

TAKING THE SEARCH OUT OF SE

CLIMBING OREGON'S MOUNT HOOD

Majestic Mount Hood rises 11,235 feet above sea level in the Cascade Mountain Range of the Northwest United States and is the most frequently climbed glaciated peak in North America. Twelve glaciers and five ridges challenge climbers from all over the world. The climbing routes are technical climbs—there is no hiking trail to the summit.

Most climbing injuries and deaths on Mount Hood result from inexperienced and ill-equipped climbers getting hit by falling rock, ice or snow; falling down steep slopes or into crevasses; or becoming disoriented due to poor weather conditions. Even the slightest climbing injury can result in tragedy due to the mountain's cold temperatures, high winds, and rapidly changing weather conditions.

Search and rescue is always a race against time. Lose the race and the results can be deadly. A shorter search lessens the possibility for tragedy not only for the lost climbers, but also for the search teams who often push far beyond their normal limits in their efforts.

In the 1940s, radios were first used in search and rescue. Since that time, improved equipment has helped search efforts. Now, an unprecedented opportunity is before us to utilize additional technology in search and rescue through the use of a Mount Hood Locator Unit (MLU) by climbing parties and search teams.

The Search Begins for Lost Climbers

When a climbing party is reported overdue, a search is initiated by the County Sheriff, who has



Photo courtesy of Riley C



SEARCH & RESCUE

overall responsibility for search and rescue. The Sheriff will call the appropriate resources available including volunteer search and rescue teams.

The only way searchers will know the party has an MLU is if it is listed on the climbing register at Timberline Lodge, and if the party members have told a responsible family member or friend that an MLU is part of its equipment and when the party is expected back.

If family or friends feels the party is overdue, they should contact the County Sheriff. When the searchers know the climbing party has an MLU, they will activate their receiving units as soon as the conditions permit. This additional search tool may help find the climbers sooner.

