

Black Diamond SAR Council

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The Coordinator's Desk



I first want to thank all of those that attended our February training. From what I have heard, this was good time spent by all and was almost like a mini simulation. You can expect more of these in the future. If anyone has any training requests for March, please let Mike and me know and we will try to accommodate those requests.

Training, as you all are probably well aware, is one of my goals for 2013. As an organization, I think we need to have planning goals, so I set a couple. One of the other goals was to upgrade our radio cache which is well under way, and another was to begin a type of uniform that would show some uniformity when we are on trainings and at missions.

Since the last two goals have been mostly achieved, I'd like to beat the proverbial dead horse a little.

I know that I have sent out some pretty harsh documents regarding training attendance. As your Coordinator, you have elected me, and your Board of Directors, to ensure that BDSAR not only remains a viable agency, but that we will also protect the agency from potential liability problems in the future.

One of the liabilities that we face is the chance that we have members responding to incidents that have not been at training in a long time. If you had to go to Court over something that happened on a search, and they requested your training documents, do you have documentation to show that you have been training? Do you have the documentation that supports a decision that you made in the field?

Training doesn't just reduce liability. It creates efficiency. If we train together, then we become a team. It's obvious, on searches, who are training and who aren't. Those who haven't trained often have to wait to be asked to do something instead of stepping up and making suggestions or offers to help.

Lastly, the Board of Directors is facing a tough decision at this time. With the onset of the Position Task Books, folks will know what it is they have to do to become re-certified. These PTBs will be kept by each of you. We will not be responsible for trying to pull together your Position Task Book at the last minute in order for you to re-certify. But, that is not what we are having trouble with.

Our current discussion revolves around whether folks who have not been to training, have not responded to missions, and have not kept a Position Task Book, should be allowed to re-test for re-certification. The theory behind this is pass-

ing the written test does not make us searchers. Passing STM or STL, does not make us searchers.

Those classes are the minimum level of training, and should be built upon by your team. Us. You.

By allowing persons to simply re-take the written test every three years, without being a practitioner, in my mind, creates a big liability for us. Just like the Commonwealth hiring Instructors that are not practitioners would create a liability for them.

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2013 VASARCO! Come and enjoy the fellowship of other Virginia, and SAR Folks from other states, as we share knowledge and learn new skills! Choose from a 2 day Land Navigation workshop, Crime Scene Preservation, SOLO Wilderness First Aid, or Lost Person Behavior on Thursday and Friday. Then you can move on to other items such as the following to name a few...

- SAR Planning with NTAP Data
- First on Scene
- Crime Scene Awareness Basic
- Autism Awareness
- Clandestine Graves
- Searching the Landfill
- Responding to the Disaster
- Snakes of Virginia
- Mounted SAR Capabilities and Tactics
- Anchors & Semi-Tech Review
- Test your Land Nav skills on the Land Nav Challenge
- K9 Tracks for all 3 disciplines Air Scent, Trailing and Human Remains detection

Prepare for a great Bar B Que meal on Saturday night and our Keynote Speaker. Don't wait to get registered! You may visit the Virginia SAR Community facebook page for more information, or email Bryan

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From the Training Officer

Mike Maggard.

We had a great turn out for the Feb 9th Training session at Hungry Mother. This was the first time we have had this particular style training amongst BDSAR and it really flowed well.

Billy Chrimmes started the morning off with a great refresher on Land Nav, map & compass, & GPS use, and we followed up after lunch with a mini-mission.

This design allowed all of our members present to get exposed to various components of an actual mission; We covered several specific subjects; Land nav, Patient packaging, litter handling, strategy & tactics, EVAC, Communications, GPS, Team leadership, and SAR Plans / Ops.

Our members with individual, specific, areas of interest, sign cutting, & K-9 were able to concentrate on those areas. Plans, OPS, briefing, debriefing, and how to work a search mission (when there isn't a SMC on scene). I was pleased to see how well each member stepped up and ran the mission.

Each one of us should always come away from every training, simulation, exercise, and mission with "lessons learned".

We will continue to build our team based on a preparedness cycle, designed to improve BDSAR overall. This is a never ending cycle, and should be implemented not only as a team but as individuals. Planning, training, exercise (response), & critique, (what went good, what can we improve on) Plan, train & response, critique, (Did we do better)

If you have not done so, especially new members, please start a personal training log, this will help you when the new format rolls out soon. (hopefully in July)



2013 FIRST QUARTER:

3/9 **Teamwide Training**
Location TBA

Keep track of the subjects you trained on, who conducted the training, where the training was located, hours, & mileage. Start doing a personal AAR (After Action Reports) for your own records, include pictures if you have them. Do the same thing for SAR missions, & Simulations. We will talk about this more in depth at our training on March, 9th.

If anyone has any comments, recommendations, or want to cover a specific topic at our March 9th training please feel free to let me know at mmaggard@bdsarco.org.

The Coordinator's Desk

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Please think about this as we move towards our meeting in April or May. Be thinking about elections -- who you want in office? Have we served you to the capacity you expect? Are you ready for us to take another term?

We will be doing the Grayson Highlands standby again this year. I announced that we do have a camper which Mike and I are going to do some work on, one evening, really soon. We may try to petition some of the members that live closer to Mike's shop to help, but if you would like to help, let me know. Please begin thinking about weekends that you would like to staff the camper and let's try to do more than we did last year.

We would like to have a team training there on at least one month if not two. If everyone wants to do the gear auction and cookout again, I feel like we should do that in August and do it at Backbone again. Folks there won't care as much about the noise.

I want to close with a need to stress that I feel we are still one of the best teams in the Commonwealth. This is not because of me, Mike or any other one person. It's because of our team!

We need to continue to improve if we are to remain one of the best in the Commonwealth. The Board of Directors looks forward to suggestions on how to improve training attendance and we look forward to any other suggestions you may have.

See you on the next one!

Bryan

Test Your Skills answers: a. 1 b. 4 c. 5 d. 3e. 2 f. power line g. very steep

Working the PLS/LKP

A couple of things from the last FTS class and GSAR simulation provide an opportunity for some thought and discussion. I think everyone in the COVSAR world knows the importance of securing, protecting and working the point last seen (PLS) or last known point (LKP). However, I think we clearly do not emphasize it enough to provide thoughts of action.

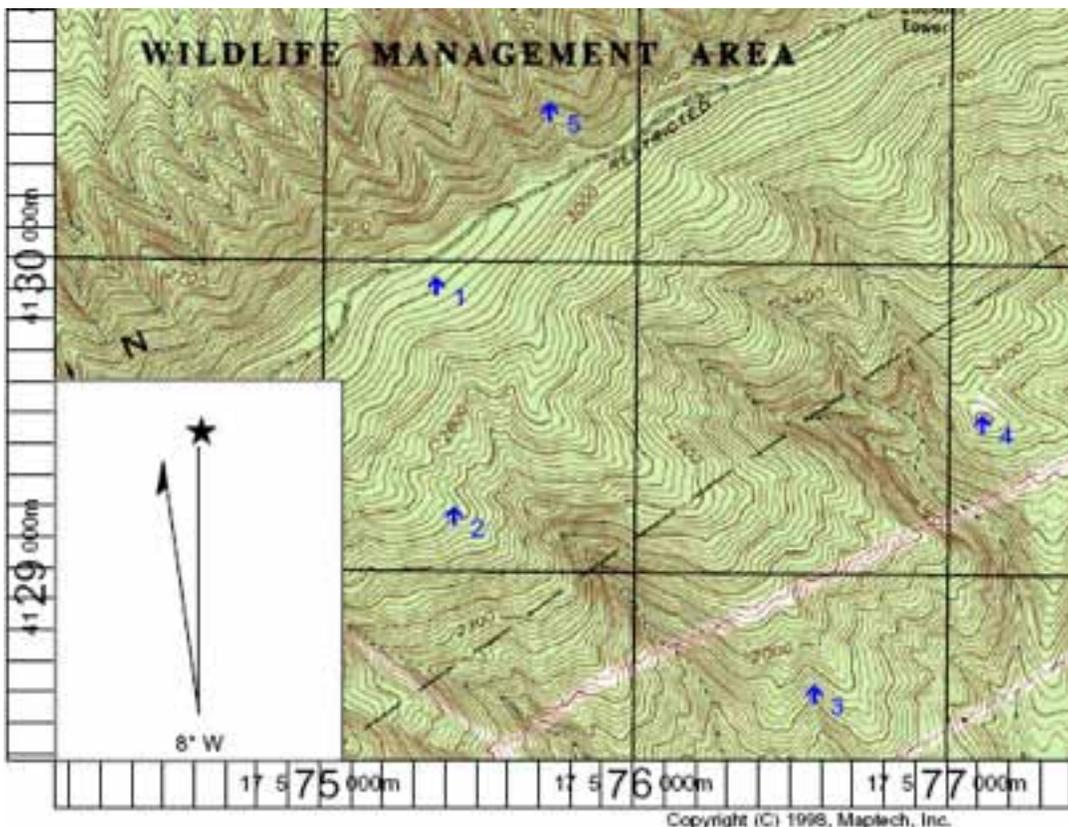
One of the jobs the team leader needs to do is communicate with other teams that may be moving through the pls/lkp or the sign line from the pls, on their way to their task area. This usually is yelling “stop” and going to that FTL and explaining that there is a pls task in process and asking them to change course to avoid contamination. The two things that surprise me is that the team moving through did not already know where the pls was. That is something I always ask in briefing so I know where my task is relating to the pls but also to plan a route that goes around. We obviously need to do a better job of covering that in management so that information is included in the briefing. We obviously need to do a better job as team leader to understand that importance and ask and clarify

that information in task briefing. Finally, the tracking resource needs to do a better job communicating those issues before leaving the briefing.

Another opportunity for improvement is for the tracking resource to explain to their team leader the process they are going to use for the pls/lkp since it is much different from a “typical” task. As we do a better job of educating team leaders (who have not gone through the FTS program) about their role leading fts or tracking teams, this should improve. However, when it is mission time, the understanding has to be communicated not assumed.

Team leaders should understand the job at the pls/lkp is inventory (and elimination). The last simulation provides an excellent and simple example. One person is reported missing and was last seen walking toward the in-field of a school softball field (one big track trap...how convenient). The plan of action would be to secure the pls, which was easy since there was a chain link fence all around, so just concentrate on entry and exit points. Then identify all tracks within the zone that fit the time line of the search. This may look very confusing to the team leader (or walker) since now all the tracking resource
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Test Your Skills...



Where am I? (list the number of the location that matches)

- a. A south-east facing slope ____
- b. A small summit on a spur ridge ____
- c. A North facing slope ____
- d. A drainage ____
- e. On a slope near a 'point' or a spur ____
- f. What is the feature at 7635 2885 ____
- g. Describe the terrain at 7673 2940

Answers on page 2

Working the PLS/LKP

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es begin purposeful wondering throughout the area looking, marking, measuring and sketching all the tracks.

Once the inventory is completed; we have hopefully gathered enough information to determine the track with the highest probability of the subject. Ignoring the hundreds of possible variables of how we determine that probability, when we do have a track we can assign a high probability, we need to communicate that “clue” and mark it as a clue, etc. The clue information should include the basic measurement (length, width of sole, width of heel), additional measurement if applicable and a basic description of outsole (the danger of this providing outsole information is creating the “pink sock syndrome” , but that is chance we have to take to provide the best information for the search effort). A tracking resource can easily forget the information needs to be communicated effectively to base (because they are going be caught up in following that track/ sign) so it can be considered in the mission. That is a critical role of the FTL to ensure that line of communication.

One last point from this example is the standard communication question asked upon radio check in; “Base to team x, what is your percent completion for your task”? In most types of tasks, you have a given area (20 acre sweep for example) where we can assign a quick percentage of what we have covered and what we have left. If we are doing a hasty of a trail, we have a linear distance we can determine how far we have covered and what is remaining. But an lkp/pls task, the answer is going to be it depends (which ops doesn’t understand). Maybe we have covered almost all the physical area of the pls with no luck and then find tracks from a number of different individuals. Although we had reported “beginning task” when we arrived, at this point it is like the task just began again. So my answer would have to be 50 (of less) percent until the entire inventory is completed, and hopefully a track of interest is identified and we have a direction of travel leaving the pls/lkp. Then we may go from 50% to 100%.



Courtesy of the Mountain Shepherd
Wilderness Survival School

CONGRATS!

...to BDSAR's two newest STLs:
Amanda Wenger, and
Anthony Holmes
