

## **SAFETY IN THE MOUNTAINS**

### **Report of the Safety Committee of the American Alpine Club 1949**

**T**HE mountain accidents of the climbing year 1948 surpassed in number those of 1947. In 1947 there were 15 persons killed or injured; in 1948 this number rose to 28. Although not all the accidents of the 1948 season can be described strictly as mountaineering accidents, they all throw emphasis again on the recommendations offered in last year's report.

It was pointed out last year that interest in mountaineering was increasing. This is still true. There is a large body of eager climbers who have not yet received sufficient training, and too often are fired with the romance of high conquest without appreciating the risks involved. The group needs and deserves guidance: it is a group that has contributed heavily to the toll, as the summaries of accidents will quickly show. Much of the preventive activity, therefore, should be directed at this large group of inexperienced and inadequately trained climbers. The first step, as recommended last year, is to encourage them to join an organized climbing group or club in which they can receive instruction and have a chance to gain experience under proper guidance. Second, literature and general information about the hazards of the various climbing areas should be made readily accessible to them. The National Park Service and U. S. Forest Service are aware of the need for information; and regional clubs, which should make efforts to reach all potential climbers in their areas, have generally undertaken likewise to act as disseminating agencies.

Last summer there was a great wave of accidents in the Alps. Many of the individuals concerned were English. Apparently the maintenance of monetary restrictions in Great Britain was one reason why so many English met with mishaps: aspiring climbers, unable to take sufficient funds out of the country, could not remain any length of time in the climbing districts, let alone afford guides.

With only a little time at their disposal, they took unusual risks in the effort to accomplish as much as possible. Further, since Great Britain has no truly Alpine heights, inexperienced climbers attempting the Alps without guides tended to overreach themselves.

The report presented herewith summarizes a number of safety programs now being carried forward by organizations throughout the country, and then reviews accidents which are known to have occurred in 1948.

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#### SAFETY PROGRAMS

*Pacific Northwest.* The Mazamas have a rescue group organized to assist in emergencies in all mountainous areas. The Mountaineers, Inc. (Seattle, Everett and Tacoma) give annual training programs in elementary and intermediate climbing, both on rock and on ice, and in ski mountaineering. They have also a Safety Committee, which is responsible for the outlining and promotion of safe mountain practices. Together with the Washington Alpine Club and the regional section of the National Ski Patrol System, the Mountaineers sponsor the Mountain Rescue and Safety Council organized last year. This group functions in cooperation with, and sometimes at the request of, USAAF and USCG Search and Rescue and other local and national governmental services.

*Sierra Nevada.* For the Sierra Club, which is interested primarily in conservation, mountaineering activities are administered by a Mountaineering Committee, at present under the chairmanship of Morgan Harris. Local rock climbing committees conduct activities in the field. A subcommittee on safety plans an educational program and carefully investigates such accidents as do occur. Rescue techniques are practised on local cliffs, and latest developments discussed at evening meetings. A classification of climbers has been completed, for better control of safety, and a copy of the classification furnished to the National Park Service. For nearly ten years