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President's Corner

We have unique credibility as a training organization in the U.S., but at the same time we have an image problem—we are definitely seen as an elite organization with restrictive standards

Technical Committee Report

As we near the end of the year, I would like to take some time to look at the Aspirant guide program to address some of the issues and expectations of this program.

Shoveling 101

While shoveling might seem elementary, it usually consumes the majority of time during an avalanche beacon rescue. The most common mistakes are...

A Historical Perspective on Avalanche Education

It was becoming obvious that the educational model then widely used in the U.S. was not translating well for the guiding community.

Vol. XXIV No. 12 Fall 2007

Celebrating 10 years as an IFMGA member

By Katie Kelly

Yosemite National Park, CA, October 21-23, 2007 - The AMGA 2007 Annual Meeting in Yosemite, CA was a huge success! We had a great turnout ~ lots of good climbing, good food and good people. The atmosphere was productive and fun. The Professional Development Clinics went smoothly and the AMGA raised over \$4,500 with the Silent Auction and Raffle. Overall the event was great and it would not have been possible without the help of a lot of folks.

At this year's Board Meeting it was exciting to experience the largest member turnout. The Annual Meeting confirmed that as the AMGA reaches out to the larger guiding and instructor community, we must continue to improve the key benefits of our membership, education, and certification programs. Approval of the Single Pitch Instructor Program and the Climbing Wall Instructor Program exemplifies our outreach education goals and further creates public awareness. We also successfully amended our by-laws and code of ethics, enabling the AMGA to raise its standards, to have a forum in which to address misconduct, and to strengthen our credibility with land managers.

The AMGA is proud to announce that we will be hiring a part-time Accreditation Director to facilitate the Accreditation Program. Also, we have created a new logo use policy. Standardization of the AMGA logo and terminology used with it will help the public have a clear understanding of the AMGA and its various certification levels.

An added membership benefit is our new Life Insurance Policy and Disability and Accident Insurance Policy available by Insurance Specialist, Inc. to all AMGA members. Please visit our website www.amga.com under resources to find out all the details on this opportunity to attain your Ten Year Level Term Life Insurance Plan and Accident and Disability Plan.

On another note, we would like to thank our Title Sponsor, Patagonia and Open-



(continued on page 3)



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Newsletter Deadline

The Mountain Bulletin is Published in February, May, August, November. The next issue of the Mountain Bulletin will be published February 15th, 2007.

Deadlines for all submissions, including advertising are: January 11th (winter issue) April 11th (spring issue) July 11th (summer issue) October 10th (fall issue)

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Katie Kelly is the AMGA Membership Director.

Betsy Novak is the AMGA Executive Director.

Henry Beyer is the AMGA Program Director.

Mike Alkaitis is a Certified Rock Guide and General Manager of Total Climbing in Boulder, CO.

John Bicknell is a Certified Rock and Alpine Guide, is current President of the AMGA, and is a Diamond Partner of the organization.

Rob Hess serves as the Technical Director of the AMGA. He is IFMGA certified and is the senior guide/owner of Jackson Hole Mountain Guides.

Tom Murphy, Executive Director of The American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education

Bruce Edgerly, Vice President co-founder of Backcountry Access, Inc. (BCA)

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Read this Disclaimer!

The AMGA, its officers and employees, authors, editors, artists and volunteers assume no responsibility or liability for accuracy, effectiveness, or safety of any technique or advice described in this publication. It is the responsibility of the individual climber or guide to investigate technical techniques and evaluate them for safety and applicability.

(continued from page 1)

ing Night Sponsor, Marmot. A big thanks goes out to OR, Arc'Teryx, Black Diamond, Gore, Brooks-Range, The North Face, Petzl, and Mammut. Also, we would like to thank Kyle and Cindy Lefkoff for their contribution to the this years meeting as well as their continued support of the AMGA. Many thanks go out to Sara and Dave Bengston & Yosemite Mountaineering School for all their help and support in organizing this year's annual meeting and BOD dinner.

We were delighted that Lynn Hill was able to be our Presenter at 2007 meeting. Lynn presented a phenomenal slide show, Rocks Around the World ~ Tour and Technique, at our Main Event. It was a true pleasure having her join us in the Valley.

Thanks to Doug Nidever and his crew for organizing another incredible Guide Olympics....I had the opportunity to participate and it was a definite highlight in my week.

AMGA welcomes new BOD Members and honors 2007 award recipients:

AMGA 2008 Board of Directors:

John Bicknell, Margaret Wheeler, Angela Hawse, Rob Hess, Phil Powers, John Race, Jim Williams, Keith Garvey, Pete Takeda, Jim Pearson, John Winsor, Peter Gould, Adam Fox, Dale Remsberg, Evan Stevens....We would also like to welcome Angela Hawse as the new AMGA Vice President.

Thank you past BOD Members - Maury McKinney, Matt Brooks, Clint Cook, Dave Bengston, and Alan Jolley.

AMGA 2007 Awards:

This years Award recipients were honored and celebrated at the Annual Meeting with a great turnout in a most inspiring venue, Yosemite National Park. The Lifetime Achievement in Guiding Award went to George Hurley for his 50+years career as a mountain guide. He is one of the few who has put more first ascents than anyone and has more loving clients around the USA than most will ever dream of....he's an inspiration for all of us other guides and climbers.

The Outstanding Guide of the Year Award went to Rob Hess, an owner of Jackson Hole Mountain Guides, AMGA Technical Director and IFMGA Certified Guide. As Technical Director and AMGA Director, in the 2006-7 season, Rob impressively lead the implementation of the AMGA's Training and Certification Program restructure. He did this with speed and urgency and with this, has left a legacy for all present and future American guides. This restructure will greatly benefit all candidates who aspire to become professional guides in the industry.

The President's Award honored Peter Absolon, the NOLS Rocky Mountain director and former AMGA board member, in recognition of his guiding, climbing skills and love of the mountains. Peter died Saturday, August. 10, 2007 in a rock-fall accident at the Leg Lake Cirque in the Wind River Range. Peter was a passionate climber and will be dearly missed.

Winner of 2007 Guide Olympics: Gentleman of Leisure - Evan Stevens, Joe Vallone, Amos Whiting.

Next years Annual Meeting will be in Bend, Oregon. For all you that made it to Yosemite - I look forward to seeing you again...and for the rest of you AMGA folks, please join us for a great weekend at Smith Rock!





President's Corner

by John Bicknell



We just finished a successful and enjoyable annual meeting in Yosemite, with highlights including a very productive Board Meeting, a Lynn Hill slideshow, and some tremendous opportunities for professional development in both the half day clinics and the Instructor Pool trainings in which former Canadian TD Colin Zacharias took a leading role. Since I know a lot of that is summarized elsewhere in this Bulletin, I want to take this chance to

review the past year while looking at the AMGA's Strategic Plan.

- Unify the guiding community in the US and within the AMGA.
 - Seek to have every working US guide a member of the organization and in support of education, certification, and standards.

This to me is the key provision in our Strategic Plan and I see progress. Almost every young guide I meet is interested in certification; almost every guide service operator I know values AMGA training and certification in selecting guides. Membership is up 11% this year. Course numbers remained stable despite an increase in course lengths and course costs. At the mountain guide level, with individuals who are working in mountain terrain with technical objectives, I believe we can achieve this goal in the near future.

On another level, our success is more ambiguous, as are the definitions of who we are trying to reach. Mountain guide, climbing guide, climbing instructor—all of these terms overlap, but they are not the same. Fewer than 200 people took IFMGA-track AMGA courses in rock, alpine, and ski in 2007. The number of individuals who teach climbing in some capacity in the US is in the tens of thousands. We have unique credibility as a training organization in the U.S., but at the same time we have an image problem—we are definitely seen as an elite organization with restrictive standards, in the words of a past AMGA President, we are seen as “serving too few well and too many poorly.” We are trying to reach out to this larger population and the 2007 Annual Meeting confirmed this—the reorganization of the TRSM Program to a Single Pitch program is largely complete and the Technical Committee and Board agreed that the Climbing Wall Instructor Program should move forward, possibly in collaboration with the Climbing Wall Association. Other collaborations have been discussed with PSIA and the American Alpine Club.

- Continue to strengthen the education and testing programs. Improve our ability to deliver the volume of guides necessary to meet the needs of land managers and customers demanding certified guides

This goal defines who we are and what we do—we are a teaching organization—and we have strengthened these programs in 2007. The successful course restructure is now more in line with IFMGA standards. A continued focus on the training and development of the Instructor Pool is the highest priority for Technical Director Rob Hess and Program Director Henry Beyer. The restructured Single Pitch and new Climbing Wall programs allow us to reach the larger world of US climbing instruction.

- Improve the benefits of membership
 - Improve access for certified guides and accredited schools
 - Make the AMGA an information source for members
 - Negotiate group discounts for members (e.g. insurance)
 - Market certified guides and accredited schools

This is an area where vast amounts remain to be done. The largest strides here in 2007 are reflected in the new website—both in terms of creating public visibility for our members and making the AMGA a better information source. Programs such as the Single Pitch and Climbing Wall can also have tremendous impact in terms of creating public awareness of the AMGA and its certified members. We have helped fund the Certified Guide Federation and it has begun making strides toward its mission of improved access for certified guides. The Accreditation Program has not received equal attention from us, but that deficiency has been recognized and the Board has agreed that Accreditation needs both more funding and more staff support if it is to succeed; it cannot continue as primarily a volunteer Program.

- Continue to develop the long term financial strength and stability of the organization.

The AMGA has never been in better financial shape; our courses are in demand and we are attractive to industry partnerships. This is crucial because it gives us the opportunity to spend wisely in support of what we decide are our key goals—will we choose to further support the CGF, can we add a staff member to develop and run the accreditation program, can we afford to spend more in support of instructor training or subsidize more in terms of guide training? By the way, these are not questions to be debated solely by the Board or AMGA office—I always want to hear our priorities.

Internally, the AMGA is stable but this has definitely been a challenging year, a year of wholesale change. The TD/PD positions were restructured in January. ED Mike Alkaitis resigned in March. After an extensive search process, Betsy Novak became the new ED in June. Henry Beyer moved from Membership Director and interim ED to Program Director. Katie Kelly came in as Membership Director. Stephanie Lazewski became the new bookkeeper. Only Justin Yates, the Program Assistant has been in his current job for over a year. It is a brand new office. Even the Board is relatively new, with several Board members completing two terms and moving off and others either not seeking or not winning a second term, and with the recent resignation of Board Vice President Maury McKinney for personal reasons.

I have worked closely this year with both Betsy Novak and Henry Beyer and I want to thank them and everyone in the office for all of their efforts. The AMGA office has done wonders in 2007 despite being both short staffed and short on institutional memory—it is a tribute to all of them.

I also want to thank Board members Dave Bengston, Matt Brooks, Clint Cook, Alan Jolley, and Maury McKinney for all their efforts while on the Board. And I welcome Adam Fox, Dale Remsberg, and Evan Stevens as new Board members. For 2008, it is important that we create a little more continuity and recreate our institutional memory, both in the office and on the Board. Betsy is already taking steps to insure this happens in the office. We need to make sure this happens on the Board as well.

That we have had this level of instability and still moved forward as an organization says two things to me—exceptional people work hard for the success of the AMGA and the AMGA's fundamental mission and strategic plan are very solid.

Letter From the Executive Director

By Betsy Novak



Thanks to all of you who were able to join us in Yosemite for our Annual Meeting. It was a huge success with a great turnout. I hope you will be able to join us next year for another eventful week of climbing, networking, and educational clinics.

I just returned from Asheville, NC where I attended the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education Conference. While there I had the opportunity to meet with a handful of aspiring climbing instructors, directors of college recreation programs and outdoor leadership schools, and wilderness medicine providers. As I sat in a workshop and listened to the goals and objectives of many of the current programs I realized the importance of providing standardized training for climbing instructors across the board.

I want you to take a moment and conjure up all the memories associated with your first climb, successful ski descent, or alpine experience. Who was by your side? Where were you? What skill level were you capable of? And how did it feel to meet your challenge?

For some folks I'm sure the first time they ever put on a harness or learned to tie a figure-8 happened within the plastered walls of a climbing gym. For others, their first climbing experience or extended mountaineering trip happened through the organized efforts of their college outdoor program or preferred outdoor leadership school. For most folks who deem winter their favorite season, I'm sure their first parallel turns or off-piste adventures started from within a ski area boundary.

The pioneers of climbing and skiing had to go to great strides to achieve their "firsts"; but today, people's "firsts", "seconds", and even "thirds" are attained in a much different way, thanks to the continued efforts of those whose passion and life pursuits involve leading others safely and enjoyably into and on top of places never before imagined.

United by our love of the mountain environment and the common goal of helping others realize their outdoor dreams the growing guiding and instructor community has the strength and potential to reach hundreds of thousands of people each year. What if each individual involved in that chain were somehow influenced and guided by the only organization in the nation that has taken on the mission of representing the interests of the guiding community, the American Mountain Guides Association?

As an organization grounded in a powerful tradition huge strides have been made since its' inception and now it is our responsibility to further that growth and build-upon an organization that should be representing the interests of all professional guides and instructors across the nation. In order to represent the community as a whole the AMGA should be working towards providing standardized education to all levels of climbing and skiing instructors. By opening our doors, remaining agile in an ever-changing arena, and looking beyond the traditional AMGA paradigm, while at the same time embracing our history, we have the chance to: grow our organization exponentially, to gain more work opportunities for Certified Guides, Accredited Guide Services, and Climbing Instructors, to achieve access and build relationships with county, state and federal land managers, to get the AMGA name out there, and to become a reputable organization amongst trade associations, educational institutions, and outdoor manufacturers. As the only organization in the country that does what we do, we should be "Leading the Way" for all professionals, aspiring guides and instructors working in the industry today.

The American Mountain Guides Association has the unprecedented opportunity to advance the guiding and instructor profession by advocating for the best practices in the industry across the board. With a new Executive Director, office staff, Board of Directors, growing membership and instructor pool, and new programs on the horizon (Climbing Wall Instructor, Single Pitch Instructor, AMGA/PSIA Backcountry Ski Instructor) I feel confident that we will rise to the challenge of fulfilling our mission and achieving our strategic plan.



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AMGA 2007 Fall Gear Review



Arc'teryx Dually Belay Parka: When I first heard of a new truly hydrophobic (no water absorption) synthetic belay parka called the Dually Belay Parka from Arc'teryx, I was sure it could not be true. We have all heard the promises before "This synthetic insulation will keep you warm even when it is wet." The disappointment of realizing you are not warm, but in fact cold while sitting in a damp belay parka is one of those feelings of true betrayal. This feeling goes away when you realize there is no better solution. Now there is no reason to compromise, or be wet and cold, as the Dually Belay Parka truly does not absorb water.

The Dually Belay Parka is filled with ThermaTek™. ThermaTek™ is a propriety synthetic puffy insulation by ARC'TERYX. Compression resilient, continuous filament hollow insulation. Each strand of insulation is coated with a heat activated DWR treatment. The result is the most hydrophobic puffy insulation in existence with an unparalleled warmth-to-weight ratio.

I ski toured, ice climbed, and spent time in the mountains of Colorado in the Dually and was truly impressed. The jacket absorbed no water besides the hand pocket lining, and I even used it to keep things dry wrapped up inside of it in the spring. The Dually went on a trip to Alaska and peak 11'300 and the response was "What is the name of this jacket and when can I buy one".

This jacket is for the mountain enthusiast who is willing to purchase a jacket that will keep them warm and dry in tough conditions.

(NEW Fall 2007 – i.e. won't hit shops until Sept./Oct.)

Weight: 23.7 oz

Retail price: \$475 (hooded version), \$425 (non-hooded version)

Garmont boots:

--**Shaman:** The new boot form Garmont is designed for skiing in the area or a quick lap out of the area, with the rest of your day riding the lift. The Shaman is a 4 buckle boot for aggressive skiers who feel the walking feature in a boot is a detriment to performance. The anatomical shape fit my foot extremely well and the boot drove the skis well. The boots come with alpine soles as well as mountaineering soles. I only used the alpine soles. This boot is a step up in stiffness from the Endorphine. The boots do not climb well as there is no walk mode. Perhaps the mountaineering sole would help a bit.



--**Mega Ride:** The mega ride is unchanged form last year and remains a top notch 4 buckle boot that is dynafit compatible. The liners in the boot could use more foam in my opinion, but will do for the backcountry. If you are looking for an aggressive dynafit boot and easy touring motion this is a great boot for you. The boot did receive an upgrade in the buckles to take off a bit of weight.

Mammut: Tested & trusted by AMGA guides.

"The Flight 28 pack is my first choice when guiding multi-pitch rock routes. Fits all my gear inside on the approach and, when compressed, its compact size is easily carried on the climbs." – Art Mooney, AMGA/IFMGA certified guide

"The Serenity 8.9 – best damn lead line on the market! Light, supple, and durable. This exceptional rope is a guide's dream for working with two clients on long multi-pitch routes. Strong enough to be used as a single line, runs easily through a Reverso, BD Guide, or GiGi, saving your arms on those speedy belays, and less weight to carry on the approach. I have zero hesitation taking a whipper on this rope!" – Carolyn Parker, AMGA Rock Guide

"The Stratus jacket is the one piece of clothing I use all the time in the mountains. I use it for insulation on long, cold trail runs and under my Laser Jacket for really frigid climbs, and it packs small enough so I can take it up with me when I climb the Diamond in one long, spring day." – Jack Roberts, AMGA



MAMMUT
www.mammut.com

AMGA Diamond Rope Partner Pro Forms available: 800-451-5127 info@mammutusa.com



Scarpa Boots:

--**F3:** The new F3 is a mixture of the Matrix and F1. It is a 3 buckle boot designed specifically for the dynafit binding (must mount plates under the ball of your boot) with a telemark baffle in the toe box for easier touring. The F3 also has the more conventional touring mode rather

than the F1 clamp. The boot skied well in predictable conditions, but there is significant play in the toe box from the toe box bellows when in unpredictable snow.



--**Terminator x:** This is the boot for the new generation looking for 1 boot to AT ski and Telemark on the new NTN system. The boot is built on the classic Terminator 1 design and adds Dynafit compatibility as well as the NTN (New Telemark Norm) under foot. It is a 3 buckle boot with the same performance of the F3. The NTN system takes the duck foot front out of the tele boot so you can now climb in them without fearing for your life. This boot also fits into the

more traditional NAXO and Fritchi bindings (not sure this is recommended).

Ski's:



--**Atomic RT86:** Nice new ski for spring skiing. It is easy to turn,

has a nice flex pattern so there are no surprises, and is usable in softer snow. I enjoyed skiing this ski in couloirs where quick turns were the norm, over letting your ski's loose. The dimensions of 127-86-113 give just enough floatation and maintain easy turning radius.



--**K2 Mt. Baker Superlite:** The new Mt Baker is designed for those looking for a light weight touring ski with a bit more underfoot. The dimensions of 121-88-108 allow the ski to float well and give a nice easy turn. With the soft flex this ski is designed for softer snow, but will ski groomers on occasion. The Superlight lived up to its name when mounted with Dynafit bindings and is a nice addition to the quiver.



--**Black Diamond Kilowatt:** The Kilowatt is the first of the new generation of skis from Black Diamond. The ski is designed to be a wood core single quiver ski. The dimensions of 126-95-114 allow the ski to float in the backcountry, yet still able to turn quickly and efficiently. The ski is not the quickest turner in tight trees. But it always felt smooth and efficient.

Backcountry Access Snow Study Kit & Snow Saw Review

The Backcountry Access Snow Study Kit (which includes digital thermometer, slope meter, aluminum crystal card, and 6X magnifying loupe) and 30 cm Snow Saw were reviewed independently last spring by two IFMGA Certified Guides, Eli Helmuth and Bart Paull. Below is a brief synopsis of what they liked and disliked.

Snow Study Kit: The overall design of the kit seemed well thought out, but is perhaps a bit too big. It would work well for a guide or educator instructing weekend avy courses as the durable carrying case would see the kit through many courses; however the size may dissuade users from carrying the kit on multi-day ski tours. Both reviewers liked the the contents of the snow kit though had varying views on each item. The digital thermometer is nice for ease of use but because it runs on batteries it could be negatively affected by extreme cold and cannot be calibrated in slush bath. The crystal card though useful seems to be designed more for the professional

than recreational user who may not be familiar with all tests. The loupe and the slope meter are both good additions.

30 cm Snow Saw: The snow saw has many nice features, in particular the sharpness of the teeth provides several advantages. Namely it cuts through crust and hard pack like butter and can also be used to cut tree limbs to make an improvised or emergency. The two recommendations for the saw are that it could be 5 cm longer and given the sharpness of the teeth the sheath could be easier to use and more secure.

Backcountry Access

www.backcountryaccess.com

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Technical Director Update

by Rob Hess, Technical Director



I have just returned from the annual meeting in Yosemite and want to thank Betsy, Henry, Justin, Katie and Stephanie for putting on a great event. They were new to this process of setting up such an event and did a fine job. Our Technical Committee meeting and Instructor Pool training sessions were very productive and ultimately a forum for us to take a look at our restructure.

As we near the end of the year, I would like to take some time to look at the Aspirant guide program to address some of the issues and expectations of this program. It has been clear that those embarking on the course and aspirant exam are taking this program very seriously and therefore spending considerable time training in preparation for their course. I commend you all on your effort and state that this is what we had hoped for.

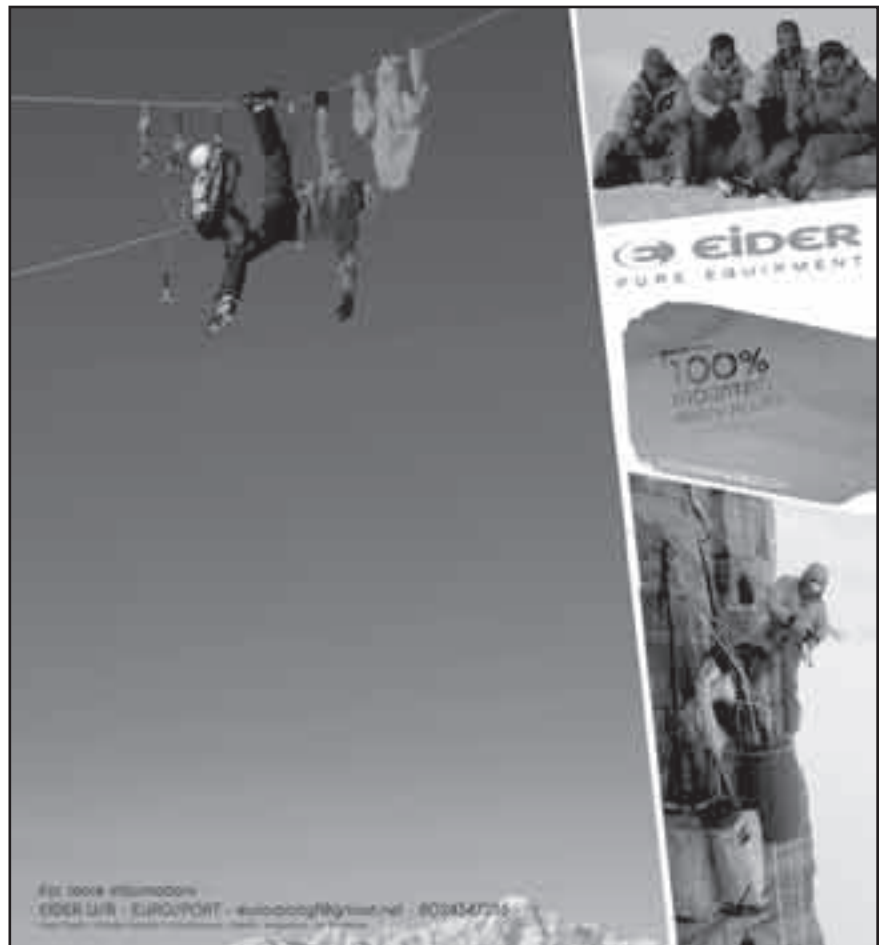
The course and aspirant exam are broken into 4 categories: educational, technical, movement and assignment, the first and foremost being the educational aspects. As you know, the majority of the time on these programs is dedicated to getting individuals on real objectives whereby instructors can coach and educate folks on the finer points of guiding. Though we are very conscious of having a distinct delineation between the educational and assessment portions of the program, one must expect assessment on movement skills at some point very early on in the course. This is basically a risk management tool to help us see where participant's skills are before embarking on real objectives. The technical skills, formerly known as objective skills, are generally done at in the middle of the course to allow for a bit of a rest day. These skills are specific to the discipline as are all, but incorporate things like the 45 minute rock rescue drill, knot pass, crevasse rescue, shelter construction, sled lower drill and transceiver use. The final aspect of the course and exam is assessment of real time objectives assigned by instructors. These objectives are meant to be of final exam length and nature and are to be evaluated like a final exam. There will be allowances for deficient scores based on the fact that individuals are at an aspirant level. Please remember that for whatever reason: weather, weekends, venue considerations and so on, the Course Director may choose to alter the itinerary to better meet the course and exam objectives. Though we will do our best to keep to the itinerary described, please be ready at any time for assessment components.

When thinking about taking a course/aspirant exam, I recommend you read the course catalogue carefully. There are requirements that must be completed between programs. The office will ask that you clearly exemplify in detail your prerequisites in each program/course application. The office will send you information on the course that details the aspirant exam process. Some folks have not received this information prior to the course and exam. To insure you are well prepared for this process, we will include this information in the course manuals. The technical skills are assessed skills that may be easily practiced and mastered before the course/exam. Please come prepared for

these components, as they are skills that must be passed before aspirant status is awarded. Re-examination will be required for such skills at a later date should they not be passed on the course/exam. The good news is that once an individual has completed these technical skills in a particular discipline, they will no longer be tested on them on the final exams in that discipline.

The final topic I would like to discuss is not as much an aspirant topic as a final exam topic. Everyone will be required to pass the technical skills components before gaining certification. At this time, if one has taken an advanced course in any discipline prior to 2007, they will not have been assessed on technical skills before final examination. Just to reiterate - Everyone will be evaluated on technical skills and must pass assessment before earning certification. For those having taken an advanced course prior to 2007, you will have a 2-year window (until 2010) to take a final exam without previous examination on technical skills, whereby you will be tested on such skills during the final exam. After such time, you will be required to be examined in such skills before taking a final exam. This will be done as a part of a pre-scheduled aspirant-re-examination or through an Instructor Pool member in one's area. If you apply for an exam in that time period but are not able to get enrolled for reasons other than personal, your application will be honored and assessment will occur on your final exam.

I hope this helps to clarify the process. I have written about the aspirant exam often, but it seems as though continued clarification is necessary. If you have any questions, please be sure to get answers well before you are involved in the course and exam. Thanks for your time.



Multiple-Victim Transceiver Searches: Myth vs. Reality

U.S. Avalanche Statistics 1997-2007

by Bruce Edgerly and Jon Mullen

Many bold statements have been made in recent years about the prevalence of multiple burials in avalanche accidents. But when was the last time you heard of someone other than Ruedi Beglinger actually performing a transceiver search for multiple victims? It's an important question for guides and educators, who must prioritize what they teach in courses.

To better define the relevance of multiple burials in the U.S., we analyzed 12 years of incidents, from December 1997 through March 2007, listed at www.avalanche.org. The goal was to determine a) how many incidents truly involve completely buried multiple victims using transceivers; and b) of these, how many are "special case" multiple burials that lend themselves to a special search technique or technology.

Our findings show that it is more valuable for avalanche educators to get their students to own beacons, master single burials, learn strategic shoveling and learn to organize a rescue than it is to invest time on specialized multiple-burial search techniques.

DEFINING "MULTIPLE BURIALS"

In our analysis, we draw clear distinctions between cases involving "multiple victims," cases involving legitimate multiple-victim beacon searches, and cases in which a special multiple-burial technique or technology could be applied. Legitimate multiple-victim beacon searches require the following conditions:

- More than one victim must be completely buried, with no visual clues above the surface;
- More than one completely buried victim must be carrying a transceiver;
- At least one searcher with a transceiver and shovel must be on scene within 15 minutes.

Even when the above conditions are met, all victims can be found by the traditional practice of locating and excavating the nearest victim, turning off his or her beacon, then proceeding to search for the next closest victim. Additional factors must be present to make use of a special technique or technology:

- If the rescuer is alone, he or she cannot turn off the first victim's beacon once the airway has been established, either because the beacon is too difficult to access or the victim is too deep to excavate within the window of survivability.
- If a second rescuer is available, then one can begin excavating while the other begins searching for the next victim; and
- The victims must be buried close enough together so both of their signals are captured at once and both searchers are led to the same victim. If they are located farther apart, then each searcher can simply isolate and excavate a separate victim as if it were a single burial.

For purposes of clear terminology, we call any incident meeting all of these criteria a "special case" multiple burial.

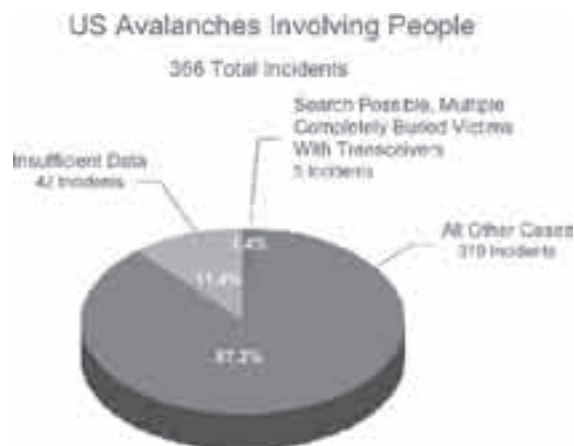
BEACON SEARCHING: THE EASY PART

The analysis resulted in the following observations:

- 1) "Multiple burial" statistics can be misleading. Of 366 incidents involving people that were reported from 1995 to 2007, 48 percent

were reported to involve "multiple victims." But these victims often escape the slide or are only partially buried. Only 6.8 percent of the reported incidents involved completely buried multiple victims. Even fewer involved beacon searches.

- 2) Transceivers are still not considered essential equipment in the U.S. Only 36 percent of completely buried victims were wearing transceivers.
- 3) Of the 366 reported involvements, just 1.4 percent (5 cases) included completely buried multiple victims wearing transceivers.
- 4) "Special case" multiple burials are an even smaller subset, comprising less than one percent of reported U.S. avalanche incidents.
- 5) Upon further researching the incidents, there was a clear message



from witnesses that beacon searching was the "easy part," even with multiple signals. The most difficult and time-consuming aspect of the rescue is invariably the excavation phase, which was described as "hell" on more than one occasion. This is consistent with previous research (see "Strategic Shoveling" at www.backcountryaccess.com/research).

CONCLUSION

Multiple-victim beacon searches are extremely rare in the U.S. "Special cases," where a special technique or technology could come into play, are even less common, comprising less than one percent of reported incidents. The greater issue is that not enough backcountry users own avalanche beacons and not enough emphasis is placed on excavation strategy. These fundamentals should be mastered and reinforced in recreational avalanche courses. Special-case multiple burials should be addressed only at the professional level.

For a report on multiple burial statistics in the Tyrolean Alps (Austria), see www.backcountryaccess.com/research.

Bruce Edgerly is vice president and co-founder of Backcountry Access, Inc. (BCA), a Colorado-based manufacturer and distributor of snow safety equipment, including Tracker DTS rescue transceivers.

Jon Mullen is a consulting engineer and computer scientist living in Boulder, Colorado.



Shoveling 101

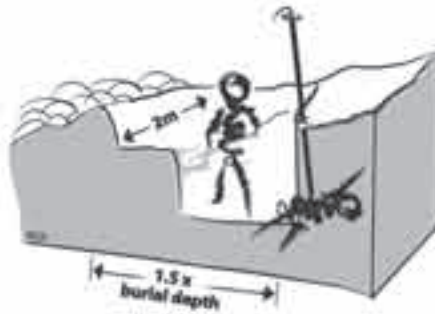
by Bruce Edgerly and Jon Mullen

While shoveling might seem elementary, it usually consumes the majority of time during an avalanche beacon rescue. The most common mistakes are to begin shoveling right above the victim and not creating a large enough hole. For maximum efficiency, make your hole about one “wingspan” wide (if only one shoveler) and excavate downhill about 1.5 times the burial depth.

Aluminum shovels hold up better than plastic in real avalanche debris. Chop the snow into blocks, then scoop. Don’t pry. Oval shafts provide even greater safety, due to their increased strength along the prying axis.

Single Rescuer

- Once the victim is located, leave probe in place as a marker. Probe depth markings aid in determining optimum hole size.
- By excavating downhill from the probe, there will be less snow to move and you’re less likely to compact the snow over the victim’s limited air pocket.
- Start shoveling on your knees, throwing snow out the sides of your hole. Stand up when the snow surface rises above your waist.
- When the snow surface rises above your waist again, throw the debris downhill, out the end of your hole.
- If burial depth is greater than one meter, a “terrace” on the downhill side will enable you to throw snow clear of the hole.
- When you reach the victim, uncover their head first to maintain airway. A well-dug hole provides room for rescuers to maneuver.



Multiple Rescuers

- If two shovelers are available, work side-by-side, following the guidelines above, make the hole two “wingspans” wide.
- If more than two shovelers are available, then two should begin shoveling just downhill of the probe. One or two should begin shoveling downhill of them (1.5 times the burial depth), following the guidelines above.
- When the uphill shovelers are up to their waist and must start throwing snow downhill, the lower two shovelers should exit the hole to rest and prepare the area for first aid and evacuation. Rotate shovelers once a minute.
- In deep burials exceeding two meters, it might be difficult to throw snow clear of the hole even with a “terrace” structure. In this case, one downhill shoveler should exit the hole. The uphill shovelers then throw their snow to this position and the remaining downhill shoveler should move it to the surface.



In recreational avalanche courses, it is more important to review these techniques—which apply to all avalanche rescues—than techniques for “special-case” multiple burials—which apply to less than one percent.

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V.P. Letter of Resignation



Please accept this letter as a formal notification that I am resigning my position as a board member and Vice President of the AMGA as of October 8, 2007.

Thank you and all the members of the board that I have served with for your friendship and the many wonderful opportunities that you have given me. I shall retain a profound sense of pride in my work with the AMGA and cherish the lessons I have learned from its many skilled and caring members.

My resignation is in no way related to any problems with the organization. Rather, I have chosen to dedicate my energies to another endeavor I feel passionately about. For many years I have harbored a desire to bring a world-class aquatic center to our community and thereby enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens. Last year I formed a private, non profit group called the White Mountain Aquatic Foundation. My work with this foundation requires diverse local involvement including teaching swim lessons for people of all ages, forming a youth and Masters swim team, fundraising, grant writing and networking with many people and organizations. Basically, I do not feel that I can do the type of job as a board member for the AMGA that is required to sustain and advance its mission.

My resignation will open the door for another guide to share their vision and energy with this professional organization and its members. If I can be of any assistance during this transition, please let me know. I would like to retain my association with the AMGA as a certified member as I do plan on continuing to guide on a part time basis for many years into the future.

Respectfully and appreciatively,

Maury McKinney

AMGA Certified Rock Instructor and Five-Year Board Member





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Calling all Certified Guides...If you don't already know about our partnership with Vail Valley Medical Center, please read on - Vail Valley Medical Center is the exclusive hospital provider to the AMGA - Benefits

- Access to Travel Clinic:

AMGA certified guides have access to the VVMC travel clinic before and/or after an international or domestic expedition. This includes scheduled consultations and services free of charge to the certified guide. Including but not limited to advice, vaccinations and prescriptions. First aid and trauma supplies are the responsibility of the guide and AMGA. Prescriptions may be given but obtaining and paying for the medications are the responsibility of the guide/AMGA.

- Access to Phone Consultations:

AMGA certified guides will have 24 hour, seven day a week access to a designated trauma specialist for phone consultations from the satellite phone in the field to assist in the management of medical emergencies. Dr. Tom Hackett and Dr. Reginald Francious are the primary contact personnel.

- Sponsorship

VVMC provides sponsorship to the AMGA for two certified guides to attend the ski and snowboard medical emergencies CME conference held annually in Beaver Creek, CO. A great opportunity to expand your knowledge in outdoor medical emergencies.

This is a unique opportunity for all AMGA Certified Guides. Please feel free to contact the office at 3030.271.0984 or Katie@amga.com with any questions.

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The American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) and the American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education (AIARE); A Historical Perspective

by Tom Murphy, AIARE Executive Director

The history of our two organizations is one that needs to be documented, as best we can, before these accounts slip further into obscurity. So doing the best I could with my own recollection and correspondence with the early players, I've constructed a mini-documentary for your entertainment.

I was working with Jean Pavillard at Adventures to the Edge in Crested Butte, CO acting as an instructor and course coordinator for the avalanche program in 1992. I had showed up in Crested Butte after 15 years in Alaska where I had built and ran the Hatcher Pass Lodge, north of Anchorage in the Southern Talkeetna Mountains. I had worked in avalanche control, ran a weather station for the Alaska Avalanche Forecast Center, and had assisted Fredston and Fesler in their avalanche courses.

As a faux guide (then and now), it was an education working with Jean, who is Swiss, an IFMGA guide and who was willing to drag me along on various trips. It was during this time (early 1990's) that Jean became involved with the AMGA as an instructor and examiner. He would go on to become the technical director for the AMGA. Around this same time the AMGA was working on becoming accepted into the IFMGA.

AMGA spring Ski Guides Bridge Course and Exam 1992; Enter Karl Klassen, Colin Zacharias, ACMG guides, and Jean Pavillard, IFMGA guide from Switzerland living in the U.S., all assigned by the IFMGA to observe the course Bela Vadasz was coordinating. What was becoming evident at this course by the instructors, observers, and candidates was uneven avalanche knowledge among the course participants and no common language. While there were a variety of excellent avalanche course providers in the U.S. at the time, there was little continuity between the providers. Few, if any, U.S. providers were using international standards for observing and recording weather and avalanches. Consequently, candidates came with more of an intuitive understanding of avalanche phenomena and risk management.

It was also becoming obvious that the educational model then widely used in the U.S.- that model being primarily developed by ski patrol, a smattering of "snow scientists", Forest Service Forecasters, and Search and Rescue teams - was not translating well for the guiding community.

Bela Vadasz; "As guides we found ourselves consistently breaking these rules. I'd come home at night feeling bad that I had seemingly broken every rule that I had been taught. I knew something was wrong."

Jean and Bela were working on refining the ski guide and ski mountaineering guide certificates of the AMGA to better reflect the standards that needed to be established in order to qualify for IFMGA acceptance. At this same time, 1995/96, Jean had invited Karl and Colin to Crested Butte to help him in developing his "Guides Training Center". I was running Jean's avalanche program and it was at this point an interesting confluence of European, Canadian, and American approaches to avalanche education began to emerge; think the Munter 3x3, CAA Professional Level Courses, and The Avalanche Triangle. A hybrid was soon to materialize.

The next few years saw Karl Klassen (author of the Technical Handbook for Professional Mountain Guides Alpine, Rock, and Ski Guiding Techniques) coming down to the states helping Jean with his guides training center and working with Pavillard to offer the first Level 3 that I had heard of. The first Instructor Training Courses (ITC) were presided over by Karl Klassen. Representatives from guide services, outdoor education programs, and ski patrols from across the U.S. took part in scripting the first drafts of the AIARE curriculum.

With so many guides involved with the initial development of AIARE, it was no surprise that it found its way into the AMGA. AIARE has benefited immensely from that undeclared partnership and we like to think the AMGA has benefited as well. Many of our instructor trainers are also AMGA members and examiners. Their involvement in both organizations brings a perspective that is unique and has helped construct a new model and the next generation in avalanche education.

The AIARE Level 2 and 3 programs have evolved into courses that respond directly to the needs of the guiding community. Our motivation to create a Level 3 certification program was driven by requests from guides and patrollers. It reflected a need to complement the AMGA education stream by providing an avalanche certification that ensures a standard has been met and elevates the credibility of the program. The courses take into consideration the rigors involved with AMGA courses and are intended to assist guides and guide candidates be successful in their endeavor.

AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Course Schedule

Advanced Avalanche Training for Professionals and Recreational Leaders

January 20-25, 2008 Eastern Sierra, June Lake, CA

February 17-22, 2008 Snowbasin Ski Resort, Ogden, UT

February 25-March 1, 2008 Red Mountain Pass/Silverton, CO

Course Length 6 days

Cost \$1100

For more information on Avalanche Education Providers please visit the AMGA website at www.amga.com



2008 AMGA Scholarships

The American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) has partnered with outdoor industry leaders and private foundations to provide necessary financial support for guides seeking training and certification. The cost of pursuing professional training and certification can often be one of the greatest hurdles for an educator and technical mountain guide. Through the generous donations and continued commitment of members, private donors, and the business community, the AMGA is able to minimize the financial burden of training and certification by offering scholarships and memorial funds.

We encourage everyone to apply and take advantage of these opportunities. We will be accepting applications November 1, 2007 through January 1, 2008. We plan on having all scholarships be awarded on March 3rd, 2008.

So, if you are interested in applying for the various scholarships offered through the AMGA, please keep in mind that you will need to submit all required information by January 1, 2008! Scholarship information, process and application is available on our new website.... www.amga.com. If you have any questions contact the office at 303.271.0984 OR Katie@amga.com.

Scholarships Application & Process

All Applications must be submitted electronically to katie@amga.com

You must be enrolled in an AMGA program for your scholarship application to be accepted.

There is one general application that applies to all scholarships. However, you must submit a separate application for each program/course that you are enrolled in.

All Scholarship Applications are due JANUARY 1, 2008.

AMGA Scholarships

- Arc'Teryx Scholarship: (Ski Discipline)
- Backcountry Access Scholarship: (Ski Discipline)
- Black Diamond Scholarship: (Any Discipline)
- Casio Scholarship: (Alpine or Ski Disciplines)
- Chad VanderHam Memorial Fund: (Ski Discipline)
- Jim Ratz Memorial Scholarship: (IFMGA Certification)
- Julie Cheney Culberson Educational Fund: (Women's scholarship)
The Julie Cheney Culberson Educational Fund has increased to \$500
- Mammut Scholarship: (Any Discipline)
- Marmot Scholarship: (Any Discipline)
- Mike Hatrup/XO Net Scholarship: (Ski Mountaineering Discipline)
- Mountain Hardwear Scholarship: (Any Discipline)
- Patagonia Scholarship: (Women's Scholarship)
- Petzl Scholarship: (Any Discipline)
- The North Face Scholarship: (Alpine Discipline)
- Walker Family Foundation Scholarship: (Any Discipline)
- W.L. Gore Scholarship: (Any Discipline)

In regards to handling 2008 winter ski guide courses, scholarship applicants will be asked to pay upfront and then once awarded a scholarship, the AMGA will be happy to reimburse you.





Program Update



As this is my first Program Update as the AMGA Program Director, I would like to extend my congratulations to all of those who participated in an AMGA program this year. The last year and a half has been full of transitions for the office and the programs, and so we greatly appreciate all of your patience and understanding.

2007 saw the implementation of a new program structure, and besides the normal tweaking that needs to be done when trying something new, the new system got off to a resounding start. There was a high success rate on the aspirant exam that is now an integral part of all advanced courses and hopefully this will translate into a greater exam pass rate. As of this publication 42 candidates successfully earned certification across the three IFMGA disciplines along with countless others receiving TRSM and Rock Instructor certification. Five new IFMGA certifications were also awarded this year. All in all it was a great year.

Looking forward to 2008, there is already a growing pile of applications on my desk. The course schedule is posted on the new and improved website and members have been taking advantage of the rolling application process that was instituted last year. There are a few changes to the program application and the application process as a whole:

- The format of the application has changed somewhat allowing for a single application to be used for any AMGA program (that is course or exam).
- A medical history form has been included in the application.
- Applications may be submitted electronically, but at this point in time the office would prefer to receive paper copies of the application and liability waivers.
- Resumes should be submitted via email.

Other important changes to note are:

- The full tuition payment deadline is now 10 weeks prior to the program starting date.
- The refund deadline is now 8 weeks prior to the program starting date.
- The nonrefundable application fee is now \$150.00. If you are enrolled in a 2008 program then a \$150.00 application fee will be deducted from any refund, except in the event a program is cancelled (in such cases you will receive a full refund).
- Please keep in mind that transfers of funds will be handled on a case by case basis and will only be allowed for programs running in the same calendar year.

I want you all to know that my goal as program director is to help you achieve your training and certification goals. Please contact me with any questions, comments, and concerns you might have.

2007 AMGA Exam Graduates

IFMGA Certified Guide

Olivia Cussen (Alpine Guide Exam)
Matt Farmer (Ski Mountaineering Exam)
Kevin Mahoney (Ski Mountaineering Exam)
Christian Santelices (Alpine Guide Exam)
Dylan Taylor (Ski Mountaineering Exam)
Evan Stevens (Ski Mountaineering Exam)

Certified Alpine Guide

Steve Banks
John Bicknell
Olivia Cussen (IFMGA)
Erik Leidecker
Bill Liberatore
Julia Niles
Nat Patridge
Travis Piper
Mike Poborsky
Nick Pope
Mark Puleio
Christian Santelices (IFMGA)
Geoff Unger

Certified Rock Instructor

Tony Grice

Beckett Honicker
Chad Kennedy
Tim Martel
Zebulon Parker
Mick Pearson
David Potter
Bayard Russell
Chris Tatum

Certified Rock Guide

Jim Ablao
Anthony Brown
Gabriel Coler
Nate Disser
Gary Falk
Bob Goodwin
Marc Hanselman
Matt Hegeman
Pete Keane
Nate Kerr
David Lane
Andres Marin
Ben Mitchell
Matt Mieczkowski
Nick Pope
David Vallet

Matt Wade
Eric Whewell

Certified Ski Mountaineering Guide

Olivia Cussen
Matt Farmer (IFMGA)
Eric Henderson
Anne Keller
Kevin Mahoney (IFMGA)
Winslow Passey
Jamie Pierce
Christian Santelices
Jonathon Spitzer
Evan Stevens
Dylan Taylor (IFMGA)

TRSM

The list of those obtaining TRSM Certification is prohibitively long to mention every one by name, however it is important to recognize collectively and congratulate all of the individuals who successfully completed their TRSM Certification in 2007.



2008 AMGA Program Schedule

COURSE AND AREA:	Date:	Ratio:	# of Days:	Cost:
Ski Discipline: S1:				
SGC- Red Mountain Pass, CO	12/27-1/7	5:1	12	\$2,200
S2: SGC- Aspen, CO	1/17-28	5:1	12	\$2,200
S3: SMGC/AE- Argentiere, FR	3/15-24	4:1	10	\$2,200
S4: SMGE- Argentiere, FR	3/28-4/4	4:1	8	\$1,600
S5: SGC- Cascades, WA	3/3-14	5:1	12	\$2,200
S6: SMGC/AE- Valdez, AK	4/29-5/8	4:1	10	\$2,200
S7: SMGE- Valdez, AK	4/29-5/6	4:1	8	\$1,600
S8: SGC- Jackson, WY	12/10-21	5:1	12	\$2,200
AE Re-exam	12/5-8, 1/11-14, 2/25-28			
Rock Discipline:				
R1: RIC – J Tree, CA	3/20-29	3:1	10	\$2,000
R2: RIE – J Tree, CA	3/31-4/5	2:1	6	\$1,600
R3: RGE – Red Rock, NV	4/7-12	2:1	6	\$1,400
R4: RGC/AE – Red Rock, NV	4/14-23	3:1	10	\$2,000
R5: RIC- North Carolina	9/16-25	3:1	10	\$2,000
R6: RIC– Boulder, CO	5/8-17	3:1	10	\$2,000
R7: RIE – Boulder, CO	5/19-24	2:1	6	\$1,600
R8: RIC – Shawangunks, NY	6/2-11	3:1	10	\$2,000
R9: RGE – Boulder, CO	6/16-21	2:1	6	\$1,400
R10: RGC/AE- Boulder, CO	9/2-11	3:1	10	\$2,000
R11: RIC – N. Conway, NH	9/2-11	3:1	10	\$2,000
R12: RIE- N. Conway, NH	9/15-20	2:1	6	\$1,600
R13: RGC/AE– Red Rock, NV	9/18-27	3:1	10	\$2,000
R14: RGE – Red Rock, NV	9/29-10/4	2:1	6	\$1,400
R15: RGC/AE – Red Rock, NV	10/6-15	3:1	10	\$2,000
R16: RGE – Red Rock, NV	10/27-11/1	2:1	6	\$1,400
AE Re-exam	4/24-25 RR, 9/12-13 Bldr, 9/15-16 RR			
Alpine discipline:				
A1: AGC – RMNP, CO	5/5-14	3:1	10	\$2,000
A2: AGC – Cascades, WA	6/16-25	3:1	10	\$2,000
A3: AAGC/AE – Cascades, WA	8/4-16	3:1	12	\$2,200
A4: AGE – Cascades, WA	8/18-27	2:1	10	\$2,000
A5: AAGC/AE – Cascades, WA	9/18-29	3:1	12	\$2,200
A6: AGE – Cascades, WA	9/18-27	2:1	10	\$2,000
AE Re-exam	8/12-15, 9/12-15			
Ice Climbing Training:				
II:ICTC -- N. Conway, NH	2/4-8	3:1	5	\$1,000

SGC= ski guide course

SGC/E= ski guide course and exam.

SMGC/AE= ski mountaineering guide course and aspirant exam.

SMGE= ski mountaineering guide exam.

RIC= rock instructor course.

RIE= rock instructor exam.

RGC/AE= rock guide course and aspirant exam.

RGE= rock guide exam.

AGC= alpine guide course.

AAGC/AE= advanced alpine course and aspirant exam.

AGE= alpine guide exam.

ICTC=ice climbing training course



PO Box 1739 | Boulder, CO 80306 | ph: 303.271.0984 | fx: 303.271.1377 | info@amga.com | www.amga.com

AMGA Membership Form

Personal Contact Information:

Name: _____

Guide Service: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email (required): _____

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

I began guiding professionally the year ____ (not required for student and associate members)

I guide professionally about ____ days per year (not required for student and associate members)

Check the type of the membership you are applying for

- Student Associate Member (\$40) (Include proof of enrollment with Student Associate Membership.)
- Associate Member (\$60)
- Individual Member (\$115) (For individual memberships you must include with application: resumé of guided climbs, minimum 40 paid days in the last two years; resumé of personal climbs, minimum 20 climbs; at least two letters of reference (from an employer, fellow guide, or client).)
- Certified Individual Member (\$100)
- Yes, I'd like to make an additional, tax-deductible contribution to further support the AMGA. \$ _____

Please mail membership application, payment, and resumé(s) (if applicable) to: Membership, PO Box 1739, Boulder, CO 80306.

Payment

Name on MC/VISA Card: _____

Credit Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Membership Disclaimer

- I agree to support the high standards of safety and professionalism in mountain guiding and instruction. I understand that the AMGA does not condone guiding without appropriate authorization and that the AMGA does not endorse and illegal guiding, whether in the US or another country. I also understand that I, or any AMGA member may be subject to the loss of membership, accreditation, or certification if such practices occur.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

- Check this box if you would prefer the AMGA not share this information with AMGA Corporate Partners.



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