

MEET THE SKI PATROL

Does the prospect of meeting new people, learning invaluable first aid skills, helping people, and skiing, appeal to you? I was asked the same questions, answered yes, and joined the Ski Patrol. Now, seven years later, I am a highly involved member, and a strong advocate of the Canadian Ski Patrol System (CSPS).

I hope this feature answers any questions that you might have about the Ski Patrol, and presents you with a brief understanding of what we do and where we come from. Hopefully, we can pick up some new keen members.

I would like to start with a little of the history of patrolling in Canada. It began in 1941 when Douglas Firth, a doctor from Ontario, was approached by the management of the ski area that he frequented. He was asked if he could provide medical assistance to injured skiers. Dr. Firth readily agreed, assembled a team, trained them in first aid, and went to work. Soon, the word of Doctor Doug's success became known, and he began to provide the service at other ski areas; the CSPS was born, and has since spread to every province in the country. Now, 52 years



later, there are over 6500 members, and the standards of the system are recognized as being among the best worldwide. The good doctor, now in his eighties, is still involved, still patrols, and writes the qualifying exam every year just like everyone else.

The CSPS is broken down into nine divisions which are further broken down into 52 zones, and finally into individual areas. Our group is the Fredericton Area, Atlantic West Division, Fundy Zone, and we patrol at Silverwood Winter Park and Crabbe Mountain.

Now that we all know where we are, it is important to know who we are and what we do. The Ski Patrol is made up of men and women aged 17 and above, who like to ski, and don't mind doing a little work to get a big reward. The Fredericton Area typically numbers around 50, and has as its members people of varying ages and occupations (or lack thereof). There is a very strong student population (myself included) who find the Ski Patrol a great organization, and a rewarding way to spend the weekends besides studying.

The mandate of the CSPS states that the members provide assistance to injured skiers and promote safe skiing policies. That means we have to be prepared for emergency medical situations and be able to properly handle them in order to alleviate the suffering of the

patient (skier). To that end, all of the members must complete an extensive first aid course every year, beginning in the Fall, and be on hand to take shifts at the ski hill on a volunteer basis.

Before the snow flies and patrollers don their first aid backpacks and radios, there is much to do in preparation. Our course began on Wednesday, Sept. 15 with an introduction to the system and to first aid. Registration will continue next Wednesday evening, so if you missed it on the 15th, don't worry, you're not too late. In the next few weeks, our entire group will meet every Wednesday night at 7:00 pm. During these training nights, our instructors will lecture on a certain topic and the class will divide into small groups to turn theory into practice, by applying the new knowledge into hands-on situations. Between Wednesday night classes, the students are expected to keep up by reading their manual which covers everything from Airway management and CPR to childbirth, and emergency chair lift evacuation. The skills learned at this course are not only useful on the ski hill, but wherever there is an emergency situation.

To become qualified as a member of the Fredericton Area Ski Patrol, a candidate must successfully complete the fall course and

pass a ski and rescue toboggan test on the hill. The first aid part is evaluated by two tests that are designed and distributed by the National office. The first one is a written multiple choice test based on the manual and the Wednesday night lectures. The second is a practical exam that displays the skill learned by the candidate. In this test, each candidate is faced with an accident simulation and must perform the role of a first responder. That is, he or she must properly



assess the situation, and treat the victim(s) while adhering to the conventions of the CSPS.

Once the first aid course is over, and skiing has begun, new patrollers must be trained to be able to handle the "on-hill" aspects. These include skiing ability, accident management, (rescue) toboggan handling and chair lift evacuation. When patroller candi-



dates have successfully passed all of the above, they are ready to wear the uniform and perform the duties of a Canadian Ski Patrolter.

These duties are varied. During any given "rostered" day, you can expect to be quite busy. The patrol is required to open the trails for the skiing public. This includes marking any hazards and making sure the trail is safe for all skiers. Once this opening "sweep" is done, the term "patrol" really takes on its meaning. Members ski down the various runs to make sure all is safe, and that there are no accident victims. All patrolters carry a radio and can be called to accidents by management or other patrolters needing assistance. Hopefully there is nothing to keep us busy, but since skiing can be a dangerous sport, we quite often have our hands full.

At the end of the day, all of the patrolters meet at the bottom of the chair lift for our final sweep. This is done after the hill is closed, and is designed to insure that there is nobody left on the hill, either injured or otherwise. Now we can retire to the bar, and enjoy apres ski, with the rest of the skiing public.

We are not all about work however. There is a strong social presence in our group, and since we are all skiers, and all enjoy many of the same things, we quite often take ski trips together, and other similar outings. For the real

keeners, there are countless competitions that one can get involved in to improve skills and add a little fun. I have personally been involved in Area, Zone, Division, National, and international competitions, and they can be a true test of a patrolter's skills.

Now, since there is still time to join, here are some particulars you should be aware of:

Registration will continue on Wednesday, Sept. 22 at MacLaggan Hall, Room 16, at 7:00pm. Meetings after that will be every Wednesday night at 7:00pm at the Maritime Forest Ranger School at the top of Regent St.

The registration fee is not finalized yet, but will be about \$100. I realize that money is scarce these days, but the course is well worth the money for the first aid knowledge alone.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding how to join, please contact me, and leave a message if I am not at home. My name is Eric Bearsto, and I am the Fredericton Area Training Officer. My number is 454-2157. I look forward to meeting new members and we will welcome all.

Think Snow!