

MIKE RAROG, ARCTIC RESPONSE

On behalf of Arctic Response, welcome to one of the most awe inspiring places on the planet – our home, Yellowknife and the Canadian sub-arctic! Ultra races are always humbling experiences and, I can assure you, the temperatures, snow and wind conditions for the Rock and Ice Ultra will prove an exceptionally worthy grind. The air here is crisp, the land and water is pristine and the spirit of Mother Nature is guaranteed to be a constant companion for this adventure.

Safety is going to be a huge feature of the Rock and Ice Ultra; and it really can't be over done. For as gorgeous as this patch of earth is, it's completely unforgiving of the ill prepared. Your navigation skills must be top notch. Whiteout conditions can develop in seconds, robbing racers of land features, the sun, stars and all other natural reference points. The winds blow up and cover tracks within minutes, making it easy for racers to become disoriented. And, of course, the simple cold will provide plenty of challenge itself. You should expect March temperatures to range between minus 20 to minus 30 Celsius. It is warm enough that you will work up a sweat quickly, and it will freeze to your body even faster the moment you stop. Give very careful consideration to your clothing and equipment.

My commitment to you is to implement a practical and effective safety net that will keep you safe without unnecessarily impeding your ultra race experience. A few of the fundamental controls we are implementing include:

- Check points and medical responders stationed throughout the course;
- Route patrols by competent rescuers;
- Ice rescue and other specialists on stand-by;
- Clear, practical procedures for declaring an emergency;
- Coordinated safety program managed through a dedicated emergency operations center.

I've been involved in emergency response for most of my adult life. I've spent eight years doing arctic ground search and rescue with the military. I've also run Arctic Response for five years teaching arctic survival and technical rescue courses to northern Canadian industry and government. Prior to that, I worked for several years as an international aid worker in many of the worst front line communities of Bosnia and Rwanda. In keeping with "the other desert" theme, I also have on-going emergency planning and response work with humanitarian agencies working in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Get out there, race hard and have a blast. Arctic Response and all the safety volunteers will be doing everything in our power to cover your back!