

Training Winter Snow Shakedown

January 9-10, 2016
Tramarack Valley
2016-T01

Written by Pete Carlson

We rode up the Tramway on the 7:30 pre-public car with the State Park Rangers and Volunteers. The purpose of this training is for new members to try out their winter equipment and for old members to be sure their old gear is still working. So off we went with average pack weight of 50 pounds each. We chose to go up the ski route to the saddle between Yale and Harvard Peaks and then drop down into Tramarack Valley to spend the night and train. This is always a fun challenging route that gets quite steep in places, but a good workout and training for winter packs.



**RMRU heads up Steep Hill 50lb packs in soft snow
Photo by Eric Holden.**

Once in camp we set up tents and had lunch before starting the training.



RMRU tents in Tamarack Valley
Photo by Kevin Kearn.

We found a slope on the side of Cornell Peak that had enough snow for what we wanted to do. We set up different types of snow anchors: (Pickets vertically and horizontally, Deadmen, and we built snow bollards). Some of these held quite well and others failed right away. It all depends on the snow conditions what anchors work best, but we wanted to show everyone each type and explain why they worked or failed.



RMRU setting snow anchors
Photo by Kevin Kearn.

In the late afternoon with then got out our avalanche transceivers and showed everyone how they worked. We then had one person bury one and the rest of us started searching for it. We formed a line about 50 feet apart from each other and then walked down the avalanche area until someone's transceiver picked up the signal. We found and dug out the buried transceiver in about 3 minutes. We then repeated the exercise several more times. Then we buried two transceivers, like two buried skiers, and went about finding them and digging them up. Our new transceivers allow us to search for and mark up to three buried transceivers at one time.



RMRU Dinner Table
Photo by Kevin Kearn.

Then it was time for dinner around the table. We built a round table and dug out around it so we could sit 10 members around the table to cook and eat as a group. This worked out well until the sun went down and everyone headed into the tents for the night. Winter nights get cold in a hurry and seem to last a long time. By 7am we were getting up and cooking breakfast before continuing training. We were out in the valley practicing avalanche probing in a line when the call for the first mission of the year came in.



**Avalanche Probe Line in Tamarack Valley
Photo by Eric Holden.**

Lost Skier out of the Tramway. So training became the real thing as we got ready to search. Some headed back to the upper Tramway to get more information and run the mission while the rest of us stayed put and melted snow so we would have full water bottles for the upcoming search.



**Searches ready to Go
Photo by Eric Holden Self Timer.**

RMRU Members Involved: Pete Carlson, Cameron Dickinson, Gary Farris, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Tony Hughes, Kevin Kearns, Rob May, Frank Snider, and Ray Weden.