

# On the ropes

## Priest Lake Search and Rescue prepares for river rescues, mountain extractions

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News Editor

PRIEST RIVER — The fear of dangling up to 50 feet off the ground on climbing ropes can make the bravest of individuals cower, but 14 members of the Priest River Search and Rescue (PLSAR) team have lost their apprehension of heights after three advanced ropes training courses.

The new ropes technicians are now certified and ready to tackle the toughest of environments that the North Idaho landscape has to offer. From extractions on the river — to the steep cliff faces found in the Selkirk Mountains — the crew now has what it takes to get it done during critical emergency situations.

Rescue Northwest, a private contractor from Spokane, put on the training for the PLSAR team on the High Bridge over the West Fork Branch of Priest River during late March.

"We could have used this training a couple times near The Lions Head when we had a couple injuries up there that were pretty severe,"



— Photo by Tom Holman

**Dangling in a litter basket, Priest Lake Search and Rescue member Ted Tisdell, gets the sky view during a mock extraction exercise.**

said team leader Mike Nielsen, who said the extraction methods would have been invaluable during those rescues on steep cliffs.

Members were trained in the intricacies of tying proper knots, using climbing harnesses,

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setting up litter extractions, and running high ropes and high lines.

Nielsen said that the training will work in cliff settings as well as extractions from river environments.

"Our training and personnel were excellent," said Nielsen. "The people have learned to

trust each other, trust the equipment, tie the proper knots and make the proper safety inspections. The team has really come a long way from our training in Ropes One."

PLSAR are following the Urban Search and Rescue training protocol and are working to get additional training in confined spaces and other arenas.

The volunteers will meet next on May 1 at 9 a.m. in Coolin at their command post for additional river rescue training. Their next general meeting is May 13 at 7 p.m. at the command post if people are interested in joining the volunteer group. The command post is located at the Bonner County Sheriff's Department substation in Coolin. Call 208-443-6603 for additional details.