

November, 2008:

Scattered Remains:

When a person dies in a wooded or wilderness area and is not immediately recovered, scattered remains are generally the result. To assist the K-9 teams, identify the area where the person died. Many times the skull is too large for most animals to move, so it is good indication of the location. That area will likely produce the largest scent source, creating large pools of scent in the area but not always directly in that area. If the body has been disarticulated, each bone that is carried away produces yet more sources of scent and their own smaller scent pools.

By identifying the largest source (where the body was) it gives the K-9 team the ability to plan a search strategy. The team will ask a lot of questions about time, prevailing winds, weather conditions and animal movement in the area. Because the bones can be so small or damaged by animals, working with a forensic anthropologist to confirm a bone is human is very beneficial.

Understanding the effect time and conditions have on a body and the scent it produces can help in recovering many of the remains for the family of the deceased.

October, 2008:

Search Management Classes: Vermillion Community College's Search Management Systems Course taught by B.J. Kohlstedt. B.J. is a member of Lake County Rescue Squad with many years of search experience. VCC's course is all about hands-on, learning by doing in the field. Included in her course is a mini-session on K-9 search and rescue that is popular with the students year after year.

Rick Slatten is a life-long member of St Louis County's Rescue Squad and teaches WoodsTalk! Advanced Wilderness Search Concepts. This is an amazing course on learning the nuts and bolts of search management in a classroom setting using computers and table-top scenarios to learn about search techniques, legal expectations and the how / where to search.

Each search is unique, but many have similarities when it comes to managing them. The author of this month's tip has taken both of these classes and highly recommends them for different reasons. Having been on searches that were managed well, and some that weren't, we know it can be a life and death difference.

September, 2008:

Search Management Classes: When we are asked by law enforcement for ideas of classes to take, two always are the first on our list; Vermillion Community College's Search Management Systems Course taught by B.J. Kohlstadt and the other is Rick Slatten's WoodsTalk! Advanced Wilderness Search Concepts.

Searches are often very different in type of subject, location, terrain, season of the year. Yet all have similarities when it comes to managing them. Both instructors are search managers in the real-world and are good at making learning fun.

August, 2008:

Water Searches: Water is a unique search venue. It is a recovery operation that for some reason retains the sense of urgency of a live search. Many witnesses are traumatized, and distances can be deceiving, landmarks not as noticeable so the most important clue - the point last seen - can be lost. Before you put divers in the water, you'll want to determine and reduce the search area as much as possible.

To help with the PLS, bring any witnesses to the exact location where they were when the drowning occurred and interview them there. Search dogs can also help to reduce the size of the area and increase the likelihood of locating the subject.

Here are some things to help the effectiveness of K-9 teams:

- Current information about the body of water such as:
 - Water temperature
 - Natural springs or water movement and speed
 - Known "strainers"
 - Depth of area to be searched
- Water conditions determine the type of boat, but preferably one that is:
 - maneuverable in the conditions
 - low in the water with a platform in the front
 - an electric trolling motor for the search area itself
- Means of marking K-9 alerts, either by buoy or GPS
- Spotters on shore make good reference points from the boat and can see the "whole picture"

July, 2008:

Emergent Volunteers: One of the hardest things about managing a missing person search is the emergent volunteers. These are folk, usually local, who show up to help when the call goes out for volunteers. They have no training and many times come ill prepared for the physical needs of searching. How do you handle this influx of help?

- a. When you give a call for volunteers, provide a minimum needs list of what to wear, such as "long sleeves, long pants, boots, bug spray, hat, gloves" type of thing.
- b. Have a sign-in area away from base command. If they are not adequately dressed, find a job for them at base, stressing how important it is (i.e. distribute water to volunteers).
- c. Assign "tough" terrain to professional searchers. Emergent volunteers tend to skip over areas physically hard to search. They also generally overestimate what they've covered.
- d. Always debrief the volunteers and record their information on the command map. A good debrief will include questions on terrain, conditions, coverage, and any clues that might seem unrelated but could be important later.

- e. If possible, let mantrackers and K-9 teams have access to the high priority areas first. Emergent volunteers tend to search for the subject only and can miss or destroy vital clues.

June, 2008:

Article Line-ups: There are times during a search when an article is found that needs to be checked if it belongs to the missing person. If your department ever needs to set up a line-up for K-9's, here are a few tips.

- a. Have two "control" articles if possible that are not contaminated - collect them like evidence. These articles will be used by the K-9's to scent for the line-up.
- b. Sometimes it is beneficial to do two line-ups with the second "control" article to confirm the first result.
- c. If a second line-up is needed, rearrange the order of the articles, or change the shape of the line-up, such as a circle instead of a straight line.
- d. Use various articles from different people so it doesn't become "which one of these things isn't like the others".
- e. For the same reason, if the article in question has been submerged or in some way contaminated, use a negative article in similar condition as part of the line up. In this way, you don't get K-9 interest simply because it is "different".

May, 2008:

Last Known Point: We recently gave a presentation for a Wild Game Feed and created interest among the hunters about preserving a scene involving a vehicle. The LKP of a person who leaves home, drives and parks someplace else is the vehicle. Like a hunter heading out to his favorite hunting grounds. In stepping out of the vehicle, they leave tracks and evidence. We encourage "first on scene" to protect that vehicle and the ground around it. Approach from the rear or back passenger side door to look in. If you must open it, treat it like a crime scene; use gloves and try not to disturb anything if possible. Not only for K-9 teams that may be called in, but also man-trackers who train to follow human passage. Allowing them access before moving the vehicle can provide a direction of travel and a good start to your search.

April, 2008:

Cell phones & SAR - Training: Searches never seem to happen during normal business hours, and so Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) find themselves at midnight trying to communicate their needs to someone who was unlucky enough to be working the late shift and not used to dealing with an emergency. So how do you handle it? Training - not of the company's employees, but the LEA's staff and employees.

We've attached a generic Exigent form to our site this month, take this sample and train with it. Also train with some role playing so everyone gets a feel for how to ask the right questions, how to complete the form, how to communicate the situation to someone who knows little to nothing about a search and rescue event. Remember, every company's form will be different, so it is a good idea to get a copy of the form from as many cell phone companies serving their area as possible.

March, 2008:

Cell phones & SAR - Communication: Cell phone companies are not in the business of finding missing people, they are there to provide a form of communication and maintain the privacy of their clients. It is understandable that they are hesitant to give out information as they face the very real possibility of a lawsuit by their client. Most businesses would err on the side of their client without a viable and understandable reason not to. So how does a person communicate that information to cell phone companies?

The Exigent Request Form is one way to formally request information; however the likelihood is, you'll also be on the phone with people who don't understand search and rescue or Law Enforcement. Our words may be foreign to them even though they speak the same language. Fuzzy information in, fuzzy information in return. The better they understand the circumstances and the life and death risk factors, the more likely they will be to assist you.

February, 2008:

Cell phones & SAR – The Exigent Request Form: We've all heard the news, the on-line discussions, and perhaps have even experienced it ourselves - trying to get information from a cell phone company for a missing person search.

Searches rarely happen during office hours so by having the forms available for a variety of different companies, you will save valuable time at a search. The Exigent Circumstance Request form will likely vary for each company, so review the forms and understand them before you need to complete one.

Steve Sullivan of Malibu SAR provided an example of a form, and some things to be prepared for include:

- Include a copy of your agency's letterhead
- Complete each section in full and legibly
- You will need the missing person's phone number or customer name
- Be concise and clear for the exigent description (why you need the information)
- Don't forget to sign and date the form

January, 2008:

Cell phones & SAR: Cell phones have become more and more a part of search and rescue. More people are relying on them to save the day by either calling for help, or

hoping their phone will help verify their location. SAR folks need to keep up with current technology and how to best utilize it. During a recent on-line SAR discussion, I met Steve Sullivan, Lt. S/R, training officer for [Malibu Search and Rescue Team](#), Los Angeles County Sheriff's Dept. and picked up some great tips on cell phones from a search manager's perspective. This month we'll hit the highlights & go into details later. Thanks Steve!

- To request information from a cell phone company, use the current form for the correct company
- The better the phone company understands the circumstances, the more likely they'll be able to help
- Cell phone companies are not in the business of finding lost people and so the SAR process to them may seem fuzzy resulting in fuzzy information in return
- Normal searches don't happen when a cell phone company's "A" team is on duty - be prepared to repeat requests and clarify information you receive
- SAR managers should take the time to learn how to put all these elements together and practice them before the knowledge is needed on a search

December, 2007:

To enhancing K-9 Search Team Effectiveness, share as much information as possible about the lost person to enable the K-9 search teams as well as other searchers to be more effective with their search strategies. For example, if a child has a history of running away, they might be more likely to do everything they could to avoid being found, such as keep moving. Hunters may also avoid searchers because they don't want anyone to know they are really lost. Autistic children are often drawn to water. If a person is despondent they would perhaps act differently than a person who is simply lost. People known to be suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia would also affect search strategies. Often times more pertinent information is revealed as the search progresses. Please be sure to pass all the information you can to our search teams as it becomes known to you, even if you do not think it is important. This will improve our likelihood for success. Using the [Lost Person Questionnaire](#) while conducting the initial interview can also garner information helpful to the search effort.

November, 2007:

Lost Person Statistics say that 39% of all missing person cases are because of poor adult (guardian) judgment or supervision. There are a number of studies and books written on the subject of lost person behavior and for a search manager, it is good information to learn. For example, it is good to know that a toddler doesn't range far from where they went missing, however they have no planned route, and they wander aimlessly, following whatever takes their fancy. When they get tired, they find something to hide in or under and fall asleep, making them very hard to find. So using a K-9 to help determine a search area and follow up with a tight line search might be your best search technique depending on your search area and resources available.

October, 2007:

At a recent conference, the author of this month's Tip took some time to talk with Tom Cherney. Tom is the Director of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Operations Center. With his permission, our Tip for October is about the MN Duty Officer program which is a part of the BCA. The purpose of the MN Duty Officer Program is to provide a 24-hour-a-day, 7 day-a-week answering point for emergency requests for state level assistance and other serious accidents or incidents and for reporting hazardous materials or petroleum spills. A "one stop shop" for obtaining contact information for needed resources, such as search dogs.

Some of the questions that you will be asked are your name, phone # for callback, verification if local resources have been exhausted or do not exist, as well as the type of incident. They will either provide a phone number for needed resources, or call them for you.

CLSAR is on the MN Duty Officer's roster of available deployable resources and in a search situation, please feel free to contact either the MN Duty Officer at 1-800-422-0798 or the toll free number CLSAR provides for Law Enforcement use as shown above.

September, 2007:

Taking a search management course can be very helpful for any Law Enforcement officer who is assigned the task of handling a missing person search. Searches can be complex scenes that require a different set of tools in the toolbox. Search strategy, resources and the best way to utilize them, protecting the point last seen, lost person behavior are all part of running a search. We are asked periodically to recommend a search class for Law Enforcement. The class that our own members are encouraged to take is hosted by Vermillion Community College near Ely. This year's course is over MEA weekend in October. To learn more, go to the VCC website.

August, 2007:

One of the interesting factors involved with drowning is what happens to the victim? Initially, the body will sink to the bottom immediately after the person stops swimming and breathing. The body remains basically stationary unless there is an extremely strong current.

Once sufficient gases have built up in the abdominal cavity to produce positive buoyancy and the body starts to become buoyant, there may be some movement with the current, but even in rivers, bodies often resurface very close to the spot they went down.

What does this mean for searchers? Search close to the last known point where the victim went into the water.

July, 2007:

With the summer here, one aspect about scent produced by humans is the fact that during the heat of the day, it is hardest to work for the K-9's. The heat "dries" the particles, known as rafts, that we shed which create the scent. Likened to bread, scent when dry has very little smell but add a touch of moisture, and the scent refreshes. Night air tends to do that to scent - refreshes it.

Many K-9 teams are willing and actually prefer to work at night because of that reason - the cool night air keeps the scent fresh and the K-9's are better able to search. It is also simply easier on everyone to work in the cool of night than the heat of the day.

So if a K-9 team requests to work through the night, verify they are trained and equipped for night searches, and if so, please let them search. They will be able to work longer and be more effective for you.

June, 2007:

Our goal is to arrive on scene with everything we need so as not to tax the requesting agencies resources. To help us, there are certain things you can provide with the initial phone call.

When calling a K-9 unit for a search, provide a clear understanding of what the conditions will be in the area. This would include weather conditions, size, terrain and hazards that might be expected in the area. With this information, the activation leader for the unit can provide the individual teams with the knowledge to have gear with them that is appropriate to the terrain and weather conditions. Each K-9 team is responsible for their own gear, so that initial call gives them the opportunity to change up equipment as needed before leaving home.

May, 2007:

The PLS or "Point Last Seen" is a vital clue to a missing person search. By definition, this is where the subject was last seen by a witness. Preserving the area generally makes it easier to determine a direction of travel, protects any clues that the subject might have left behind, as well as provides the K-9 SAR teams less contaminated scent conditions to work with when they arrive.

One way to help protect the area would be to establish your search base or Incident Command some distance away from the PLS. Giving clear directions to searchers, media and volunteers is another way to keep the PLS so it isn't inadvertently damaged or destroyed.

April, 2007:

Dementia and Alzheimer's is becoming more and more prevalent in our society, and because of it, there are more missing person searches being conducted. By learning about the disease and how it affects people who suffer with it, Incident Commanders are better able to conduct those searches.

March, 2007:

Some of the questions we often receive during this time of the year reference recoveries after someone have gone through the ice. The process of decomposition begins shortly after death when microorganisms start to produce gases within the body. It is these gases that the K-9's use to locate human remains. Cold controls the speed of the gas buildup, however the process is ongoing. Although ice is porous, to prepare for a K-9 search of a frozen body of water, drill holes approximately 3 feet apart in a grid pattern around the Point Last Seen (PLS). The K-9's locate the area where the scent is coming out of the water; however scent can travel under water as well. It is up to the handler to be aware of the current, temperature, and depth of the water under the ice they are working on so divers or remote cameras can be utilized most efficiently.

February, 2007:

A scent article is needed for all scent-specific dogs, such as track, trail or air scent dogs. To collect a scent article, standard methods for collecting evidence should be used in order to avoid contaminating the article. The article should be something the subject has worn or handled recently that hasn't been used by others - for example, don't take clothing from a family laundry bin. Sheets or pillow cases if the person sleeps alone are a good choice. Wear gloves when collecting the article, and store it in an unused Ziploc bag or paper bag. Don't use a garbage bag as they are generally treated to break down smells. Record how, where and who collected the article.