



SnowLine

The Official Newsletter of the
TAHOE NORDIC SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM, INC.
 Lake Tahoe • Truckee • Donner Summit

The momentum has been somewhat start and go, but the Sierra Nevada is finally home to not one but two avalanche forecast centers. The Sierra Avalanche Center (www.sierraavalanchecenter.org), based out of the US Forest Service office in Truckee, and the Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center (www.esavalanche.org) out of Mammoth Lakes, are now providing (near) daily avalanche hazard forecasts throughout the winter season. Both centers are in cahoots with the Forest Service, but operate somewhat independently as non-profits, hustling finances through grants and donations to support forecaster salaries, public education programs, etc. This is a co-op business model that most the country's forecast centers have employed. Even though they're up and operating, their survival is not a completely done deal. They rely heavily on public support, so please do your part. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team is both an equipment and cash sponsor of the SAC (though by the size of our name's type face on the website's sponsor page you might not know it!), part of the Team's ongoing commitment to mountain safety and education.

Though never meant to trump any observations you make on-the-snow, the hazard forecasts are a valuable tool to compliment those obs, and should be regularly employed by every backcountry traveler whether you're out there burning calories or fossil fuels. The forecasts are a combination of data from the forecaster's direct observations, activity inbounds at the ski areas, remote weather and snow sensing instruments, and input from people "in the field." So, if what you're seeing on the snow is interesting, unusual, or you just feel like taking up some

very busy person's time, make yourself heard. With the Sierra Nevada now averaging about one avalanche fatality per year (most of which occur in the Tahoe area), the need for avalanche awareness has never been higher. Make good decisions out there!

Here's a good decision. Attend the next meeting of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team—Monday night, **January 2, 6:30 PM** at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut. The New Year's celebrating is over, pop, so mainline some ibu, wipe the vermouth stains off your

party shoes, and come on down! Can you think of a better way to start 2006? No, you can't.

Search

On November 24, two novice backpackers set out into Desolation Wilderness for a bit of Thanksgiving holiday adventure. On the 25th, a swift and heavy-hammered storm struck the Sierra with a combination of wind-driven snow and lots of sideways rain. The gloomy weather drew the two hikers into an ever-increasing state of soggydom, eventually prompting a mad-dash retreat. Half way back to the trailhead, under hard rain and lead skies, one of the guys stopped to mess with his backpack adjustments while his buddy continued on down the trail. When the guy with the ill-fitting pack finally got going, he took a left turn where a right would have been completely appropriate. His buddy carried the tent.

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was paged at 3:40 AM on November 26 to look for the ill-fitting pack guy (IFPG), still out in Desolation—sans tent—somewhere. He had called for help on a weak and sporadic cell phone signal, did not know where he was or how he got there, and yes (you guessed it), his phone battery was dying.

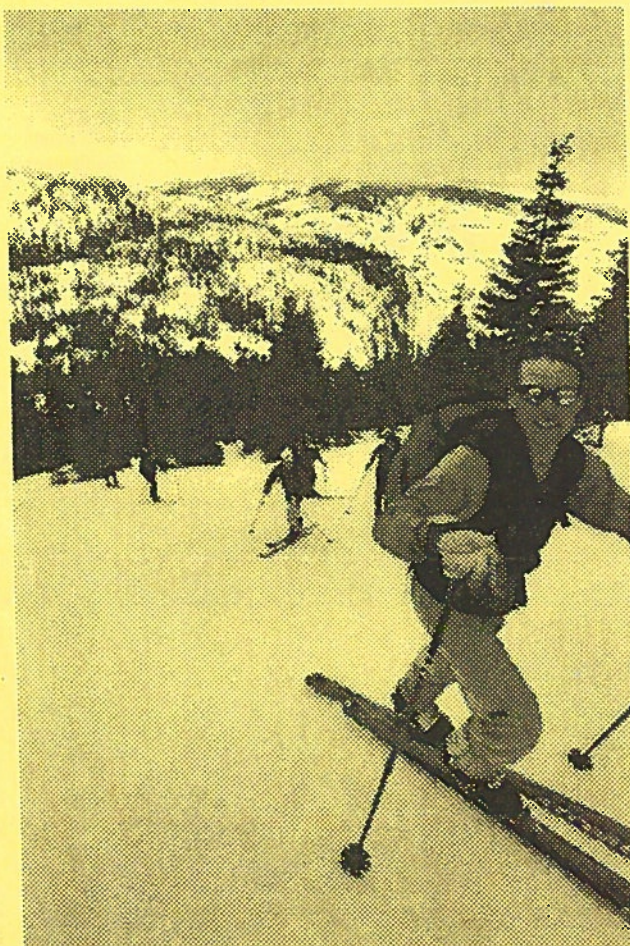
Four Nordic Team members responded: Mike Kennett, Sarah Lagano, John Pang, and Steve Twomey. After a few bouts with mis- and missing information, the Team searchers started a long 7-hour circuit through the Velma Lakes basin searching for tracks in the ankle-deep new snow. At about 3:00 that afternoon, IFPG, a 24-year-old Tahoe visitor, sodden, tired, but OK, found his way out to Highway 89 along Eagle Creek.

This was the Team's first response of the season.

Team Activities

Team trainings scheduled for the month of January (and beyond) have not yet hit the press, but stay tuned into *SnowLine*, the Team website, and the Team meetings for further announcements and updates.

January: Jim Coffey (583-1276), Pam Le Francois (546-7393), and Marty Daniels Schoonmaker (583-2929) have orchestrated a



Nordic Team member Paul Honeywell and friends ascend from the Middle Fork of the American River on their way to ski down the North Fork. April 2005.

Photograph by Randall Osterhuber

Next General Meeting is Monday, January 2, 2006, 6:30 pm at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut

full Winter Awareness education calendar for this month at our area's schools. If you haven't already, please contact one of these search and rescue people and sign up to help.

January 6-8: Peter York (583-0465) is organizing an Avalanche Level I course taught by Squaw Valley assistant avalanche forecaster Lel Tone and (schedule permitting) me. Talk to Peter if you're interested in attending.

January 28-29: Sarah Lagano (775-745-7037) is coordinating a winter search and rescue workshop over these two days. Please contact Sarah about helping with this busy weekend schedule.

Jan, Feb, Mar: Training and certification on the use of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) is being offered by Tahoe Forest Hospital's Center for Health and Sports Performance to Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team members who hold a current and valid CPR card. The courses are a one-night gig, held on a Monday night, from 5:00 to 9:30 PM. Course dates are: **January 9 and 23, February 13 and 27, March 13 and 27.** To sign on, please call 587-3769 ext. 218.

The Low Life

Of the many things about Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team that I've been proud of over the years is our professional behavior out in the field. No matter who we've searched for and rescued—be it local skiers, visiting attorneys, substance-abusing snowboarders, or one of our own—we have conducted those rescues with the highest respect for the search subject. Not that that should in itself be odd or unusual. There is no place in a civil society for disrespect; it's most certainly inappropriate when someone in the mountains is in trouble and in need. I couldn't therefore read the letter to the editor published in the December 15 issue of the *Tahoe World*, by one Sally Smith, without immediately thinking of our rescue Team.

Distinguishing between "visitors" and "locals," the way many that live up here do, has

always smacked of silliness, so I was amused to read the nastiness bound up in Sally Smith's snap-attack against all her Tahoe neighbors. Her letter definitely fell into the "so bad it's good" category. It was a great reminder that if you're going to burn a bridge, make darn sure you think it through before you light the match.

Anyhoo... I just wanted to make it perfectly clear that our Team members are fully prepared, at a moment's notice, to leave our low-life homes, and our low-life sons, daughters, and spouses, and our low-life jobs as teachers, carpenters, hydrologists, and physicians, to search for and rescue anyone, or any of her family, any of her friends.

Happy New Year everyone!

—Randall Osterhuber

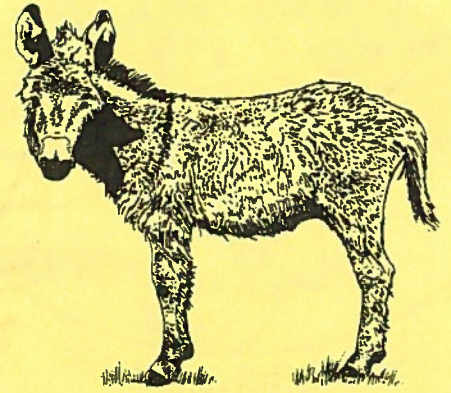


The wheel reinvented for far faster and easier shoveling.

Our NEW! wheeled shovel cuts snow three times faster than a regular shovel with a lot less strain and effort. Engineered to reduce the risk of back and heart injuries, the leverage provided by the easy-to-manoeuvre wheel design and see-saw lifting action lets you simply push down with your body weight to easily lift snow and slash off your walk or driveway. Never lift a shovel against harmful stone-work or landscaping. Weighs only 28 lbs. (optional accessory kit includes a shovel plate for snow and ice, gravel shovels, hand's grips, and a black wear strip).

SSL101J Wovel™ Wheeled Shovel \$119.95
 SSL102J Accessory Kit \$29.95

Though maybe not appropriate for residents of Norden, the "Wovel™ Wheeled Shovel" just might be the ticket for someone from, say, eastern Glenshire? If your self-confidence is great enough to shrug off the inevitable ridicule from your neighbors, this in-flight magazine wonder will bring you that critical step closer to "Never lift a shovel again!"



Team Officers

President	Russ Viehmann	525-6978
Vice President	Brian York	583-0465
Treasurer	Scott Schroeffer	546-2809
Secretary	Sue Duerksen	412-3836
Board Members	Mark Johnson	583-1308
	Sarah Lagano	775-745-7037
	Bernie Mellor	546-2238
	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
Directors-at-large	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
	Joe Pace	583-1806
	Doug Read	583-6381
	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376
	Steve Twomey	525-7280

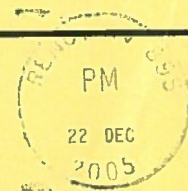
Committee Chairs

Cuisine	Debra Schroeffer	546-2809
Dispatch	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	Jim Coffey	583-1276
Equipment	Brian York	583-0465
Great Ski Race	Doug Read	583-6381
	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
Newsletter	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
Snowcats	Scoop Remenih	583-1684
Snowmobiles	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Technology	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376
Training	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
	Mike Kennett	581-2101
	Bernie Mellor	546-2238
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please keep us informed of your correct address!