

THE RESCUER



October-December, 2000

Number 31

“STORMY WEATHER”

Over the last several months we have seen flooding in Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma and parts of the Carolina's. The hurricane and Monsoon season has left us “wet” and scrambling for higher ground. The changing weather is continuing to deliver higher than normal rainfall in a variety of areas. It is no longer a matter of “when” but rather “where” will be the next “flash flood”.

Because of advances in weather reporting we are aware of daily changes in weather conditions around the world. Since the weather is shared by all nations, we should be interested in what they are experiencing.

The following are excerpts from a recent Time Europe article titled “Stormy Weather”. The hope is that you can see a direct relationship of our weather changes to theirs. James O. Jackson - London, writes this article.

What a week of weather it has been. What a month. What a year. Raging rivers in Italy; gales in France; fires in Greece; water everywhere in Wales; rain in Spain. There was even a tornado in Bognor Regis. What? That's supposed to be an English seaside resort of sunny shores and gentle showers, not some

dusty town in America's Tornado Alley. And stately, centuries-old oaks in the gardens of Versailles in Paris are not supposed to be ripped up like palm trees in a Key West hurricane. All over Europe it's the same story.

Last month flash floods and mudslides wiped away the heart of the village of Gondo in southwestern Switzerland, and Italy's River Po overflowed from the Alps to the Adriatic, carrying away \$2.6 billion in losses of homes, fields and businesses. Is it just our imagination, or is Europe's weather getting worse?

The short answer is yes; the weather certainly is getting worse. The cause is air pollution that pours greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere to produce global warming that can alter weather patterns.

Europeans can expect more rain and flooding in the north as well as drought and desert conditions in the south. Glaciers will melt in the Alps, parts of Spain and Italy will turn as dry as the Sahel, forests will thrive in Sweden, and, yes, tornados will rip up trees in places like Bognor Regis. The scientists say that



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Eco-Challenge Participants are Bringing Home More Than Gold

**In a recent New York Times article,
headlines read “Deadly Infection
Reemerges as People Get
Adventurous” By Alicia Ault**

After falling out of her raft on a whitewater expedition this spring in the Costa Rican rain forest, Dr. Nicole MacLaren was so grateful she was alive that it did not occur to her that her near-drowning might lead to something else, a potentially fatal bacterial infection called leptospirosis.

But four days after returning to Park City, Utah, Dr. MacLaren, 37, developed the first signs of infection: a fever that soared to 103.5 degrees and drenching sweats that alternated with chills so severe they felt almost like a seizure. Dr. MacLaren, a veterinary ophthalmologist, had a splitting headache, and her eyes and muscles ached. In the emergency room, her kidney and liver were found to be inflamed. The effect on the kidney and the discovery that she also had meningitis suggested that she had leptospirosis.

“It was terrifying, because as a vet, I’d dealt with so many cases that had died,” said Dr. MacLaren, referring to leptospirosis she had treated in dogs.

Health officials and some researchers say that as people venture more boldly into remote wilderness, there is likely to be an increase. “We suspect that as people pursue these kinds of activities more and more, as we venture into areas where essentially human populations have not spent time before, this may continue to increase,” said Dr. Jim Sejvar of the meningitis and special pathogens branch at the Center for Disease Control Prevention.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently confirmed a leptospirosis outbreak in 30

American athletes in the Eco-Challenge Expedition Race who likely became ill by swimming and canoeing in the flooded Segama River, which runs through a dense rain forest in Malaysian Borneo. Rats, civet cats, bearded pigs, monkeys, and orangutans inhabit the jungle. No racers died, but at least 12 were hospitalized, and the C.D.C. urged them all to be treated.

A similar outbreak occurred in the United States in 1998, when 110 of 775 triathletes contracted leptospirosis after swimming in Lake Springfield in Illinois. It is believed the disease is reemerging because of greater participation in adventurous activities and the growing interaction between rats and people in urban areas.

Mortality rates for those who become infected can be as high as 25 percent, especially in developing nations. If so, leptospirosis kills more people than the Ebola virus, Dr. Vinets said. Studies have shown that doxycycline works as a preventive. Some Eco-Challenge racers took the drug as an antimalarial, and did not get leptospirosis.

Dr. MacLaren said she wishes she had been warned to take doxycycline before her trip. Five months later, she is still weak, and has only recently gone back to her veterinary practice part time. She is still grappling with what happened. “As a tourist, you don’t expect to get something that could kill you.”





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El Nino: Once Burned, Twice Shy

By Randolph E. Schmid
Associated Press




In late October of this year a report was made to the United Nations urging international strategy for recurring crises. The report calls for the development of regional organizations so that countries can work together in preparing for El Nino.


The time to get ready for the next El Nino is now, before that disruptive weather event returns, a panel of U.N. scientists says. In 1997-98, the periodic warming of parts of the Pacific Ocean changed the patterns of the wind and moisture overhead, resulting in severe weather around the world. It has been blamed for thousands of deaths in storms, heat waves, fires, floods, frost and drought, and causing \$32 billion in property damage.

“The 1997-98 event was a wake-up call,” said Michael Glantz of the National Center for Atmospheric

Research in Boulder, Colorado. “Awareness of what El Nino can do to societies and economies is now high. El Ninos recur every two to seven years, and now is the time to prepare for the next one. El Nino, in a way, is like winter; it’s a natural hazard, and we have to learn to cope with it,” Glatz said.

Other recommendations include involving top government leaders early in disaster planning; mapping the world’s most vulnerable populations; improving forecasting; educating local decision-makers on how best to use El Nino forecasts, and developing a scientific establishment within each country to use research from other nations.

A country needs to understand how this phenomenon affects it, how good the forecasts are and what it can do to prepare for El Nino, Glatz said. The report also calls for increased research into El Nino, which Michael Coughlan of the World Meteorological Organization said would need to roughly double the current \$100 million annual spending in that area. 



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THE RESCUER is published quarterly by
Rescue 3 International, Inc.
9075 Elk Grove Blvd. #200 • Elk Grove, CA 95624
1-800-457-3728 • Fax (916) 685-6969 • Editor: Judy Turnbull
Annual Subscription rate is \$7.50 in U.S.
\$17.50 outside of U.S.

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even if the world’s governments and industries meet international goals on reducing greenhouse gases, which they probably will not, it still won’t be enough to prevent severe changes to the world’s weather. Their advice to governments, businesses and private citizens about these changes: get used to it.

A landmark report released last week by a team of 27 European climatologists warns that a trend in global warming may be *irreversible*, at least over most of the coming century. That, they say, means governments should start planning immediately to adapt to the new extremes of weather that their citizens will face with bans on building in potential flood plains in the north, for example, and water



conservation measures in the south. “We make almost 50 recommendations for policy and research in this report,” says Martin Perry, scientist at Britain’s University of East Anglia who edited the so-called *Acacia* report assessing effects and adaptation to future weather changes in Europe. “It really is imperative that we take the first steps in adapting to climate change now.”

That represents a subtle but significant shift in attitudes toward global warming, and some activists are dismayed at the suggestion that the world should adapt rather than try to halt or reverse it. Next week at The Hague, representatives of 160 countries will gather to assess progress since the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. In that undertaking, governments pledged to cut greenhouse emissions worldwide by 5.2% below 1990 levels by 2012.

Campaigners for drastic cuts in emissions felt that talk of “adapting” rather than “mitigating” will ease political pressure on the big polluters such as the U.S. and Japan.

Parry and his colleagues say there will be a general warming of Europe, with much wetter weather in the north and much drier conditions in the south. That will mean extensive northern flooding, while parts of the agriculturally productive south will turn into near desert. In the Alps, much less water will be held on mountains in the form of snow and instead will run off to feed devastating flash floods. Alpine glaciers will melt and tundra from Lapland to Siberia will vanish. The level of the Mediterranean Sea will rise half a meter by 2050, inundating coastal wetlands and wiping out whole species of bird and sea life.

All this because, says the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global temperatures could rise by as much as 6 degrees Centigrade (approximately 10.8 degrees Fahrenheit) in the 21st century, 10 times as fast as temperatures have risen in the last 100 years.

Some argue that the ultimate result of global warming will be a paradoxical but even more catastrophic development: global cooling. As the arctic ice cap melts, a flow of fresh water into the North Atlantic could disrupt conveyor currents including the Gulf Stream, which is what keeps Northern Europe warm. “There is an argument that short-term global warming could actually lead to long-term cooling,” observes Steve Hall, an Oceanography Center. “One moment we are basking in a Mediterranean climate and the next, icebergs are floating down the English Channel.”

Julian Morris, an environmental analyst at London’s Institute of Economic Affairs, says, “The climatologic history of the world is long, and man’s knowledge of it is short. Attempting to make clear assessments of what is driving the climate over these much shorter time spans is fraught with difficulty.”

But the growing scientific consensus is that momentous changes are coming. Not all of them, however, are bad. Forests of Scandinavia and

northern Russia will grow faster and farther north than before, helping draw off CO₂. “We may have longer growing seasons in northern latitudes, which farmers can exploit to have more than one harvest in a single year,” says Michele Bernardi, an agrometeorologist at the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome.

It is also possible that, despite governmental and industrial foot dragging, greenhouse emissions will come down. The environment conscious Germans have shown that relatively simple changes in attitude and life-style can bring significant reductions in the industrialized world, where about a third of emissions come from private households. Recycling cans and paper, lowering thermostats, improving home insulation and switching off unused lights helped Germany reduce emissions by an impressive 18.5% since 1990, far surpassing the Kyoto target.

The chief target of environmentalist wrath is, of course, the U.S., the world’s biggest emitter of greenhouse gases and the leading advocate of trading emission credits with the developing world. But the U.S. position has been up in the air because of the recent presidential election.

THE RESCUER: In case you are wondering why so much time has been spent on weather conditions in Europe, let me draw your attention to a world map. If you look at the countries between the latitude lines of North Africa, up to the United Kingdom and then let your eyes drift left to the United States, you will see why this information is so important. These latitudes begin at our southern border and extend northward to the middle of Canada. That is why we are all experiencing the same type of climatic changes.

Our landscape may be different but the abnormal weather conditions we have been experiencing are similar. This article ended with this bit of advice: Get out the umbrellas and hip boots and head for high ground. Storms are coming; the water is rising. Our descendents and we have to learn to live with it. 🗡️

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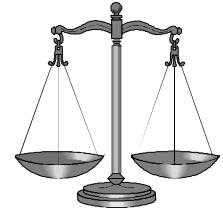
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Item # BK2745 \$14.95

Rescue 3 does not require that Instructors use this particular log book. Any permanent recordkeeping system that shows training and teaching information is adequate.

Extreme Sports Can Cost Your Life

18 Tourists and 3 Guides Die in Flash Flood



8 Employees Charged With Manslaughter by Swiss Authorities

In the last newsletter we discussed the concept of “Extreme Sports” and the consequences that many have experienced because they have not taken the time to be properly trained in the use of their equipment nor in the technical aspects of their chosen sport.

This report of tragedy from the Swiss Alps is an alarming example of what can occur even when you have a so-called “expert” in charge.

November 2, 2000

Geneva, Switzerland: Swiss police officials charged eight employees of an adventure sports company with manslaughter Wednesday in the deaths of 21 people who drowned during a canyoning trip in the Alps. Three directors of Adventure World, which organized the trip, along with three guides and two other company employees, were ordered to appear in court to answer charges that their negligence led to the deaths. They were accused of “having led a canyoning trip into the Saxet Brook in spite of the fact a thunderstorm was breaking over the Saxet Valley.”

The 45 tourists, equipped with life jackets and wetsuits, set off in four groups. As they reached the riverbed, a thunderstorm broke, turning the mountain stream into a powerful torrent that swept 18 tourists and guides to their deaths. They were taking part in canyoning, which involves rappelling down ravines, sliding down waterfalls and swimming rapids.

The thrill seekers were plunging down waterfalls and rapids when a sudden storm unleashed a raging torrent that engulfed the group. They had no warning. Investigators were trying to determine why organizers did not call off the excursion, given that the bad weather had been predicted.

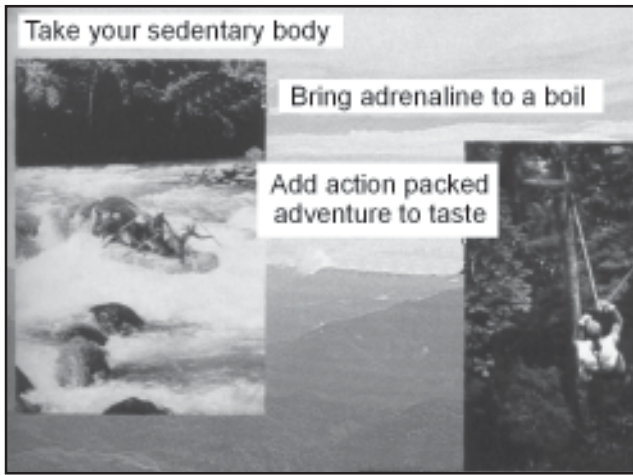
Up to 13 of the dead were Australians. In addition to the Australians, Swiss authorities said the dead were from Britain, South Africa, New Zealand and Switzerland. It was believed to be the deadliest accident ever for the sport, in which participants without rafts, slide; jump; or rappel down waterfalls and mountain streams into gorges. The sport originated in France about 15 years ago and has gained popularity quickly.

The source of the area’s beauty, with its snowcapped Alpine peaks, is also the root of its danger. Much of the region was declared off limits earlier this year because of the risk of avalanches and subsequent flooding. Local residents said they were shocked by the tragedy-but not surprised. It was clear a storm was coming.

THE RESCUER: The emergence of the term “extreme” to describe sport and other adventure activities, combined with the availability of new technologies has changed the way people are participating in outdoor sports. We just can’t forget the consequences of our actions. Please continue reading for more unexpected consequences for enjoying the wilder side of life. The staff of this newsletter sees tragic stories like this one all too frequently.

Whether it is victims of a flash flood in Switzerland or an unexpected disease contracted from Costa Rica, we are in search of adventure and challenge without giving thought to consequences.

When something serious happens to them the first thing they ask is, “Why didn’t someone tell me of the risk?” Instead they should be asking themselves, “How much thought and planning did I give to identifying and preparing for potential problems?”



We recently found the advertisement at left showing a group of rafters going down a rapid filled river. Read the caption.

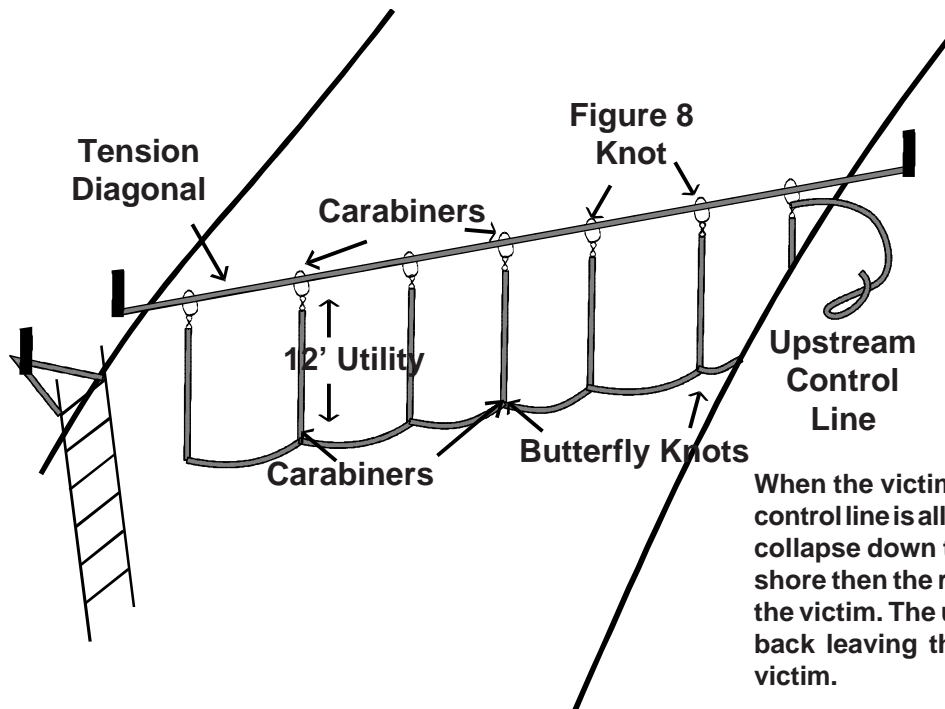
It doesn't mention anything about not forgetting their common sense and asking questions like, "should I have some concern about my safety or what happens if I fall overboard?"

"Risk recreators" are looking for that adrenaline rush but are not always adequately prepared for what they may experience. They have an expectation that someone will be there to rescue them! 🗡️

Classic Rescue Tip

Over the past years, we have had inquiries from departments about where they could purchase a commercially manufactured Vertical Channel Curtain. Not having an answer, we have sent them the drawing below that was offered a few years ago in *The Rescuer*.

The curtain shown below is literally designed to ensnare a victim coming down a high speed channel. The rescuer should be ready to extract the victim from the water *the instant* they reach the edge as the water pressure, combined with the net itself will make lifting the victim up the edge very difficult. We feel that the lower edge of the net is the most significant part of the system in catching or ensnaring the victim. 🗡️



When the victim grabs the line, the upstream control line is allowed to go free. The carabiners collapse down the tension diagonal to the far shore then the rescuer on the ladder retrieves the victim. The upstream control line is pulled back leaving the system ready for the next victim.

RESCUE 3 INTERNATIONAL

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Surfin' the Web



- Most of you know what a fire truck looks like but check out the City of Davis' (CA) virtual fire truck. http://www.firehouse.com/firetruck_tour/
- As always, Rescue 3's own Slim Ray offers a number of well written articles on his website. Some of the titles currently offered are "Five Ways to Survive a Swiftwater Rescue", "A Flood is a Weapon of Mass Destruction", and "Equipping the Engine Company for Flood and Swiftwater" The address is <http://www.cfspress.com/>

Calendar

- December 5-7, 2000. *Search & Rescue 2000* Panama City Beach, FL. Sponsored by Rotor & Wing Magazine. Phone (888) 707-5812 or visit the web site at www.defensedaily.com
- February 6-8, 2001. *Fire Rescue West*, San Jose, CA. Phone (800) 827-8009*
- February 26 - March 4, 2001. *FDIC East*, Indianapolis, IN. Phone (888) 299-8016*
- April 30 - May 5, 2001. *FDIC West*, Sacramento, CA. Phone (888) 835-3342*
- May 24-27, 2001. *SAR 2001*, (the annual NASAR conference) Colorado Springs, CO. Phone (703) 222-6277 or email sar2001@nasar.org
- May 31 - June 2, 2001. *EMS Expo*, New Orleans, LA. Phone (877) 367-3976*

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