

Tips for Teams

We offer the following tips to help you enjoy your Challenge (and hopefully make life easier on the organizers, officials and judges as well!).

- Firstly, read the Participants Manual. It has been produced so that you know what to expect (within reason). Study the rules especially with respect to safety and equipment. Check on who provides what equipment so you know what you need to provide/bring. Check your equipment is up to spec., in good condition (as new is OK, worn is excellent... worn out is not) and that you have the necessary rope/equipment logs up to date.
- The Challenge is not a race. Just like a real life rescue, there is time pressure, but the team that finishes first (and maybe kills their casualty in the process!) doesn't automatically win. Neither will the laid back crew who takes enormous pride in building the perfect, technically correct system, while their casualty suffers and relentlessly deteriorates. The teams that will succeed will be the teams who are well trained, practiced, drilled, prepared, competent and maintain a good perspective on what they are trying to achieve.
- Don't assume that your rescue scenario has to be, or indeed can be, done in the time allowed.
- Take note of the judging criteria - it is provided so you know what the judges are looking for.
- Be fair dinkum. At a lot of competitions teams are under the illusion that they have an audience and a stage so naturally they have to be actors. You do not need to go to great pains to role-play to impress the judges. To our knowledge our judges are not idiots. Be clear, definite and deliberate about what you say and do, but be yourself.
- Impress the casualty - not the judges. No matter whether you are on a real job, training or in a competition, you are working for the casualty! You do what is best for the casualty given the situations you are presented with. Do not change what you would do for the casualty in order just to impress the judges. The judges have plenty of experience in vertical rescue and can compare your actions to their own call in a similar situation and will judge accordingly. So do what you do on the job.
- Technical manuals, books, videos, etc are intended as guidelines - in fact "rules for fools - a guide for the wise". Don't copy textbook techniques blindly thinking this is what the judges are looking for. They aren't. They are looking for rescuers who can think and solve problems.
- Elegance is the key. Elegance is achievement divided by complexity. So to be elegant, you achieve a lot with something simple. Don't waste time on elaborate anchor systems, or other technical niceties. Do what you have to do, simply, quickly and safely and get outta there!
- Always think casualty first. After that, all other issues fall into place.
- Live Casualties will be used.
- Team Leaders are under a little pressure in the Challenge. We have deliberately made the team size 1 member less than recommended. This not only keeps us consistent with international competitions, but it adds that extra bit of pressure to test the team and the team leader. There will be times when the Team Leader will NOT be able to keep hands off. But just because the team leader has to get involved, is no reason to abdicate. The team leader will need to show some cunning about what he/she gets involved with so that they can still be an effective leader!
- Don't sell your soul to one solution. If it becomes apparent your initial attack is developing slimmer and slimmer chances of success don't be afraid to change

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tack. Develop a plan A, B and if necessary C, and recognize those critical points in your operation where you may need to change plans.

- It is OK for team members to talk to each other, and it's extremely OK to talk to the casualty! For inter-team communications prowords and standard calls are excellent value - again, they are elegant - they achieve more with less. But don't kill the concept of prowords by overdoing it. For example, if the haul system is chock-a-block and needs to be reset, don't call "Chock-a-block, Reset!". A simple "reset" will do.
- Get through the motions of scene assessment and decisions on strategy, tactics and safety issues as soon as possible. Remember the objective -the suffering, bleeding, dying, screaming casualty that requires your attention NOW!
- Get used to doing parallel activities. Get the team doing more than one thing at once particularly when rigging. Use the brains of all the team members, don't just use the one brain to drive 5 pairs of hands.
- Be prepared to have to make decisions about weak and strong anchors. Don't be afraid to use rope if necessary to extend a strong anchor to where you need it.
- Rigging anchors is one of the truly great time wasters in vertical rescue. Technical perfection is not what we are after. We want safe and we want fast. That usually means we want simple (once again we are back to elegance!). From the start of a scenario (or arrival on the scene of a real job) the aim should be to have a rescuer over the edge and on the way to the casualty in less than 5 minutes. Practice and develop it. No one will argue with elaborate anchor systems if you only have a pine cone and a guinea pig to anchor to... but when surrounded by bombproof anchors... let's get real...
- Train for time efficiency. Use minimal equipment and personnel to do tasks. Train as a team as often as possible, and do as many different scenarios as your devious minds can collectively conjure.
- Communicate. Make sure every team member knows what is expected of him or her and what is going on. Don't assume.
- Don't over specialize. OK, you may have some people in your team who do some things well - by all means take advantage of that. But make sure more than one person can do each role in the team for the finals, and *EVERYBODY* in the team can do what is required for the skins events.
- Know your systems and practice them under the most adverse conditions you can think of. It makes a real job so much easier if your training is harder.
- Learn to assess, stabilize and package your casualty while you are both suspended.
- Look hard at how you store, package, transport, and rig your equipment on the job. Are there ways to minimize your rigging time on the job? There is no eleventh commandment saying "Thou shalt not pre-rig." Be critical - if it doesn't save you set up time in the majority of your jobs, don't do it!
- Everything you do must be safe. If it is not safe, it isn't in the casualty's best interests, nor your own!
- Be prepared to change your systems to suit the conditions. A lack of brawn for the haul team might mean a change in MA is required. A lack of space may limit your haul team to one person...
- Practice!!! We have gone to great lengths to describe the skins events and give you an idea of the finals so that you can practice. The skins events are all small specific tasks which will help you to be more proficient, more professional vertical rescuers. So practice them, and show us what the hell you can do! Inquiring minds want to see...!!!

A word about the spirit of the event:

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The Challenge is not just a competition. If you come to the Challenge taking it so seriously that a) you have to "win"; b) you have to "cheat"; or c) you are paranoid that someone might copy what you do - then you have already lost! Yes, at the end of the event there will be a team deemed as "the winners". They will have won the *competition part* of the Challenge. They will be the best team at handling the evolution scenarios and the associated circumstances presented on the day, and unfortunately, we feel they will have difficulty retiring on their winnings! There will hopefully be a hell of a lot more *real* winners:

- Those who learned something: whether it be from judges comments, mistakes, watching, talking or listening to others; and
- Those who were able to show others something: whether it is an innovation of their own, or simply an inspiring demonstration of teamwork and preparation.

The Challenge is to not only compete, but also to cooperate, share and learn.

If you've learnt or taught, you've won!

