

# Relationships and responsibilities between recreationalists, brands, professional athletes, and rescuers.

---

Dale Atkins  
Mountain Rescue Association  
USA



# The Importance of Organized Rescue: A change in attitudes for a new generation

---

Dale Atkins  
Mountain Rescue Association  
USA



# Premise — Avalanche Prevention/Education

---

- Nearly all rescuers and avalanche-awareness educators focus is on the importance of companion rescue at the expense of the significance and benefits of organized rescue.
- This perspective — focusing on companion rescue while almost ignoring organized rescue — is outdated and worse, has harmed some avalanche victims.



# Years Ago — Barriers to Organized Rescue

---

- no communication
- slow travel
- primitive search technologies (transceiver provided a new technology and a shift in attitudes to companion rescue)
- limited medical expertise

**Therefore the only conclusion was to focus on companion rescue.**



# Old Attitude —Today's Problem

---

Organized rescue is too late and too slow to save lives.



# Today — Organized Rescuers

---

- notified sooner
- travel faster
- employ advanced search technologies
- provide sophisticated medical expertise



# Organized Rescue Response Time

---

time of accident to  
time rescuers on site

Switzerland<sup>1</sup>

20 min

France<sup>2</sup>

59% within 30 min  
86% within 60 min

United States<sup>3</sup>

72 min

<sup>1</sup> Flyable conditions

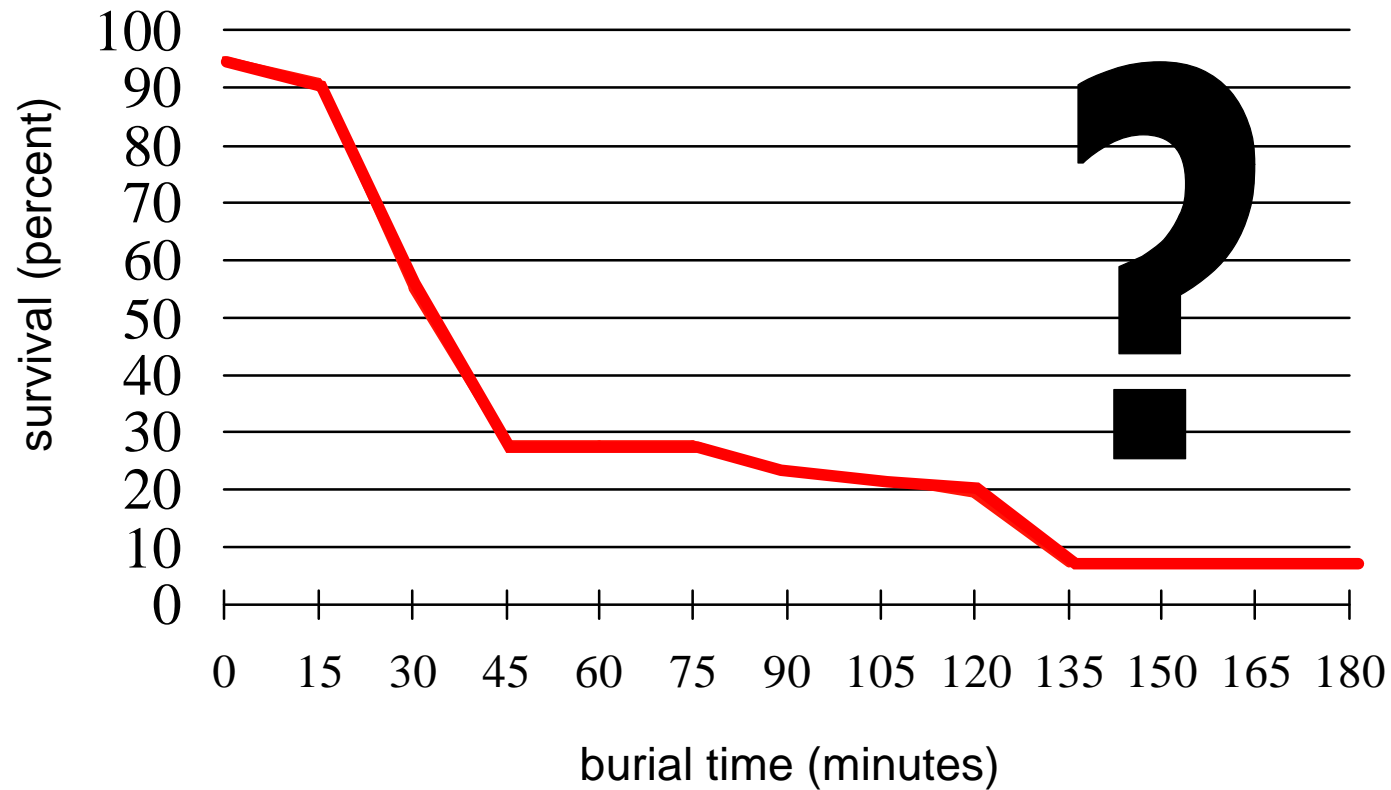
<sup>2</sup> ANENA, 2005-06

<sup>3</sup> Only backcountry/wilderness accidents within 5km of resorts and towns -- about 40% of accidents.



# Optimism for Organized Rescue

How many more lives would have been saved had victims been found hours sooner?



Falk et al., 1994





# Technology Search Rates

---

	<u>Search Rate</u>	<u>Hours for 1 Searcher to Search 1 Hectare</u>
probe pole	25 m <sup>2</sup> / hour	400
dog	5,000 – 10,000 m <sup>2</sup> / hour	2 – 1
transceiver	60,000 m <sup>2</sup> / hour	0.17
recco	60,000* m <sup>2</sup> / hour	0.17

Probability of Detection of 98%

\* Based on opinions of many rescuers that recco is as fast or faster than a transceiver.



# Who Relies on Organized Rescue?

---

Nearly **half** of all buried avalanche victims!

- +50% of US victims not equipped with transceivers.
- 44% of AT skiers not equipped with transceivers.
- 45% of FR victims not equipped with transceivers (2002-2006).
- about 50% of rescues performed by organized rescue.
- 68% of rescues in FR performed by organized rescue (2005/06).
- **53%** (16/30) of victims **found alive** by **organized rescue** in FR;  
43% (13/28) by companions during 2005/06.



# Companion Rescue — Theory

---

Is an important concept and practice, but many people are not prepared

- transceivers are expensive
- ignorant of the hazard and do not realize their danger
- not practiced or competent
- are human



# Companion Rescue — Can it save more lives?

---

Companion rescue must be taught, and the importance of transceiver, probe and shovel must continue to be stressed; however, we rescuers must realize a **large percentage** of mountain visitors will **never have a transceiver**.



# Reality — new attitude

---

Organized rescue sometimes (more and more) arrives soon enough to save lives.

In some rescue situations (more and more) organized rescue arrives fast enough to become companion rescue.

**Organized rescue can make a difference.**



# Organized Rescue Getting Faster — US

---

In the past 20 years

- notification time decreased 60%
- travel time decreased 32%
- search time decreased 20%

**How can we save time?**



# Saving Time and Saving Lives

---

Means adopting and embracing technologies and new attitudes

- notification time
- travel time
- search time
- shared responsibility for recreationists, athletes, commercial brands, rescue equipment manufacturers & rescue teams



# Saving Time — Notification

---

Means adopting and embracing advanced technologies

- expanded mobile phone coverage and use
- enhanced 911 & 112 emergency systems that provide GPS location and/or radiolocating with mobile phones
- improved and expanded radiocom systems





# Saving Time — Travel

---

Means adopting and embracing advanced technologies

- more helicopters
- more snowmobiles / snowcats
- improved personal travel gear (skis, boards, snowshoes)
- improved personal fitness



# Saving Time — Search

---

Means adopting advanced technologies and strategies

- more efficient and easier to use transceivers
- more efficient search strategies and tactics
- improve tactical communications between rescue agencies
- more dogs
- more recco



# Saving Time — Shared Responsibility

---

All players should be aware of their shared responsibility in accident prevention and improving rescue efficiency.

- recreationists: education and practice prevention, be equipped, and to notify organized rescuers immediately upon an accident.
- professional athletes: motivate recreationists to make smart ~~and not smart~~ decisions.
- commercial brands: only invest in rescue devices if customers ask. Important that rescuers also support commercial brands.
- rescue-equipment companies: make more rescue devices available for rescue teams.
- rescue teams: adopt new attitudes and technologies to deploy more efficient and faster rescue efforts.



# Organized Rescue — A New Attitude

---

We can make a difference

- still should focus on companion rescue AND embrace the new potential of organized rescue.
- the combinations of rescue equipment — that make search faster — when integrated with communications systems, travel methods, and medical expertise saves lives.

