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Joint Avalanche Rescue Training



On Tuesday night (March 28), Vail Mountain Rescue Group, Beaver Creek Ski Patrol and paramedics from Eagle County Paramedic Services deployed together on a joint training mission in backcountry terrain just outside Beaver Creek Mountain's ski area boundary. Coordinated by an incident command based at the Beaver Creek Chapel, three teams of skiers and snowshoers responded to a simulated but realistic avalanche scenario that had been staged at the top of Paulie's Plunge. The responders worked together to locate, stabilize, and evacuate three buried victims, as well as a fourth simulated victim who had escaped the avalanche but had become lost in the creek drainage. The exercise concluded just after 7:30 p.m. with a debriefing at the Beaver Creek Chapel incident command center.

In an actual avalanche incident, all three of these groups would be called out to find and extricate any victims, making this a valuable exercise in practicing for future inter-agency missions. Thanks to the members of Beaver Creek Ski Patrol, Eagle County Paramedic Services, and the volunteer members of Vail Mountain Rescue Group, for making this training a success.

Polar Star Mission



Just before 7 a.m. on March 20, skiers staying at the Polar Star Inn 10th Mountain Division hut on the west side of New York Mountain texted 911 to request the immediate evacuation of a member of their party who had suffered fractured ribs and possible internal injuries in a fall. Vail Mountain Rescue Group dispatched a team of rescuers and an Eagle County Paramedic Services SAR amedic to snowmobile to the hut. After assessing and stabilizing the skier's injuries, the rescuers evacuated the patient to the Yeoman Park trailhead; from there, an ambulance transported the subject to Vail Valley Medical Center. All rescuers were out of the field by 1:45 p.m. Thanks to all the resources that participated in this rescue, including Eagle County Paramedic Services, the Eagle County Sheriff's Office, Vail Dispatch, and the volunteer members of Vail Mountain Rescue Group.

Vail Valley Surgery Center Supports Local Nonprofits Through Donations



(Published in the Vail Daily, February 27, 2017 – partial article)

VAIL — Throughout the past six years, Vail Valley Surgery Center has reinvested \$764,000 into the community. In 2016, the Surgery Center increased its donations to local nonprofits by \$100,000, totaling \$250,000 in giveback to community organizations. The company added 13 nonprofits to its charitable list last year, bringing the total number of nonprofits it serves to 29.

Vail Valley Surgery Center offers world-class, multi-specialty ambulatory surgery centers in Vail and Edwards. A joint venture between Vail Valley Medical Center and approximately 25 physician-investors, the Surgery Center handles more than 6,400 cases annually. Specialties include orthopedics, pain management, gastroenterology, general surgery, ophthalmology, otolaryngology (also known as ear, nose and throat), plastic surgery and podiatry.

"Our staff is proud to carefully select a group of local nonprofit organizations each year and donate substantial dollars that, in many cases, help them meet their budget," said Michael Westmiller, Vail Valley Surgery Center administrator.

One of the biggest monetary recipients is Vail Mountain Rescue, which provides public education, in addition to its life-saving search-and-rescue missions in the backcountry. Vail Valley Surgery Center's \$30,000 annual donation funds snow machines, radios and general rescue service necessities.

**If you are lost or injured, don't hesitate
Call 911 without delay**

Be Prepared For Your Adventures

By Eagle County Sheriff James Van Beek

(Published in the Vail Daily, March 30, 2017)

Some are attracted to the beauty of the mountains; others, the small, caring community; many seek the security Eagle County provides; but a large number come here because of their sense of adventure. We feel a need to push the envelope; to live life to the fullest; to unplug and get out.

Integrating ourselves into that open space is exciting, yet part of that thrill can create challenging circumstances that may require the help of others. The Eagle County Sheriff's Office is fortunate to have the Vail Mountain Rescue Group at the ready. Just when you think you've got it all handled, life happens and in our valley, it happens a lot.

The simple dog walk that suddenly turns deadly due to wildlife, weather, or terrain changes; the child chasing a bunny who disappears within moments; the elderly parent who is recalling past events and heads off in a new direction, unable to find their way back. Anyone can quickly find themselves in a life-and-death emergency, unable to move or reach anyone. What do you do?

Once 911 is reached, the rescue group is contacted. They immediately begin analyzing the area and planning the search with military precision. Everything is taken into consideration, from location, to destination, weather, the physical and psychological state of the victim, and their experience and familiarity with the area, issues relating to terrain and environmental conditions, evaluation of best equipment for the search, including anything needed for specialized circumstances, including air support. Interviews are conducted with family to gain insight into potential destinations and reasons for possible deviation from those plans. If, within 48 hours of disappearance, the cell phone forensics may be secured without a warrant (for emergency use only), to seek location, direction and speed of travel. The entire evaluation and prep may take several hours and the search can last weeks.

Vail Mountain Rescue Group is staffed exclusively by volunteers who put in over 8,000 man-hours per year. They are on-call 24/7 and their job is often extremely dangerous, as they hang off cliffs, navigate rapids, tackle nearly impossible terrain, helicopter in when necessary, handle wildlife, carry the injured over miles of difficult landscape; all while protecting the well-being of each victim. They go where most people would never dare to enter and they do it, risking their lives, at no pay, for the sheer love of their community.

You will never find a more dedicated group, and they operate with the support of the National Guard's High Altitude Aviation Training Site, which provides military-grade aircraft; and with the generosity of community members, whose funding supplies trucks, boats, snowmobiles, tractors, climbing equipment, and anything else required for high-risk rescue missions. Volunteers range in age from their 20s to 70s, with each possessing a unique skill set. They dedicate countless hours to training and practice, knowing that lives depend upon their preparedness.

Living or visiting the mountains requires a high degree of situational awareness. Visitors tend to behave like they are simply out for a stroll at home; and locals are used to wandering into the mountains unprepared, as it is often a daily experience, but the very nature of our environment, requires that we maintain the highest degree of awareness. Vail Mountain Rescue Group suggests the following precautions:

- Bring a fully charged cell phone. Even with no reception, a 911 text can often be received.
- Even if familiar with the trail, bring a map (in case an alternate route back is needed).
- Go old-school and bring a compass as well as your GPS (usually your cellphone).
- Don't go alone, if possible.
- If alone, then tell someone where you are going and an estimated return time. Even a note taped to a neighbor's door is helpful. If not back within two hours of that time, then instruct them to call 911.
- Leave a copy of your hiking plans in the car. If it's a regular destination, keep a permanent copy visible.

- If lost, do not move. You are easier to locate at the point of distress.
- Try to bring water
- If possible, then bring a small first aid kit and Swiss army knife in your pocket. The smaller and lighter, the more likely you are to take it with you.
- Be aware of altitude sickness. Remember that at 10,000 feet, oxygen is required and many of our local mountains are 11,000 to 14,000 feet. Also, altitude drugs dehydrate, so if taking them, water is essential.
- Satellite phones only get reception 70 percent of the time, so they may not be reliable .
- If in an area with active wildlife, then carry bear spray or something else to discourage an attack

Vail Mountain Rescue Group is an integral part of the Eagle County Sheriff's Office and their service to the community saves lives and they do it at great personal risk. We wish to honor and thank their exceptional volunteers.



OUR COMMUNITY. OUR MOUNTAINS. OUR FUTURE.



Many thanks to our outstanding Lead Partners
