

NATIONAL SKI PATROL
Far West Division –MotherLode Region
Pinecrest Nordic Ski Patrol

Mountain Travel & Rescue

Thank you for registering, participating, and taking the steps to prepare for the Path Less Traveled. The NSP Mountain Travel & Rescue program is designed to turn your passion for the mountains into practical, life-saving capability. Through a series of progressive courses, we build skills in survival, navigation, and SAR leadership so patrollers and responders can move with confidence and act decisively when every minute counts.

Survival & Self-Reliance ~ Shelter-craft, winter nutrition, and risk mitigation that keep teams alive in harsh conditions.

Navigation ~ Map, compass, GPS, and terrain-reading skills that turn unknown ridgelines into clear routes.

Search-and-Rescue Leadership and evacuation techniques for effective mountain SAR.

Group Dynamics & Decision-Making ~ Strategies for leading diverse teams under pressure and in changing weather.

When:

Please check the website for current course dates, as they may vary from year to year.

Where:

Pinecrest, located near the Dodge Ridge Ski Area, approximately 40 miles east of Sonora.

What to Expect:

You'll begin with a mandatory online Prep Session held over Zoom. After that, we'll meet in person for a full weekend of field sessions, running from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon.

Preparation:

Before attending, download the **Course Booklet** from our [website](#) (located below the registration page) and complete the included questions.

Required Text:

Please purchase *Freedom of the Hills* (XX edition) directly through [Amazon](#) directly. We'll reference this book throughout the course. See the section below for the chapters that will best help you prepare.

Important:

You must also register for this course through the National Ski Patrol (NSP) to participate.

IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND OR HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO E-MAIL ME.

Regards, Jeff Gurrola ascenderjeff@gmail.com

Student Expectations

As a participant in the Mountain Travel & Rescue program, you're stepping into a course built on practical skills, personal responsibility, and teamwork in challenging environments. To get the most out of this experience, and to contribute to a safe, effective learning environment, please come prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Arrive Ready to Learn and Engage

- Review the assigned chapters from *Freedom of the Hills* (10th edition) before the event.
- Bring questions, observations, and a willingness to participate actively in discussions and field exercises.
- Expect hands-on learning: you'll be building shelters, navigating terrain, and practicing SAR techniques in real conditions.

2. Take Responsibility for Your Personal Preparedness

- Show up with the required gear, clothing, and food for winter field travel.
- Maintain your own warmth, hydration, and energy throughout the weekend.
- Practice the self-reliance principles we teach, your preparation directly affects your safety and the group's success.

3. Embrace the Team Environment

- Support your classmates during navigation exercises, shelter building, and group decision-making scenarios.
- Communicate clearly, listen actively, and contribute to a positive learning atmosphere.
- Be ready to rotate between leadership and followership roles as we practice SAR leadership principles.

4. Commit to Safe Practices at All Times

- Follow instructor guidance during field sessions, especially in cold, low-visibility, or uneven terrain.
- Apply risk-management concepts from the course and *Freedom of the Hills*, including terrain assessment, hazard recognition, and conservative decision-making.
- Speak up if you see a safety concern; we model the culture of responsibility expected in real SAR operations.

5. Be Adaptable in Changing Conditions

- Weather, snowpack, and terrain can shift quickly. Expect plans to evolve.
- Stay flexible, maintain a positive attitude, and be ready to adjust your approach as conditions change.
- Use these moments as opportunities to practice real-world decision-making under pressure.

6. Uphold the Spirit of Mountain Travel & Rescue

- Approach the course with humility, curiosity, and respect for the mountain environment.
- Recognize that these skills are not just technical—they're part of a broader commitment to helping others when it matters most.
- Strive to leave the course more capable, more confident, and more prepared to serve your patrol or SAR team.

Registering for the Course (We can do this in the zoom session (it is a PITA). The registration process is arguably the most complicated aspect of the entire avalanche curriculum. So..do not get too frustrated. There are two separate and distinct registration processes AND payments:

1. Pinecrest Nordic Ski Patrol-done simply at <https://www.pinecrestnordic.org/mtr1>
2. National Ski Patrol-this requires that you register with the National Ski Patrol and become an Associate Member. This is a many-step effort:
 - 2.1. Go to https://www.nsp.org/NSPWebsite/Contact_Management/Create-Contact-Form.aspx and create an account.
 - 2.2. Email memberrecords@nsp.org with your name, member number (provided in the email you receive after you create an account), and the state you reside in. State that you wish to become an associate member to enroll in an NSP Avalanche course.
 - 2.3. You will receive a notification and invoice from NSP for \$100 for Associate membership. Pay this following their instructions. This will unlock your ability to access NSP's Center For Learning, where you will complete the following step.
3. Return to NSP Site, Log-in & find the course in Learning Center Catalog and enroll there:
 - 3.1. Browse Catalog
(<https://learning.nsp.org/topclass/searchCatalog.do?catId=73434>)
 - 3.2. In the Search Bar at the top of the page, type " Mountain Travel"
 - 3.3. Select Mountain Travel & Rescue Level 1
 - 3.4. Hit "Choose Session". Find "Pinecrest" patrol offering (these are listed by date then patrol).
 - 3.5. Select "Enroll"

Mountain Travel and Rescue Syllabus

Freedom of the Hills: Reading reference:

MTR Core Topic	Coverage in <i>Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills</i>	Coverage in <i>Introduction to Search and Rescue</i>
1. Body Temperature Regulation	Chapters 2, 3, 24	
2. Water and Hydration	Chapter 3	
3. Nutrition	Chapter 3	
4. Clothing	Chapter 2	
5. Sleeping Systems	Chapter 3	
6. Emergency Shelters	Chapter 3	
7. Essential and Group Equipment	Chapters 2, 21	
8. Travel Equipment	Chapter 16	
9. Navigation	Chapter 5	Chapter 3
10. Backcountry Hazards	Chapters 6, 17, 23	
11. Environmental Awareness and Camping	Chapters 3, 7, 8	
12. Weather	Chapters 27, 28	
13. Group Dynamics	Chapter 22	
14. Backcountry Medical Emergencies	Chapter 24	
15. Search and Rescue Basics	Chapter 25	All chapters
16. Emergency Rescue Techniques	Chapters 11, 18, 25	

Notice that chapters 12-15 and 18-20 of *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills* do not appear in this table. These chapters cover technical rock climbing, ice climbing, and glacier travel, which lie beyond the scope of NSP's MTR curriculum and outside the terrain guidelines listed in the *MTR Instructors' Manual*. The table below shows the chapters in *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills* that cover core topics in MTR F, MTR 1, and MTR 2.

Course Schedule MTR-1

Friday Evening:

1700-2300 Arrive at Pinecrest Community Lodge & rest, relax, and get to know the team.

Saturday:

Start Time	Agenda	Allotted time	Resp
0730	Gear Compile @PCC; Day Prep		Patrollers
0745	Check-in, Check off Pre-Test, & Sign Liability Release; eat breakfast & drink coffee		Students
0830	Introductions of Instructors & Group Leaders	15	Jeff G
0845	Orienteering & Navigation	60	Jeff G
0945	Break	15	All
1000	Weather; Route Planning; SAR	60	Jeff G
1100	Avy Introduction & Team Dynamics	90	Keith
1230	Shelters & Team announcements;	15	Jeff G
1230	Gear check-out; Radios; Car shuttle; etc.	15	All
1300	Leave in Teams from Trailhead – coordination; Wait for Dispatch confirm	30	Wade
1330	Snowshoe/ski to objective	45	ALL
1400	Shelter building and kitchen set-up (PNSP) HELP OTHERS AS NEEDED	120	ALL
	Saturday Afternoon – <u>if shelters go up fast</u> #1GPS/Map; #2 Knotts	TBD	
1800	Dinner TV TV at camp kitchen	60	All
1900	Prep for night search; Coordinate volunteers and shadows	25	All
2000	SAR Exercise		All

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Sunday – Field Stations and Return to Trailhead

0630	Reveille		Wade
0700	Breakfast	45	All
0745	Instructors prepare for field stations	45	
0800	Dispatch to stations 4 -5 person teams	15	
0815	Field station rotation #1 Emergency Shelters & Fires	45	
0915	Field station rotation #2 Avalanche & Shoveling	45	
1015	Field station rotation #3 Raising and lowering systems	45	
1115	Field station rotation #4 Navigation	45	
1215	Roses, Thorns & Rosebuds	35	All
1245	Clean-up camp and pack		
1315	Dispatch to dismiss teams to trailhead	30	All
1400	Collect gear and/or meet back at PCC	30	All
1430	Clean up PCC	45	All

Knotts:

Water knot, Double fishermen's, Prusik, Munter hitch-mule combination, Figure 8's, Load Releasing Hitch, Clove Hitch, Truckers Hitch, Tent Hitch; Deadman

Friday Night Lodging

Lodging is provided in a co-ed, single-room setup located in the same building where we hold our indoor sessions. The Pinecrest Community Lodge (PCL) is a former one-room schoolhouse that now serves as a community meeting space—think of it as a big college-style dorm room.

Please bring your own sleeping gear (**sleeping pad and sleeping bag**). Everyone spreads out throughout the 25' x 40' room.

The lodge has bathrooms but no showers. We are not permitted to cook in this facility.

Food Recommendations for Winter Camping (Field-Stove Cooking)

For our winter field weekend, you'll need to plan for **Saturday lunch**, **Saturday dinner**, and **Sunday breakfast**. Cold weather changes how your body uses energy, so aim for meals that are **high-calorie, simple to prepare, and easy to cook on a small stove**. Think warm, hearty, and fast.

General Guidelines

- **Prioritize hot meals.** Warm food boosts morale and helps maintain core temperature.
- **Choose quick-cooking ingredients.** Water boils slower in winter; avoid anything that needs long simmer times.
- **Pack foods that still taste good when frozen.** Many items will freeze—plan accordingly.
- **Bring extra snacks.** You'll burn more calories than you expect.
- **Use insulated containers.** Keeps food from freezing and speeds up cooking.

Saturday Lunch (in the field) (Cold, High-Calorie Options)

Mid-day in winter is often windy, cold, and busy with field skills, so lunch should be **quick, no-cook, and packed with calories**. Choose foods that stay edible when frozen and deliver steady energy.

Great cold-weather choices:

- **Tortillas or bagels** with nut butter, honey, or Nutella
- **Hard cheeses** (cheddar, gouda, parmesan) paired with salami or summer sausage
- **Cold-soaked couscous or instant rice** prepared in a thermos before leaving camp
- **Energy-dense wraps** (tuna or chicken packets + mayo + relish in a tortilla)
- **High-calorie bars** (Clif, ProBar, RxBar, Greenbelly, etc.)
- **Trail mix** with nuts, chocolate, dried fruit, and pretzels
- **Jerky or meat sticks** for protein and salt
- **Cookies, pastries, or dense baked goods** that don't freeze rock-solid
- **Electrolyte drink mix** to keep hydration up in cold, dry air

Snacks to keep handy: trail mix, energy bars, jerky, dried fruit, cheese sticks (freeze-resistant).

Saturday Dinner (at camp in the field on a snow table if we're lucky)

Dinner is your chance to refuel deeply. Choose something warm, filling, and easy to prepare after a long day.

Recommended meals:

- Freeze-dried backpacking dinners (Mountain House, Backpacker's Pantry, etc.)
- One-pot pasta (ramen, couscous, or small noodles) with pre-cooked meat
- Instant rice or couscous with curry packets, chili, or dehydrated stew
- Mac & cheese with added protein
- Pre-cooked brats or sausages warmed in a pot of water

Hot drinks: cocoa, tea, cider, electrolyte mixes—these make a big difference in cold weather.

Sunday Breakfast

Aim for something **fast, hot, and high-energy** so we can break camp efficiently.

Solid choices:

- Instant oatmeal with nuts, dried fruit, or protein powder
- Breakfast freeze-dried meals
- Instant grits with cheese and bacon bits
- Bagels or tortillas with nut butter
- Hot drinks (coffee, tea, cocoa)

Extra Tips

- **Fuel:** Bring enough stove fuel for cold-weather use—consumption is higher in winter.
- **Water:** Keep water bottles insulated or stored inside your sleeping bag overnight.
- **Backup food:** Always pack one extra meal in case of delays or weather changes.
- **Label meals:** Makes it easier to grab the right food quickly in the cold.