

Revelstoke Search and Rescue

For Wally Mohn, this year marks the 40th anniversary of his involvement in Search and Rescue. Mohn became involved in the Nelson Search and Rescue team in 1968. In 1989, he brought his expertise to Revelstoke, both as a veteran RCMP officer and member of Search and Rescue.

Mohn has witnessed Search and Rescue evolve from the civil defense philosophy of the post-war era with basic emergency rescue equipment to the state-of-the-art wireless technology that exists today. Currently, Search and Rescue is under the mandate of the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) and works in close partnership with the RCMP, BC Ambulance and Parks Canada. Revelstoke Search and Rescue also has a mutual agreement to assist other areas in the region like Salmon Arm and Golden.



WALLY MOHN

Revelstoke has had a well-organized team for many years. Chuck Elliot, Bill Gill, and Larry Streeter were long-time active members in the early days. Winter has always been a busier time and traditionally almost 90% of rescues involved snowmobilers. At that time it was natural that lots of members from the Snowmobile Club were involved. Mohn remembers one year when the team had 20 call-outs before New Years' – and they were all sledders.

Now, especially as Revelstoke becomes well-known as an outdoor adventure paradise, the winter Search and Rescue season involves not only snowmobiling, but also the ski touring industry, back country snowboarding, and most recently, downhill ski area incidents. Team expertise has had to expand with training sessions and recruitment of new volunteers from a variety of backgrounds who are comfortable in backcountry situations. Summer incidents include mountaineering, climbing, and more recently, mountain biking. It is critical to recruit Search and Rescue team members from specific groups who are familiar with terrain features (like mountain biking trails), and new areas being developed.

Mohn acknowledges that backcountry users, for the most part, are making an effort to increase their awareness, training and knowledge of the backcountry, and organizations like the Canadian Avalanche Association are also working hard to make this happen. As well, users are now equipped with technology - cell phones, satellite phones, GPS, personal location devices, avalanche transceivers, all-weather clothing, quality gear, and other supplies. What counteracts all the technology and gear – especially for tourists – is a lack of familiarity with the terrain. As well, there are more people than ever before venturing out to explore Revelstoke's back yard. In the last year, Search and Rescue had 22 incidents.

Mohn expressed his pleasure at the number of dedicated, highly qualified people who have come forward to be involved with Revelstoke's Search and Rescue team. He emphasized the importance of passing on knowledge and expertise to the younger generation and new leaders. Buck Corrigan, a local mountain guide who has been involved in Search and Rescue for many years, is now taking on more of a leadership role. Revelstoke Mountain Resort has also come on board as a real team player. Last year, RMR not only worked hard to facilitate (and prevent!) on the mountain rescues, but also donated generously to the organization.

Mohn has always had a great love for the outdoors. He appreciates that others seek to enjoy themselves outdoors and be familiar with the backcountry. In all this, Search and Rescue has its place and for Mohn, a driving force has been the knowledge that at some point there is someone out there who really needs his – and the team's – help. For downhill skiers this winter, he has a few words of wisdom: "Don't follow the tracks!" and "Stay within your ability!" – unless you know exactly where the tracks are heading, it may not take long to get into a situation that in order to get out, you will need some help.

To access Search and Rescue in emergency situations, call 911 or 1-800-663-3456. Revelstoke Search and Rescue meets every 2nd Thursday night at 7 pm at their office located in the rear of the Revelstoke RCMP building on the corner of 3rd street west and Campbell Ave. For more information about volunteering with Search and Rescue contact Wally Mohn at 250-837-9540 or Buck Corrigan at 250-814-8494.

Submitted by Jill Zacharias, Photo courtesy of Cathy Burke, CFDC Volunteer Committee members