

Snow and Ice Training

February 4, 2017
Tramway Grubb's Notch
2017-T02

Written by Kevin Kearns

RMRU members conducted Low Angle Snow & Ice Training Saturday, 4 February, 2017 about one quarter mile from the upper Tram station at Grubbs Notch (8,300'). Weather conditions were clear and sunny with freezing temps in the morning giving way to rising temperatures in midmorning.



**Cameron Instructing Ice Axe
Photo by Eric Holden.**



Tony Cutting Steps
Photo by Eric Holden. <

In the early morning, the team took advantage of the crusty, iced-over snow to initially practice travelling on low angled slopes with crampons and ice axe. After training on traversing slopes, we practiced straight up ascending and descending as well using French Technique and Front Pointing (AKA German Technique). Soon after, we trained to cut steps properly with an ice axe – perfecting speed and efficiency.



Eric Digging In
Photo by Cameron Dickinson.



Kevin Coming to a Stop
Photo by Eric Holden.



Cameron Flying Head First
Photo by Eric Holden.



Michael Feet First
Photo by Eric Holden.

Just as temps started to rise, we set up an anchor and belay system at the top of a long slope. Individual team members each took a turn executing a series of self-arrests with their personal ice-axes after removing their crampons for safety. Individual drills involved falling/diving forward and then backwards into a tumble down the slope and then maneuvering their body and ice-axe to stop themselves. We practiced these self-arrests repeatedly until everyone was proficient. The ability to self-arrest quickly and safely is one of the most essential, individual winter-mountaineering skills that the team requires of all its rescuers.



Boot Axe Belay
Photo by Eric Holden.



Snow Anchor Practice
Photo by Eric Holden.

Finishing up individual training, we practiced boot-axe belays and then team members all set up and tested snow anchors (dead men). Like any disciplined professional organization, team mates critically evaluated each other's work and checked these anchors as we transitioned to set up a twin tension system to

lower and raise our plastic litter as a collective team. We fully executed a training scenario just as we normally would. We took today's opportunity to also train people in roles they had never practiced before.



Gary and Michael Testing Anchors
Photo by Eric Holden.



Getting Toboggan Ready

Photo by Eric Holden. p>After a short break, Eric Holden gave an outstanding class on evaluating snow conditions for avalanche potential. There had already been avalanches in

the area the previous week which underscored the sobering importance of this skill. The team used our shovels to test and assess snow conditions on hazardous slope before heading back to the tram and wrapping up the day's training.



Avalanche Test Pit Shows Layer that could Slide
Photo by Cameron Dickinson.



Snow Anchors with Team Members
Photo by Eric Holden.

RMRU Members Involved: Cameron Dickinson, Gary Farris, Michael George, Eric Holden, Tony Hughes, Matt Jordon, and Kevin Kearn.