



# Willing and Ready:

Search and Rescue Volunteers diligently work to keep up on techniques and technology for when it matters most.

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Every December, a selected segment of Alaska's backcountry becomes a training ground for Search and Rescue Volunteers from a multitude of Agencies. This year the scores of volunteers along with personnel from the Alaska State Troopers and the Department of Military and Veterans affairs gathered at Hatcher Pass. The Alaska Mountain Rescue Group, one of the main SAR groups utilized by the Alaska State Troopers, coordinates and runs the mass exercise.



Each year, reports of overdue recreationists, boaters, pilots and more come into dispatch centers. For the past few years, the SAR count statewide was well over 300- only a handful of those are avalanche related. What makes the avalanche responses so challenging though is the potential for a rescuer to be buried.

State statute dictates that it is the responsibility of the Alaska State Troopers +

to initiate and provide oversight of SARs. However, with approximately 400 troopers spread out across a vast area and resources few and far between, the task of organizing and operating a search and rescue is often daunting. AST depends on the expertise of volunteers at nearly every turn.

Any good SAR coordinator knows that they can get a lot more done and cover more ground with one trained volunteer than 10 untrained volunteers. That is why these mass training events are so important.





It keeps veteran SAR volunteers up-to-date on the latest skills and techniques while giving them the ability to share their experience with the new generation of SAR volunteers. The exercises also assist with fostering good communication and relationships between groups.

At the Hatcher Pass training exercise, trainers divided the volunteers up in groups and rotated them through various stations to refresh a variety of skill sets specific to avalanche responses, to include probing, shoveling techniques and victim assessment.



The annual event is traditionally a two-day undertaking. The first day is used to help volunteers brush up on their techniques and the second day they put their skills to work in a massive avalanche scenario. Unfortunately, the lack of snow caused the second half of the training to be cancelled.

Near the end of the training day, a man sledding down one of the many slopes in Hatch Pass slammed into a rock. Medics and other volunteers were able to take control of the situation almost immediately as the incident was only a few hundred yards from the training area.



The Alaska State Troopers would like to express its gratitude to all of the SAR volunteers who put in an enormous effort to provide an invaluable service to the people of Alaska. SAR volunteers are one of the greatest assets AST has to utilize. Thank you for putting in the time to conduct mass training exercises such as this one.

