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23 November 1985

Mountain Rescue Association  
Judy Beehler, Executive Secretary  
P.O. Box 2513  
Yakima, WA 98907-2513

Dear Ms. Beehler:

Thanks for your note and for the copy of the MRA Directory. I am the initial Chairman of the Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group, which is indeed interested in affiliation with the MRA. However, I should clarify the circumstances under which the AMRG is forming.

Several years ago, the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference, Inc. (ASRC), which then consisted of two Groups, the Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group of the Washington, DC area, and the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group of Charlottesville, Virginia, applied for MRA membership. We underwent unit testing, and were accepted as the first MRA-certified organization in the east. (We were told that the people in North Conway had been thinking about MRA membership for a while, but not made formal application when we were accepted.) Since that time, the Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group was replaced by the Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group, and a new Group in the Roanoke/Blacksburg area was chartered: the Southwest Virginia Mountain Rescue Group. Since several of us who were members of the Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group moved to Pittsburgh, we have started a new Group here; at the December 7th Membership Meeting of the ASRC, the Group's petition for a Probationary Charter will be made. Thus, the ASRC now has three full mountain rescue teams with a fourth now starting.

I should explain the reason that the ASRC joined the MRA as a unit rather than as individual groups: ASRC Groups are merely local chapters of the ASRC. All members wear the same uniform (with an ASRC patch but without the Group name on the uniform), follow the same Search and Rescue Operations Plan, and meet the same certification requirements as expressed in the ASRC Training Guide. When ASRC members are on a mission, they function with a unified command structure where members of the different Groups are used interchangeably. It is rare for an ASRC mission to involve only one Group; indeed, a search here in Pennsylvania last week had members of all the ASRC Groups working together (an Air Force C-130 made the participation of members from the Southwest Virginia Mountain Rescue Group possible).