



SKINNY BRIEFS

Newsletter for the Lake Alpine & Pinecrest Nordic Ski Patrols

Fall Edition, November 1999

Director's Ruminations

by Ted Hullar

In retrospect, I should have known it would happen. My weekend trip companion asked if she should bring her big first aid kit. Now why would we need that? It was just a weekend car trip up north, some simple backroads exploring. Not like it was an expedition or anything. My small kit should be just fine.

It was shortly before midnight; we had just passed Shasta Lake, making good time northbound on I-5. Lots of lights up ahead; a big rig stopped in our lane, two others in the southbound lane. The upside down pickup truck in one of the opposite lanes was not immediately obvious, dwarfed by the larger vehicles. A figure darted across the road in front of us, the truck driver running to help.

After a moment's uncertainty, we headed up to next on-ramp and doubled back. Although my initial plan had been to stop and put out some flares, in the few minutes it took to come back to the accident I realized my puny flares were no match for the illumination (and barricade) provided by the trucks. We drove past the accident, through the debris from the truck bed, and parked on the shoulder. I grabbed my flashlights, rubber gloves (kept handy for installing chains and other messy jobs), some rags, and we headed back to the accident.

A truck driver had already called for help on a cell phone. One guy, apparently a passenger in the overturned truck, was hopping around, asking everyone for a cigarette. He leaned over and spoke to the ground several times, or so it seemed; it gradually dawned on me he was speaking to someone still in the pickup. I bent down in time to see the driver crawl out of the opening where the back window had been. Okay, then, ABCs; that guy seems okay for A and B, now how about C? Although he was dripping a bit of blood, his injuries were largely superficial. We cleaned him up a bit, and asked if he wanted to sit down and put some warm clothes on. He deferred, preferring instead to join his friend in a smoke.

After a few minutes, he started shivering, quite suddenly. I asked my friend to go back to the car and get a blanket to put around him, when the passenger interrupted and pointed out the driver's jacket was literally at my feet. We put the jacket on the driver. At this point all the vehicles with multicolored lights started showing up: CHP, volunteer fire department, paramedics. The high point of our involvement was past.

Lessons? You bet there were lessons. What, you thought I was just going to tell an interesting story?

Calendar Highlights

December

- 4-5 Lake Alpine On the Trail
- 12 X/C Ski Fest (BVCC)

January

- 8 Ski with a Ranger, Lake Alpine
- 8-9 Pinecrest On the Trail
- 19-21 Basic Avalanche, Bear Valley
- 22 Ski with a Ranger, Lake Alpine

February

- 5 Ski with a Ranger, Lake Alpine
- 11-13 Telemark Festival, Bear Valley
- 19* Ski with a Ranger, Lake Alpine
- 26 Sr. Nordic Ski and Toboggan Clinic

March

- 4 Ski with a Ranger, Lake Alpine
- 11-12 Bjornloppet Ski Race (BVCC)
- 11-12 Basic Mountaineering, Dodge Ridge
- 18* Ski with a Ranger, Lake Alpine
- 18-19 Sr. Nordic Ski and Toboggan Evaluation

April

- 8 Ski with a ranger, Lake Alpine
- 8 Tom's 10K Race (BVCC)
- 21-23 M.A.S. Backcountry Festival, Lake Alpine

BVCC = Bear Valley Cross Country; * full-moon ski

1. Scene safety: Had I arrived on the scene from the other direction (southbound, in the accident lane), I would probably have stopped behind the trucks. Fortunately, the few minutes it took to find a ramp and double back was ample time to think about a rational plan for rendering assistance. Stopping behind the trucks was not only unnecessary, it was unsafe.

And let's not forget the truck driver running across the highway to get to the accident scene. Had the timing been different, a minor injury accident could have become a tragedy. We are trained to help, and that's why many of us got involved in ski patrol. However, an immediate reaction is rarely the most efficient approach, and can sometimes be downright dangerous. Don't be afraid to take a few moments, assess whether or not you can assist without endangering yourself or others, and devise an effective plan.

Continued on pg. 2 ...

FWD Division Asst. Director's Report

by John Kretschmann

So, we slide into another season, filled with dreams and anxiety of journeys that lie ahead. As you read through the articles in our Newsletter you will no doubt frame opinions, and hopefully you will set new goals as Patrollers. Changes abound – at our own backdoor as well as from our National office. Careful, less you find yourself being unknowingly jostled around by this change, and not a willing partner to it.

Some of you have been with me from the earliest years of Nordic Patrolling. Together we have been both participant and witness of a most interesting transition in time with the introduction of new Patrol Organizations, new Educational Programs, and significant refinements to existing programs. And, after all is said and done, one thing remains most certain: you can be sure there will continue to be change in our NSP organization. The basis for this change starts with the general membership, the individual patroller ... YOU! We are challenged each time we put on that NSP Jacket/Vest to be the very best at what we do. Do you find yourself living up to this challenge, or are you contributing to the "problems" that feed the challenge? Ask yourself: what's the extent of my involvement within in my Patrol, my Region, and the national body of the NSP? Being an NSP Patroller should mean more than showing up for a weekend or two to "Ski the Trails" in search of those "Hot Tele Runs".

Peruse the MLR Calendar ... you will see that there are ample opportunities to improve your educational goals both as participants, as well as affording you mentor instructional opportunities. The MLR offers one of the best, well-prepared, and well-attended Basic Winter Mountaineering courses available. Over that past several years this course has reached literally hundreds of NSP patrollers and general public use recreationists, preparing them for safe enjoyable winter travel in a harsh environmental setting. Using a well-established clinic/station format we are able to present a vast array of topical information from basic fire building, navigation, survival to advanced levels of understanding in rescue and avalanche safety. We can always use more help in teaching this course, as well as expanding its reach into a greater sector of the public domain.

Starting new, with our 1999/2000 season, is the Mountain Awareness Program. A course specifically developed from years of input from NSP Mountaineering Instructors that can be presented to the general public. It's an official NSP-sanctioned safety course with the goal of providing vital information in a clear and understandable way to winter travelers for a fun safe time in the snow. You can be a big part in this new program as instructors and presenters. Don't overlook a fee structure when offering these courses that will adequately cover materials and other appropriate expense related items.

It has been my observation, both from a student as well as leadership level, that my skills growth and knowledge enhancement have been directly proportional to the extent that I took part in some capacity as a teacher ... more so than the student. True, we all need to start at basic student entry level, but what we do with

those basic initial instructions will be the reflection of who we are tomorrow ... when you look into that mirror of your past – do you see a leader or a follower? How do you imagine others see you?

Make this your year to take on the Nordic Senior Program ... you may surprise yourself in how well trained and skilled you already are in the everyday chores as an NSP Nordic Patroller. I'll bet Randy and Mark are ready to take you out for a day or two to let you strut your stuff. The Senior Program, like all of our educational opportunities, is a personal growth program that we can work on together to fulfill an objective. The bottom line ... you'll be helping yourself to better help another.

Here's a trivia question for you and the winner gets to prepare a breakfast in bed for me at our Pinecrest Nordic Ski Patrol Deluxe Winter Lodge: How many hours (total) were contributed last year by your Nordic Patrols of the Mother Lode Region in service to the Stanislaus National Forest Winter Visitor?



Ruminations...

Continued from pg. 1

2. Treat for shock: I was amazed how quickly the driver slipped from behaving normally, if a bit stunned, to trembling uncontrollably. Let's face it, everyone involved in an accident will get shocky. The treatment is simple and almost universally necessary. Which leads into:

3. Take charge of the scene: I asked the driver if he wanted to put his jacket on, and also asked if he wanted to move away from the car and onto the shoulder. His answer was no to both. Clearly, treating for shock should not have been up for negotiation, and moving an ambulatory patient away from a wrecked vehicle on an active interstate highway is even more obvious (especially when he wants to smoke). Patients, and in many cases bystanders, are generally not in the best condition to assess and respond correctly to their injuries. Although it may seem rude or imposing, if you believe you are the best qualified to make decisions, do so.

4. Universal precautions: I was sure glad I had those gloves when dealing with the driver's injuries. They were cumbersome, however, and I removed them to deal with some other things. Only after picking up the driver's baseball cap, apparently of some personal significance, did I realize there was blood on it. Blood and other bodily fluids can be everywhere in an accident. Universal precautions need to be universal.

I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to getting back to the relative safety of ski patrolling...

Ted



Ski Tips



Survival Skiing or Simply Fundamentals?

Many of us consider ski season the time to perfect turns performed in the most sacred of all positions – the telemark. We strive to improve upon last year and telemark down those great runs we enviously eye each year. But, as patrollers we also need to master our survival skiing. In teaching circles, these are the fundamental movements that provide the greatest stability and speed control in any condition including: breakable crust, crud, sloppy cement and wind slab. Along with the slide slip, these are the movements required for toboggan descents. If you're at an alpine resort watch the patrollers move down steep slopes with a sled. Better yet, sign up for an NSP Nordic Toboggan Training Course.

For all snow conditions, but especially in sketchy snow, the body position must be strong, i.e., balanced fore and aft and navel heading down the hill. Weighting must be positively placed on the ski edges to effectively execute any turn. Just as in telemark-stanced turns, survival turns require commitment to the fall line. Timid turns result in failure. Here's a few positions to think about throughout the fall and early winter. Begin your days of skiing by practicing each on easy, gentle slopes with forgiving snow. Gradually increase the slope angle or the ugliness of the snow until you can survival ski in anything.

The wedge – The most fundamental position of them all. A good wedge can be, believe it or not, difficult to master. The idea is to use the edges of your skis, as in any turn. Too often, we weight the center of the skis and end up sliding instead of carving. Point your skis down a gentle slope and move your heels outward being careful not to dig them in. Brake by pushing the heels outward and allowing the ski edges to control the braking. Don't roll the ankles while pushing out the heels.

The wedge christy – Start with the wedge, but this time finish a turn by employing a parallel skid – a christy. Work on smooth weight shifts from the wedge to the parallel.

The stem christy – As Paul Parker says, "If you must control your speed for dicey skiing, the stem christy is an excellent turn." The stem christy is similar to the wedge christy, but this time step into and out of the "V". By actually lifting the inside ski (you can really exaggerate this while practicing), your weight will much more naturally shift from ski to ski. The turns can be very tight

and very controlled. Remember the basics of the wedge as you commit to the fall line – the heels need to move outward to control downhill speed. As you lift the inside ski to match your outside ski, the christy will not only complete the turn but will also control your speed across the slope.

Kick turn – Balance is the key, which means proper weighting is, once again, paramount to a smooth execution of this turn. Often used for travelling up on long climbs, use it for the end of a traverse when descending on super ugly snow.

If you decide to take a toboggan training course, your mastery of these fundamental skills will become immediately apparent. As patrollers, it makes sense to ski all conditions in control so, practice, practice, practice (good thing it's such a kick!).



Me, a Senior ??

by Randy Berthold

Do you aspire to perform at the upper levels of Nordic skiing? Do you enjoy the camaraderie of other skiers with the same aspirations? Well the Senior Program is designed for you. Through this program you will increase your overall patrolling knowledge and skills, meet new friends, and gain confidence in your ability to operate with patrollers at any hill, in any situation. This training program will enhance your personal skiing, toboggan handling, OEC problem management, and general leadership skills. What more could you ask for? Need more information, contact Randy B. or Mark H. They would love to mentor a few chosen folks.



Hypothermia

by Steve Donelan

As nordic patrollers, we don't see much trauma on the trail. What we do see are skiers exposed to winter weather with no huts or cafeterias where they can re-warm and refuel, which puts them at risk for hypothermia. Even in its early (and often unrecognized) stages, hypothermia impairs mental and physical efficiency, and therefore increases the chance of accidents. So the beginning of the patrol season is a good time to review the problem: how to recognize it, how to prevent it, and what to do about it.

"Hypothermia" means too little heat, and any body that is losing heat to its surroundings faster than it can produce heat is getting hypothermic. Since our ancestors evolved in the tropics, we tend to lose heat in air temperatures below about 82° F. So in cold weather we need to use clothing or shelter to create a warmer microclimate around our skin. Anyone who takes Jack Stephenson's catalog too literally and skis nude is not going to last long.

We all know how cold weather clothing works: inner layer that wicks sweat away, insulating layers that trap dead air spaces, outer layer that resists wind and wet, materials whose fibers don't slurp up too much water, plenty of layers and zippers so we can vent steam and adjust to conditions. But many skiers out there don't know much about clothing. If you see people with inadequate clothing skiing into trouble, it's time to make some public contact and do a little educating. No commissions on clothing sales though, at least not while you're patrolling.

What conditions are likely to suck the heat out of skiers and chill them into hypothermia? The greater the temperature difference between the internal and external climate, the faster we lose heat. But in very low temperatures, which are rare in our patrol area, people feel cold and tend to protect themselves. Windy and wet days are more insidious. Wind chill (convection) is very efficient – every mph of wind is equivalent to more than one degree F. of frost. So a 20 mph wind at 50° will chill faster than still air at 30° F. and much faster if the skier does not have a windproof outer layer.

Similarly, wet snowfall will make even well-clothed skiers damp, and ill-clothed skiers very soggy, especially if poor visibility is causing them to crash and wallow in the slush. Water conducts heat 25 times as fast as air, which means that for a very wet skier the onset of hypothermia may be measured in minutes rather than hours, just as in cold water immersion. Perhaps we should have a sign at the patrol cabin: Hypothermia hazard today is HIGH (for windy days) and VERY HIGH for wet days. On these days we should be watching for hypothermia, especially in skiers who have hypothermia risk factors.

The most important risk factor is small size. Heat production is proportional to the volume of heat-producing body tissues. Heat loss is proportional to skin area. So heat production increases with the cube of height, and heat loss with the square. Result: big people have an advantage, and small people a disadvantage. A three-foot tall child will lose heat about twice as fast as a six-foot adult,

and a one-and-a-half foot toddler about four times as fast. So when hypothermia hazard is high, take a close look at any small skiers on the trails, especially if they are unnaturally quiet.

Body shape also makes a difference. The rounder you are, the more volume you have compared to surface area. You don't find too many tall, skinny Eskimos. But to balance that, the more lean muscle mass you have, the greater your heat-producing capacity. So we tall, lean patrollers can stay warm too as long as we keep our body's machinery supplied with plenty of fuel.

This brings us to another risk factor – running out of fuel. Yes, you can burn fat, but it takes more water and oxygen than burning carbohydrates, so it doesn't work too well if you're dehydrated and panting from exertion. That's why many of us carry extra energy food and water. Giving a flagging skier a handful of gorp and a drink of water – or even better, a hot drink from a thermos – is a lot cheaper than an evacuation after the skier has collapsed.

How can we tell if someone is going into hypothermia? Of all our vital organs, the brain is probably most sensitive to cold, and without good head protection it is the most exposed to cold. Impaired mental functions are therefore reliable signs, and the only way to pick up on them is to talk to people. If they have trouble doing simple mental tasks, or are losing their judgement, it will show in their conversation. The next sign is loss of fine coordination, which will show as slurred speech and trouble using the fingers, e.g. to operate zippers or snaps. People with these signs need to slow down heat loss (check their clothing), re-hydrate, and munch some energy food. If that doesn't help, they should be escorted out for re-warming.

As the body continues to chill, the skier will become clumsy as well as less coherent. Chilled muscles work less efficiently. They require a lot more oxygen to do the same amount of work and they react more slowly. Watch for the skier who is panting heavily even from light exertion, falling down a lot for no apparent reason, and who is not very responsive even to your most brilliant conversational gambits. This is someone who should certainly come out, and may need help.

Unfortunately, not even nordic patrollers are immune to hypothermia, so we need to watch each other when the hazard is high, and talk to patrollers who seem to be slogging along in a world of their own. But we also have a responsibility to look for early signs of hypothermia in recreational skiers, intervene before it gets serious, and educate them in prevention whenever we have a teaching opportunity on the trails.

Pinecrest on line !!

The Pinecrest Nordic Ski Patrol is proud to announce its new on-line presence. The site at www.pinecrestnordic.org allows Pinecrest Nordic to provide information about mountain safety and Ski Patrol educational activities that are open to the general public. Pinecrest Nordic is also providing services to other National Ski Patrol associated groups through its members.pinecrestnordic.org site. Available here are detailed patrol schedules and access to a email list processor set up to support the educational activities of the Far West Division.

Pro-Deal Update

by Fred Martwick

It is that time of year to spend all your hard earned dollars on the latest mountaineering gear!

The Pro-deals organized by LANSF for this season will be:

| Manufacturer | Point of Contact |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Mountain Hardware | Gery Peterson |
| TUA (Ski) | Steve Boyd |
| Rainey (Bindings) | Steve Boyd |
| DANA (Packs) | Fred Martwick |
| Yakima (Racks) | Bruce Storms |

Ed Lopez of Pinecrest is also organizing Pro-deals with North-face/Sportiva, Fischer, Karhu, and possibly Marmot as well. Contact Ed for details. The remaining information below pertains to the Lake Alpine Pro-deals.

The general process is that the pro-deal point of contact will send out an e-mail with specifics relating to that deal (cut off dates, payment method, delivery pick-up location, etc.). In general, visit a local distributor and select the product size, color, and model information. Remember DO NOT mention to the distributor that you are participating in an order direct from the manufacturer. Our goal this year is to have orders placed by Dec. 10. Please notify the point of contact whether you intend to place an order by OTT, Dec 4. This way we will minimize missing folks who desire participation.

Participation in the LANSF Pro-deals is available to the patroller (or candidate) if he/she has

1. Submitted patrol dates to Alan Defever.
2. Attended OEC and CPR training and obtained updated certificates.
3. Paid the yearly dues to Dennis O'Neill.
4. Volunteered to shovel the barracks roof.

Also, Pro-deal participants are expected to submit a letter (to the point of contact) which describes his/her satisfaction with the product while on patrol (include a picture of the product being used in the field if possible).

Items purchased on pro-deals are intended for use by the patroller only. Purchasing for friends is not allowed by the manufacturers.

Caretaker's Corner

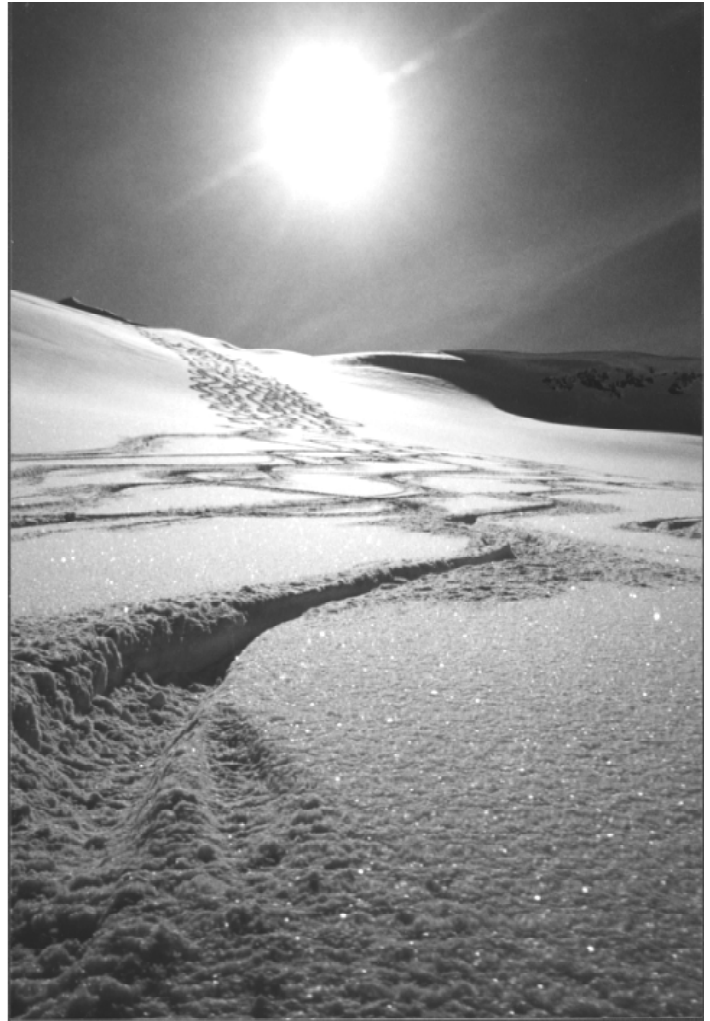
by Steve Heerema & Shara Briggs

Thanksgiving finds us scurrying around like woodland critters trying to get our burrow cleaned and stocked for winter. An early start on winter preparation was sacrificed on the alter of bureaucracy, but thanks to some hard work in a short time by Shara and

our friends at the Forest Service, we are ready. The carpets are steam cleaned, the garage is full of wood, the skis are out of storage... we are ready for another awesome La Niña winter. Bring on the snow!

Steve and Shara will be caretaking the Lake Alpine barracks again and we want you all to feel welcome. We want you to know we are training Kluane, our German shepherd, to be a rescue dog. This may require assistance from patrollers as we work on basic obedience and some of the simpler search exercises.

We aren't sure if we can cook Saturday night dinners this year. We have some ideas and we need your feedback. If you are scheduled to patrol and must cancel, please call us to let us know in advance. We'd love for you to e-mail us, so does anybody have a half-way decent PC they can donate? Other barracks needs: pillows, pillow-cases, and a snow blower. Shara will be leading pre-shoveling warm-up exercises, so bring your favorite aerobics music.



Lake Alpine Patrol Scheduling

by Alan Defever

Of course it should be fun, but patrolling is also a commitment and requires leadership and organization. Establishing the patrol schedule and relying on us to meet our commitment is a patrol priority. As Ted has mentioned, we are all expected to patrol 8 days in addition to the On-the-Trail weekend.

The patrol schedule provides valuable information that helps us to develop our transportation and over night plans. The published schedule is also used by other parties (i.e. USFS, our patrol director, our great barracks hosts) to determine who is coming and what coverage we are providing during the winter season as the Lake Alpine Nordic Ski Patrol.

We will use the same process for scheduling as we have in the past:

- * I sent out the season calendar and schedule request. This schedule will be finalized at the OTT with those who have not established their dates so be ready if you haven't already given them to me.
- * Early in the week prior to patrol, I will send a note to the scheduled patrollers for their final confirmation, pass them the previous patrol's report summary and current backcountry and weather conditions (which needs to be updated for the actual patrol days).
- * I will refresh the schedule monthly with any updates and send via e-mail to all patrollers. You can contact me as to any schedule changes.
- * DO NOT show up unscheduled. This has caused crowding problems in the past.
- * Please contact me on Wednesday or Thursday and I can give you the latest on the weekend commitment.
- * I will be reluctant to schedule you on weekends where we already have 8 patrollers scheduled when we have weekends without good coverage.
- * I will send out notice when we have a low coverage weekend to see if anyone wants to volunteer.

During the past year we have had a lot of no-shows. Patrollers who would have come up did not because the schedule showed there was plenty of coverage and no room in the barracks. Please let me know if you must change as soon as possible so we may be able to find a replacement.

Patrol duties include:

Being ready to patrol from the designated patrol start location at 8:30 – 9:00 each morning.

Select a patrol leader who:

- * organizes the patrol
- * makes sure the patrol is equipped properly (patrollers, radios, first aid supplies, etc.)

- * reviews previous patrol logs and determines the patrol route(s)
- * makes sure the patrol is put in and taken out of service with Stanislaus
- * works with the team on devising skill building scenarios during the patrol
- * assigns duty and rotation at the "information booth"
- * at the end of the day fills out the patrol log
- * at the end of the weekend fills out the USFS volunteer forms
- * makes sure the "house chores" are done so the barracks are clean and neat
- * coordinates shoveling the roof as needed each day
- * sends an e-mail to Ted H. and Alan with a patrol summary, participants and barracks needs to inform the next patrol

Ok, ok, this is the theory of what should happen. We are reluctant to lead and organize because we all want to be friends, get along, not impose on others and we want to have fun. Well, we can have fun, contribute as a patroller and be organized. Leadership and organization are core competencies we all need to develop to be able to be proficient as patrollers and be ready to respond to emergencies as well as make sure we don't lose anyone along the way.

Let's all work to improve our performance of the basic patrol duties this year.

Barracks Housing:

As you know we have limited room and can only have four patrollers actually in the barracks sleeping over night (in addition to our two hosts). The first four on the patrol schedule are the first four who signed up and get the beds. The four can choose their bunk as they arrive. All others must sleep somewhere else (i.e. car, tent, MAS hostel), but can use the barracks for food preparation, visiting, etc. Ladies get priority for the "private" room with the two twin beds.

Patrol preparation:

I enjoy reviewing the weather and backcountry conditions in preparation for the patrol and fun ski outings to help determine the driving conditions, equipment needs and think about safe routes and possibly dangerous routes and aspects. Of course local conditions are what's important on the trail, but understanding the general conditions is quite helpful and gets the mind working on this important safety topic. Some of the web sites I find informative:

www.bearvalley.com - up-to-date ski area info can give you snow pack info, recent snowfall, wind and temperature information as well as special activities which may need patrol "attention"

www.csac.org - the Cyberspace Avalanche Center gives avalanche warning and weather by selecting "current conditions" in California and going to the area in question. You can also get equipment info and last year they had a neat shirt

www.r5.pswfs.gov/tahoe/avalanche.html - gives bulletins, snow pack warning definitions and conditions

Send me those patrol dates, keep me posted of changes, and enjoy!