

ICELAND 2010

ICE-SAR is a voluntary organisation with the mission to prevent accidents and save human lives and valuables on land and at sea in Iceland. The rescue workers need clothes that can cope with tough work in challenging environments where durability and safety are vitally important. We are proud that they wear Taiga.



TAIGA

CLIMATE PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Guðjón Sig. Guðjónsson:

We struggled to break loose and rise to the surface

Guðjón Sig. Guðjónsson has been trapped on the bed of a lagoon at a depth of 24 metres. He has saved buried earthquake victims in Haiti and Turkey. Guðjón is head instructor for the rescue divers, and has been trained in Urban Search and Rescue. He works in environments that few of us could cope with.

“While diving, I sometimes find myself in total darkness. At earthquake sites, it’s necessary to work in high temperatures and crawl around in narrow spaces,” he says.

His jobs and responsibilities require initiative and fast decisions. Guðjón tells us how he and a colleague once barely escaped with their lives. While searching for a missing diver in south-east Iceland, they got trapped on the bed of a lagoon.

“To help equalise the pressure, we went down feet first.

When we reached the bottom, we sank thigh-deep in silt, a fine-grained type of soil. We got stuck like in quicksand.” While struggling to get loose, they got tangled in the safety line. Guðjón’s colleague was forced to cut the line.

“As we began the ascent, his mouthpiece started leaking. We had to share mine. While ascending to the surface, I couldn’t see anything. I could only keep in contact with my colleague by feeling where he was and listening to his breathing.”

However, the Icelandic weather doesn’t worry Guðjón during rescue operations.

“As an Icelander, I dislike warm, humid environments. I like to be able to peel off layer by layer.”





Name: Guðjón Sig. Guðjónsson

Age: 41

Occupation: Firefighter/emergency medical technician for Reykjavik Fire Brigade, rescue worker.

Interests: Diving, kayaking, travelling around Iceland with his family, doing voluntary work in the rescue team.



Name: Páll Viggósson

Age: 40

Occupation: Telecommunications technician
for Vodafone, rescue worker.

Interests: Travelling, mountain climbing, snow scooters,
motorbikes, superjeeps, ATVs, my rescue work.

Páll Viggósson:

Three men died when the boat overturned

“Our members need to arrive at the rescue site fast.” Páll Viggósson’s work is critical. As head manager of the rescue team’s vehicle fleet, he is ultimately responsible for ensuring that jeeps, snow scooters and motorbikes are ready to be taken on rescue operations.

Páll also trains the drivers to drive and manage all types of vehicles. This naturally requires specialist knowledge, since a driver may need to drive through challenging wilderness terrain during rescue operations.

“My knowledge combined with my interest in nature and technology are perfect for this job,” he says.

However, there are high risks involved, both as a rescue worker and as a telecommunications technician. Páll remembers one winter when he was installing an optic fibre at the bottom of a lake. The job ended in tragedy.

“One of the boats overturned. The three men on board drowned, and were not found until the rescue team searched for them with boats and dogs. It took two days to find the third man.”

Páll’s work requires hardwearing clothes that are windproof and waterproof to withstand heavy rain and snow. However, he doesn’t hesitate when asked to name his favourite piece of clothing.

“My bathrobe! After a long day’s work, I love to take a leisurely bath and then relax on the sofa.”



Kristín Sigmarasdóttir: *Special clothing is required during* *avalanche searches*

Kristín Sigmarasdóttir is a dog handler specialised in rescue operations in avalanches and wilderness areas. She has personal experience of the dangers of Icelandic weather.

Rain combined with wind is the type of weather that Kristín dislikes the most. If rain seeps through the top clothing layer, the body quickly gets very cold. This can have grave consequences. Kristín knows the serious hazards of wearing the wrong clothes in the wrong place. When Eyjafjallajökull first started erupting, she was assigned to ensure the safety of travellers wishing to watch the eruption.

“We received an alert that three travellers had not returned after making a trip on their own. Tragically, two of them died of exposure.”

However, Kristín is not worried by tough weather conditions and the risks of her job.

“I try to work safely and do my best. In my job, it’s crucial to avoid risking my own or anyone else’s life.”

Rescue workers in Iceland must always take the weather into account. It can change fast, switching from torrential rain to sun in just a few minutes.

“An avalanche search requires clothes that are warm but flexible. I must be able to move fast while searching and digging. In Iceland, we can’t change our clothes according to the weather – we wouldn’t have time to save anyone in between changes,” laughs Kristín.





Name: Kristín Sigmarsdóttir

Age: 30

Occupation: Customs officer, dog handler, rescue worker.

Interests: Travelling, working with the rescue team,
training dogs, judo, Brazilian jiu jitsu.

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