote terrain with greater ease and comfort than before.

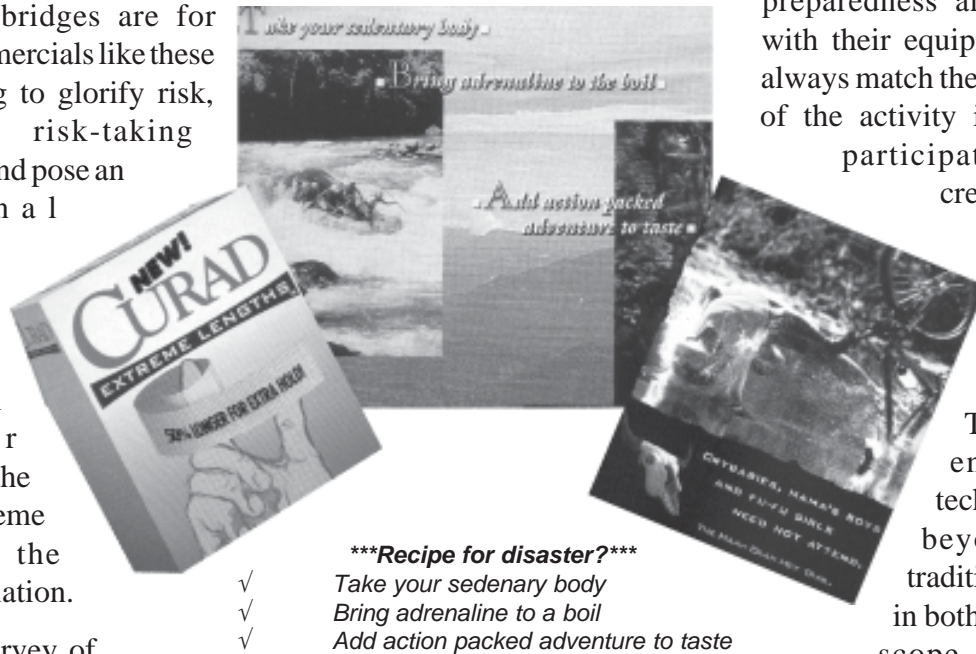
Unfortunately, the users level of preparedness and experience with their equipment does not always match the new challenge of the activity in which they participate. This has created a new and expanding category of recreational SAR client - the *dilettante*. This is a person enabled by technology to go beyond average traditional capability in both the nature and scope of outdoor activity, but with

possessing the high level of knowledge and safety awareness.

Attitude Toward Personal Responsibility

This survey also showed that people who use technology to push the limits of personal abilities have the attitude that there is a permanent "safety net" associated with outdoor activities. They believe there is an unchanging level of protection despite the increase in number of participants and the increase in recreational activities.

There is a growing antigovernment, anti-regulation sentiment resulting in fewer tendencies for someone to follow those rules and regulations intended to promote safety and awareness. More people are seeking greater freedom in their private lives and less intervention in their recreational pursuits. As a result, the sense of individual responsibility relaxes, and has declined overall.



Many of these people consider themselves “weekend warriors.” They seek to reconnect with nature through their outdoor pursuits and vacation destinations. For the most part, these urbanites are spontaneous weekend enthusiasts who take little time to prepare for their undertakings and lack the necessary skill, experience and judgment to partake in their respective activities safely. A Canadian official added “peoples’ abilities have changed, and they are no longer conditioned to be outdoors.”

That is quite a statement considering the media is telling us that with the right equipment (or is it the right aftershave, I keep forgetting?) we can go anywhere and do anything. At some point and time reality has to set in. Too often it is in the middle of a crisis.

The Report of the Canadian Ground Search & Rescue Study was used for the factual basis of this article. If you would like a copy of this study write or call:

*The National Search & Rescue Secretariat
275 Slater Street, 4th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2*

*Tel: 1-800-727-9414; Fax: 1-613-996-3746
Email: gsar@nss.gc.ca*

The price is \$35 plus shipping (I believe the price is Canadian so US \$ should be less).


Conclusion

How many water rescue courses have you attended or taught where you ended up pulling someone out of the water because they literally got in “over their head?” They had the equipment but no idea of the power of the water. Nor did they take the time (or motivation) to develop basic operational skills for the equipment they were trying to use.

Our country is not lacking in recreational financial resources. But, our time seems to be at a premium so people are buying the toys they think they need but aren’t spending the time developing sufficient skills to take care of themselves. This results in more people finding themselves unexpectedly in trouble

and needing rescue assistance.

Is there anything we can do to change current attitudes that glorify risk? Do we live in a society where individuals believe that they are indestructible? Do we hear comments like, “it will never happen to me!” Other than helping people become more aware of the pitfalls this type of attitude can bring, what can be done? Or, will we be forced to wait for this phase to run its course? It is a helpless feeling, and one that should not be acceptable in the rescue world.

We have a very limited ability to influence the public’s needed change of attitude. What we can do is take steps to prepare ourselves and our agencies for the increased number and difficulty of rescue calls. 



Hug-A-Tree and Survive

This is a children’s Search and Rescue (SAR) prevention program. It is aimed at children from kindergarten to grade six, and has as its purpose the goal of teaching them:



- How not to become lost in the woods.
- How to do if they do become lost.
- How not to come to harm.
- How they can help searchers find them.

The History Of The Program

The Hug-A-Tree and Survive program was developed in San Diego, California, in response to the loss of a life of a young boy, nine years old. In February 1981, the boy was camping with his parents and brothers when he became lost. Despite a valiant 3 1/2 day search by law enforcement, trackers, 400 volunteers, 200 Marines, and search and rescue dogs, the boy was found dead as a result of hypothermia. Many of

the people involved were deeply affected by this tragedy and wished to find a way to prevent similar mishaps from ever happening again.

In March of 1981, Ab Taylor, a retired Border Patrol agent and Tom Jacobs, a free-lance writer and photographer, responded by creating this program. This is copyrighted slide presentation and hands-on

demonstration designed to teach, at their level of understanding, basic survival principles to children aged 5-12.

To learn more about this program please visit the Hug-A-Tree and Survive web site at:

www.tbt.com/hugatree/



When Seconds Count: Storm Ready Communities Are Prepared

Ninety percent of all presidentially declared disasters are weather related, leading to around 500 deaths per year and nearly \$14 billion in damage. To help Americans guard against the ravages of severe weather, the National Weather Service has designed Storm Ready, a program aimed at arming America's communities with the communication and safety skills necessary to save lives and property.

About Storm Ready

Storm Ready prepares communities with an action plan that responds to the threat of all types of severe weather—from tornadoes to tsunamis. The entire community- from the mayor, emergency managers, to business leaders and civic groups- can take the lead on becoming Storm Ready. Local National Weather Service forecast offices work with communities to complete an application and review process. To be officially Storm Ready, a community must:

- Establish a 24- hour warning point and emergency operations center;
- Have more than one way to receive severe weather forecasts and warnings and to alert the public;
- Create a system that monitors local weather conditions;



- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars;
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

Storm Ready Certification Process

An advisory board, comprised of National Weather Service warning coordination meteorologists, and state and local emergency managers, will review applications from municipalities and visit the locations to verify the steps made in the process to become Storm Ready. Storm Ready communities must stay freshly prepared, because the designation is only valid for two years. The advisory board seeks to officially designate 20 communities each year for the next five years as Storm Ready.

For more information about the Storm Ready program, please visit the following web site:

www.nws.noaa.gov/stormready



Betsy's Great Adventure Bovine Has No Beef with Rescue Crews

Betsy had a rough day at the pasture on Tuesday. Firefighters worked almost five hours to save the pregnant cow after it slipped under a fence and fell down a 35-foot ravine. The unfortunate mother-to-be had been trapped since Monday night when she fell into the gulch at the 5-acre residence on Little Road off Highway 84. Betsy's owner called the fire department and a veterinarian at 10 a.m. Tuesday after they couldn't get her out. Firefighters from the California Department of Forestry in Sunol and its Large Animal Rescue Team, called in from Felton,



used slings and a tractor to pull out the 1,000-pound Hereford-Angus cross, said CDF Captain Itson.

Betsy's owner said, "I was feeling really bad. I only made one call and I didn't know it was going to cause such a big commotion, but I am thrilled she's all right".

Sean Norman, one of the rescuers and an SRT1 Instructor, said there were two engines and about 10 firefighters at the scene. Film crews from "Animal Planet" and "Real T.V." showed up and filmed the incident. ■

Quickie Bipods

by Slim Ray

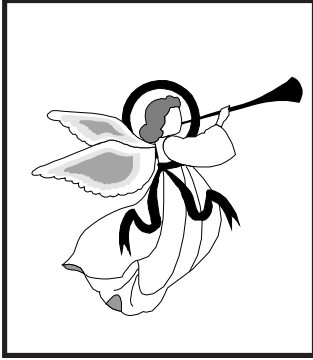
While doing an SRT-A course recently with Dennis Kerrigan, we came upon a great way to make a quickie bipod. Bipods are usually used as a high directional anchor to hang a pulley—this gets your rope up off the deck and away from abrasion rocks, etc. The usual way to do it is to lash two poles together. This takes time and you first have to have the poles. We didn't, and could not find any on short notice. We were starting to worry.

Finally, we decided to use signposts. These are the U-shaped metal stakes that the transportation people bolt signs to. We found a Department of Transportation yard nearby where workers allowed us to borrow a couple. They worked great. Because of the U-section, they are quite strong, and no heavier than poles.

On ours, we just bolted two of them back to back, scissor them out, padded the V, and slung a pulley from it. Then we guided it down front and rear. It was quite stable, even though it was resting on bare New England rock. You could make an even better one by bolting a section of chain to the bottom to control the degree of scissoring. This type of bipod is quite flexible – you can move the bolt up and down, and change it around if you want to use it as a "lazy leg" bipod or tripod. If you don't have a bolt you can still lash the stakes together, and you can lash on a third pole on as a stabilizing leg.

Since these stakes are almost everywhere, you can "borrow" one in an emergency, but the local DOT probably won't like it. Better to buy it instead and carry it on your truck. ■

A Band of Angels by Diane Brazil, rafter



This is an account of an unexpected river rescue during an SRT1 course on the Cache Creek in Northern California taught by Ron Roysum on July 8, 2000.

On July 8, I was enjoying my 26th day of rafting on Cache Creek (the previous 25 times having been over a 15 year period). The water was perfect for rafting, the day was beautiful, and I was taking my 24-year-old son rafting for the very first time. This was something I had been looking forward to for many years.

About an hour into the trip, we were thrown from the raft- not an unusual thing on a white water trip. Because of my experience on Cache Creek and other white water rivers, I knew instinctively what to do- get my feet out in front of me facing downriver and enjoy the ride. This time, though, I was heading downriver backwards and, for some reason, wasn't able to turn around. As a result, and because the river was moving so fast, I was being pulled under- repeatedly. Each time I was able to come up for air, I was pulled down too fast to get enough and was gasping while I struggled frantically to turn around.

I do remember trying to scream for help but was pulled under before I could. I threw up my arms up in case anyone who was around might realize what was happening to me. The thought passed through my head that I was actually drowning. At that moment, I either felt or saw a rope near me. Still not breathing air, I grabbed the rope and was pulled to safety.

There, on the banks, stood a group of people in wet suits, helmets and life jackets. My first thought was that they were there to rescue people caught in the rapids that they had just pulled me from. As I sat there

for a long time gasping and feeling my heart racing, I slowly realized what was actually happening.

They were a group of firefighters in training for white water rescue. This was their first time there- at that very moment and at the very spot where my life was almost taken. When I realized that, I thought, "So, this is what a band of angels looks like." And I was right. While I didn't require CPR and my lungs weren't filled with water, I did take in some water and was actually closer to drowning than it might have appeared.

You saved my life and I am deeply grateful. I don't even know how to really thank you except to send you this message. I only hope that the people who take your training realize the profound importance of what they're learning and how it will impact the lives of the people they save. Thank you so very much. 🐼

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Paron, Arkansas, 11 Pulled From Flash Flood

This is an excerpt from the Courier newspaper, Saline County, Arkansas, June 2000.

Two Benton firefighters and an Arkansas Game and Fish Commission officer were credited with pulling 11 people to safety from the rain-swollen North Fork of the Saline River.

Doug Brown, a member of the Lake Norrell Volunteer Fire Department and captain of the department's Swift Water Rescue Squad, said fireman Wade Marshall and Bryan Ware and AG&FC Officer Chris Carpenter "did a tremendous job" in rescuing those who were attending a family reunion along the river.

Although trained to perform rescues under conditions that existed at the time, Brown said he and swiftwater rescue team members Lynn Wright and Ronnie Forsyth “couldn’t get a line to the people who were in jeopardy.



“Seven of them were stranded inside a pavilion and four others were hanging onto trees as the water continued to rise,” said Brown. He said the would-be victims ranged from 18 and up. He said the water was moving too fast for even a strong swimmer to navigate to safety.


Marshall, Ware and Carpenter, through the Lake Norell department’s mutual agreement policy with other area agencies, were on hand to execute the rescue operation. Marshall and Ware are trained in swiftwater rescue techniques and Carpenter is an instructor, Brown noted.

Using an AG&FC boat, the three were able to reach those in danger and deliver them to safer ground. Wright and Forsyth, along with Constable Jerry Smith, took care of the shore-based operations at the time the rescue was being conducted.

He also said the situation helps emphasize the need for a swiftwater rescue team in the Lake Norell area. Although local politicians have been helpful with

funding, more is needed to buy equipment and pay for training.

The cost for a basic setup per person costs about \$2,000,” Brown explained. That covers the initial costs of the wet and dry suits, vest, diver’s knife, helmet, fins and gloves. That doesn’t include the actual rescue equipment, which consists of ropes, pulleys, body litters, rope bags and items designed especially for low-angle rope rescues. “We’re hoping to send 6 or 7 more to training in September,” noted Brown.

He said the course is taught by Springdale area Park Ranger Mark Clippinger. Clippinger teaches a course designed by Rescue 3 International of Elk Grove, Calif. “It’s the largest and most widely recognized swiftwater training agency in the world,” Brown said. 



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PO BOX 519

ELK GROVE, CA 95759-0519

Surfin' the Web



- <http://www.enter.net/~voyager/knots.htm> --- An entertaining site sponsored by a Boy Scout troupe in Pennsylvania. Has animated graphics showing how to tie simple knots.
- <http://www.fema.gov/kids/> --- This site teaches kids how to be prepared for disasters and how to prevent disasters by taking action now!
- <http://www.redcross.org/news/inthnews/00/9-11-00.html> --- A nice write up by the American Red Cross commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Great Hurricane of Galveston (Tx)

Calendar

- October 16-19, 2000. *First Due-Fire and Rescue Conference and Exposition, Las Vegas, NV.* Phone (800) 266-5367 or visit the web site at <http://www.jems.com/confrenz/confhm.html>
- December 5-7, 2000. *Search & Rescue 2000* Panama City Beach, FL. Sponsored by Rotor & Wing Magazine. Phone (888) 707-5812, visit the web site at www.defensedaily.com or email
- February 6-8, 2001. *Fire Rescue West*, San Jose, CA. Phone (800) 827-8009*
- May 24-27, 2001. *SAR 2001*, (the annual NASAR conference) Colorado Springs, CO. Phone (703) 222-6277 or email myleaw@nasar.org
- May 31 - June 2, 2001. *EMS Expo*, New Orleans, LA. Phone (877) 367-3976*

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