

## **November, 2011**

Amazing time at the North American Police Work Dog Association workshop hosted by Central Lakes SAR in late September. When our unit first approached the idea of a NAPWDA workshop, most of us didn't know much about the organization, but handler Sharolyn had recently tested her new cadaver dog with them, and was impressed with the two day long test that really challenged handlers and their K-9 partners.

Sept. 27 brought 20 K-9 teams to Camp Ripley, from Law Enforcement officers to civilian volunteers. All worked tirelessly through the week and at the end, we had multiple requests for us to bring NAPWDA back again in 2012.

Please take a few minutes to check out their website and consider if this organization is one your department could utilize as well!

[www.napwda.com](http://www.napwda.com)

## **July, 2011**

### **Working together for the good.....**

Is your county so far away from the resource you need for a search that you have to wait hours for them to arrive? Or have a time-sensitive search and wish you could cut the response time for a K-9 team? We all know that sometimes it takes hours for K-9 teams to arrive from across the state.

A recent search helped an agency in Minnesota with this very issue, simply by making a call to the Civil Air Patrol. CAP arranged for planes for multiple K-9 teams in different areas of the state, flying them to the search and getting them there hours sooner than if they had driven. They arrived fresh and ready to search. And all at no cost to the agency making the request.

So for your next search, consider calling the Civil Air Patrol. They can be reached through the MN Duty Officer, at the number listed above.

## **June, 2011**

### **MUSTANG Weekend follow up**

Multi Unit Search Training and Networking Gathering sponsored by SRRRMN was held on the first weekend of June. A multi-agency search and rescue training exercise, it included multiple search disciplines and many agencies from Law Enforcement, Civil Air Patrol, Mounted Posse and K-9 SAR teams.

It was a great opportunity to hone your skills, learn new ones, or meet and connect with other search resources. The training was designed to incorporate

everyone in the search community and provide a learning environment without the pressure and confusion that can accompany a real search.

The response from this one was positive and requests for another event next year is in the planning stages.

## **May, 2011**

**MUSTANG Weekend!** What does MUSTANG mean and why is it our tip of the month for May?

Multi Unit Search Training and Networking Gathering sponsored by SRRRMN. The weekend of June 4th and 5th will be a multi-agency search and rescue training exercise involving multiple search disciplines and many agencies from Law Enforcement, Civil Air Patrol, Mounted Posse and K-9 SAR teams.

If you want to hone your skills, learn new ones, or meet and connect with other search resources, this is your opportunity. The training is designed to apply to everyone in the search community, providing a learning environment without the pressure and confusion that can accompany a real search.

## **April, 2011**

### **Thinking Outside the Box**

Sometimes we need to think outside of what we normally do, and find new tools for our toolbox. Did you know that a K-9 can search a car in approximately three minutes? Have you ever considered using a K-9 to search for homicide evidence on a car?

Recently a Central Lakes member attended a training that is a little outside the box, using K-9's to determine crime / homicide scenes. Is it possible? Yes, but it requires alot of training, not just for the K-9 team in finding and identifying source, but more for the handler. Most search and rescue handlers are volunteers, so the handlers need to learn things law enforcement already know. How to complete reports, logs, and preserving a scene.

Consider working with your local search and rescue team for not only your missing person searches, but also crime scenes.

## **March, 2011**

### **Search Management Training Opportunity!**

Is your agency ready if you should get a missing person call? What would be the first thing you would do? Does your dispatcher know how to handle a call if it should come in?

Consider having key members of your staff take a search management class taught by someone who has been there many times over, and knows what it is like. Vermillion

Community College hosts just such a class annually in Ely, MN. This class offers the students a chance to learn not only how to manage a search, but what searchers in the field experience and the knowledge they need to do the job for you.

Click on the link for more information on how to register:

<https://webproc.mnscu.edu/registration/search/detail.html?campusid=147&courseid=000119&yrtr=20115&rcid=0147&localrcid=0147&partnered=false&parent=search>

## **January, 2011**

### **Winter searches – what to expect...**

If a person is missing, it is unlikely that you will want to delay any search efforts unless it puts your searchers at risk. What are those risks? Some things to consider:

1. Have places for your searchers (including animals) to warm between sorties
2. Limit the time in the field
3. Make sure your searchers are geared for the weather
4. Don't ask searchers to drive if conditions aren't safe
5. Don't deploy searchers if there is any concern about thin ice
6. Be aware of wind chills, not just air temps
7. Every searcher has the right to refuse to deploy if they are concerned about their safety
8. Make sure you have plenty of water for searchers - dehydration is a real concern in the winter

By being proactive in keeping track of conditions, you can usually start shutting down a search before conditions become dangerous for those in the field. As a search manager, don't be afraid to stop a search if conditions become unsafe, but keep the family involved and informed with that decision. Most understand that if it is unsafe, that it is better not to risk more lives. Although it sounds like a cliché, safety really does come first.

## **December, 2010**

### **Welcome to all the new Sheriffs!**

It was a pleasure meeting many of you at the Minnesota Sheriff's at the Minnesota Sheriff's Association Winter Conference in Alexandria, MN this month. Although we've worked with some of you previously, some of you are newly elected to your counties. Congratulations on your election!

Although we prefer to meet you during conferences like the MSA, sometimes that isn't the way things happen. Sometimes our meetings are when your department is in the midst of an emergency; a tornado, an Alzheimer's patient who walks away, a deer hunter who doesn't return on time....at that time you have to call in a resource you may not know. Who do you call?

Our tip for December is to keep the Minnesota Duty Officer's number handy. It is a one-stop shop for resources available to Law Enforcement agencies. 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.

## **November, 2010**

### **Preparing for a search:**

Sometimes there are misconceptions on what K-9 teams need or don't need for a search. These ideas can be passed along from one agency to another, or person to person. Some of the myths don't affect the outcome of a search, some may. Here are some that we've heard over the course of the years.

- Dogs can't smell drowning victims under ice because the body hasn't started to decompose due to the cold.
  - The truth is, most dogs will react to the anomaly of human scent under the ice. Many dogs also train on divers in ice conditions.
- Air scent dogs aren't "scent specific" so are unable to use scent articles.
  - Many air scent dogs are now being trained and tested as "scent specific", so it is always good to collect a scent article.
- Dogs can't search an area while searchers are still in it.
  - Don't stop a search so the dog teams can search. Just let the handlers know where the other searchers are and in what direction they are expected to move.
- An area must be "aired" before dog teams can search it.
  - Our only caution is to protect the Point Last Seen (PLS), otherwise, keep your searchers in the field. Search dogs are trained to handle distractions, and are generally used to contaminated search areas.

If you ever have questions on if a dog needs something special for searching, ask when you call them in. The more you work and train with them, the more you'll have a good idea what is really myth and what is fact.

## **October, 2010**

### **On Vacation!**

## **September, 2010**

### **Who do you call?**

When your agency is in a crisis situation, do you know who you will call for assistance? Is it someone you've worked with before? Someone recommended by another agency? Have they worked with them? Do you call the Duty Officer for help? Do you know who

within your own agency is trained for a search and rescue event? Is anyone trained? Most Law Enforcement programs don't include search and rescue in their syllabus.

50% of searches end within 3 hours of the initial call. Most agencies have experienced these types of searches, and so when an apparently normal search is initiated, many counties aren't prepared if it isn't resolved quickly. They get into the next day and wonder what has happened, why the person hasn't been located yet. Weeks, months, years later, they still are left to wonder if they could have done things differently.

It is these searches that make agencies realize they should have gotten training or located resources in their area to assist them before they are needed in an emergency. Take time to research organizations in your area, the CERT teams, mounted posse, dive teams, cave rescue and K-9 teams. Find out what their capabilities are, what their training covers, how they certify or test their skills. Train with them on a joint exercise prior to needing their assistance.

And once you find a good group to work with, keep them on your call-out list even if your agency changes leadership. Mutual aid is something everyone benefits from.

## **August, 2010**

### **Water Basics II, Float Conditions:**

There are many things that can affect float times of a drowning victim. These variables can give us an idea of what to expect, but that means there are things we should be asking during the initial interviews.

- Water temperature in the area of the drowning, the colder the water, the longer it takes the body to build up gases required to float
- Is the victim lean or fat? Fat is more buoyant and likely to rise faster than a person with lean muscle mass.
- What did they eat last and when? Foods / drinks high in carbs create gases faster and may speed up float times.
- Type of clothing worn, loose clothing can trap air, heavy (winter) garments can trap water, making them less likely to float.
- Damage to the skin and/or internal organs can eliminate places for the body to store up gases which cause it to float.
- Water depth and thermoclines that may be present can affect float times, or the ability for the body to rise.

This is just a small list of things that can be asked, plus we'd recommend finding out about the water, such as strainers or underwater debris locations that can snag and hold a body. Work with your dive team, or if your agency doesn't have its own, develop a working relationship with one in your area. They often dive in the local water ways and know them.

And if you can, coordinate a training between your agency, local dive teams and K-9 SAR teams in your area.

## **July, 2010**

### **Water Basics:**

Water searches never have a joyous ending, they are always tragedies. The longer a search lasts, the harder it is on everyone. The family, Law Enforcement, volunteers, searchers. Thinking beyond those intimately involved with the search, you have friends, business associates, school mates and employers. All affected by the search.

And water searches are notorious for poor witness testimony; distances are less sure, the trauma experienced by the witnesses can create blanks or inaccuracies. This can lead to unacceptably large search areas and a longer search. Some ways to minimize the area is to include K-9 SAR teams into your search.

K-9's don't replace other forms of search, they can compliment your other resources. In fact, using a K-9 can help reduce your search area size, sometimes quite dramatically, thereby saving your human resources - divers - for small areas, and not risking your expensive equipment trying to cover large areas.

## **June, 2010**

### **Search Cartography:**

Cartography, or the production of maps, is a critical aspect to any search. Maps provide those in command a means of tracking what has been searched, by whom and how well it was covered. By assigning different colors to your different resources, you can see at a glance what is happening on your search.

Give your briefing over a map if you can, as your resources may have insight from their experiences. Debrief your resources after they come out of the field over a map, as it is easier to mark the map as you talk. Your searchers may see something on the map during their debrief that connects with something that happened to them.

Don't forget your other mapping consideration however - providing maps for your special resources to take into the field. Although every resource may have different needs or preferences, here are some tips for supplying maps to your field resources:

- 8x12" copies work well, the area to search can be folded down as needed, but allows room for notes.
- If you can, offer the following types of maps:
  - Satellites show vegetation and can give K-9 teams an idea of what wind might do in the area. These maps are good even if the area is small.
  - Topos are great for safety reasons as it shows terrain changes, from high angle areas to low swamps. They also are preferable for navigation purposes. These maps aren't as easy if the area to search is small as they are harder to read.

- Street maps are generally only good for urban searches, and while park maps show trails, they generally aren't large enough to show the terrain or vegetation, and many park maps aren't accurate for distances.
- If possible, provide the maps in color, especially the topographic maps as their symbols are necessarily in color.

Mapping is a critical part of any search, no matter where you are, or how large or small your search area.

## **May, 2010**

### **The First 12 Hours - Wrapping it all up:**

By incorporating all the elements listed below, you create search objectives. Those objectives can help you to put together a good and effective strategy. Keeping in mind one of the main reasons for search failure can include misuse of special resources; it is good to learn what those resources bring to the search, make sure they are qualified and how to utilize them effectively.

Taking a search management class will also help pull it all together. A good class will include table top exercises as well as what different resources do and how they do it. For more information on classes available in Minnesota, please contact us!

1. Investigate your subject, the scene, the event
2. Protect your point last seen or last known point like a crime scene
3. Contain your subject by setting up boundaries and running trails
4. Hasty search with qualified searchers the areas around the PLS
5. Call in specialized resources like mounted posse, canines, firemen, etc.

## **April, 2010**

### **The First 12 Hours – Hasty Searches:**

Specialized resources can be the scariest thing for Law Enforcement to call in. Unless it is a resource you've used before, how do you know if you will be getting a good one? Many agencies have been burned using them and hesitate to call them in again, especially volunteers. But these resources can provide you with much-needed manpower and equipment. Call them in as soon as possible; remember they will have "gear-up" and travel time. If you find the subject early, stand them down.

Know what your resources do and are capable of; they have specialized knowledge and skills that should be used in their area of expertise. Learn ahead of time what they can do and if used appropriately, they will provide you with the help you called them to provide. For example, a mounted posse can ride trails, searching and setting up containment. K-9 teams are less effective to do this job, but they can search large tracts of land more efficiently than ground searchers. CAP can provide overflights as well as ground searchers to do detailed line searches.

Consider what you need, who can provide it most effectively, and call immediately. Also plan trainings where you can include the resources so you learn to work together efficiently. When an emergency happens, you will already know what to expect and what skills can be brought to your search efforts.

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## March, 2010

### The First 12 Hours – Hasty Searches:

Many believe that the hasty search is an easy way to use emergent volunteers by giving them something to do. This early in the search, there are clues that can be easily destroyed, so in reality, this isn't an appropriate use of your volunteers.

A hasty search, by its very name, is something that needs to be done early and quickly. But it also should be well-directed with a specific plan and completed by skilled searchers. Based on lost person behavior, we know the subject's likely distance traveled, and our investigation should have provided information of where the subject might be most likely to go. We've established a containment plan and can send out our hasty teams.

Hasty search teams are generally two to four people that are looking for clues in areas that are most likely to produce them. Places like the point last seen, a known or potential route of travel, campsites, buildings and other areas where the subject might have gone. They move quickly, but because they are trained, they are less likely to miss or damage vital clues, including the subject themselves.

Additionally, these teams can help verify areas for searchability: Are there hazards? Is it dense foliage or open? Are there drainages that can be checked in more detail later? These teams can also provide information on areas that are unlikely to need further detailed searching.

Hasty searches should be fast, mobile and achievable. It is an effective fact and clue gathering mission that will provide Incident Command with needed information quickly.

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## February, 2010:

### The First 12 Hours – Contain:

By learning about lost person behavior you can, statistically speaking, contain the subject if they are on the move. Remembering of course that most missing people haven't read the books about lost person behavior and may not do the statistically expected thing.

Boundaries should be natural and / or man-made routes that would cause a subject to have to make a decision of sorts. When encountering the boundary, they need to ask "do I cross this road, or do I turn and follow it?" "Do I climb down into this valley or go around?" Boundaries should also be fairly easy to identify on most maps and generally traversable.

Monitoring and searching these boundaries can be as simple as putting a car at the junction of two roads so two boundaries can be watched at once, or having mounted posse riding along a trail or a hiking team walk along a ridgeline.

By establishing a good containment system as quickly as possible, you are better able to focus your search.

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## January, 2010:

### The First 12 Hours – Protect:

In the first hours of the search, locating and confirming the place that the missing person was last known to be, or last seen, can be the biggest clue that you have.

Sometimes your last known point (LKP) isn't what you might expect - the LKP might be a gas station that has a surveillance camera, but no proof they ever got back in their vehicle and drove away. Or the point last seen (PLS) is their own home with no proof they ever really walked down the driveway to pick up the mail.

It is still very important to find that location, and once identified, it needs to be protected like a crime scene, as there is always the chance that it IS a crime scene. Your subject may or may not have wandered off, driven off or walked away from that point voluntarily.

The area is still the only place you have to start your search. By protecting it, you'll have a better chance to find whatever clues it may bring to the investigation, and if you intend to use man trackers or search dogs, you'll help preserve the trails that exist, both scent and visual.

The better you protect the LKP or PLS, the more likely you will be successful.

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## **December, 2009:**

### **The First 12 Hours - Investigate:**

In the first hours of the search, investigation of the subject, the scene and the event that precipitated the person going missing is the first step in a successful search. As Law Enforcement, investigations are part of your normal existence. Missing person searches are really no different, except the sense of urgency escalates.

Complete an LPQ on your subject. Utilizing a form really helps to make sure you don't miss something that might be important. Many times a family liaison will help tremendously if your agency is able to utilize one.

Learn what happened during the last hours. Could it have contributed to the disappearance? Who else was there & can supply information? What about phone calls that might have been made? Do timing of events mesh with the information supplied? Does the story match common knowledge about the subject? What about where the person was last seen? Are there clues that can be garnered?

The more you can learn early in the search, the more likely you will be successful.

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## **November, 2009:**

### **The First 12 Hours:**

Robert Koester's book "Lost Person Behavior" is a fascinating study of exactly what the title says, the behaviors of lost persons. In his book, Koester provides some interesting statistics on successful searches. Such as, 50% of all searches are successfully resolved within 3 hours, and 81% of all searches are successfully resolved within 12 hours.

Most of the first 50% are lucky or "non-events" - where the subject isn't really missing after all. But the second group are more than likely searches that are handled well during the initial hours. Our tip for November is to always remember the 5 objectives of a search and try to do them as best as your agency is able in the first hours of the search.

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## **October, 2009:**

### **Search Management Training Opportunity:**

Our tips for October have always related in some fashion to search management training opportunities. This year will be no different. MNPLEAA - Minnesota Professional Law Enforcement Assistants Association - is hosting a 2-day seminar for their members in November. They asked Central Lakes if we would be interested in being one of their training presenters this year.

Our focus will be the initial stages of a search incident, some search objectives that you should consider, how specialized resources can help or hurt your search, including "red flags" to watch for when requesting a resource. We will also talk about how recent laws can affect how some searches are handled, such as Brandon's Law which was passed in Minnesota just this year.

## **September, 2009:**

### **Every Missing Person Search is an Emergency:**

What does that mean? As we said in the August Tip, searches can get out of hand very quickly. Several hours maybe lost while decisions are made.

- The family has likely already spent hours searching themselves, not wanting to call Law Enforcement as it is a sure sign something really is wrong,
- The responding officer probably will not hurry to the scene as, unless it is a child, the call doesn't sound like an emergency,
- Upon arrival, time will be spent interviewing and then the officer or multiple officers will try to perform a search themselves before considering additional resources,
- Additional or outside resources usually have travel time, delaying their arrival.

Our tip this month is consider changing your procedures so that when a missing person call comes in, your outside search resources are called at the same time. SAR units are happy to turn around if the subject shows up before or even after they arrive. But if it turns out to be a "tough one", you know your resources are already on the road, saving you valuable time.

## **August, 2009:**

### ***Initial Hours into the Search:***

As we all know, the first few hours after a person goes missing are the most critical. Any delay can allow the person to go that much further, or the injured or ill person's condition to deteriorate. Here are some quick tips that may help your next search:

- Treat every missing person search as an emergency
- Protect the last known point of the subject, treat it like a crime scene
- Don't hesitate to call in as many resources as you can immediately, for example: Mounted Posse, K-9 Search Units, Mantrackers and Civil Air Patrol
- Pair up with resources who can manage themselves in a professional and cooperative manner in order to help relieve the stress on your own agency
- Keep a map at base and mark the results of every search sortie, this can help you plan ahead as well as defend your decisions if necessary

- Have someone assigned to brief and debrief searchers, logging any clues or areas of interest, no matter how minor it may seem
- If possible, have someone always at base to handle emergent volunteers, bystanders, media and people who want to help but aren't equipped for it.

Searches can get out of hand very quickly, so many times it comes down to managing the incident from the moment the call comes in.

## **July, 2009:**

### *Cadaver Dogs - Size does Matter:*

The training of cadaver dogs is reliant on a handler's ability to utilize actual remains as much as possible. Many teams are able to purchase bleached bones from places like The Bone Room, however what handlers find is that the sources we are able to obtain don't represent the full scent picture of a human body. It also doesn't have the strength of an entire body. K-9's that train on small sources tend to "fringe" when it comes to a full body. The scent is overpowering to them, so they don't approach it, but indicate the find further away.

If you have a suicide or natural death that has been in place for a day or more, consider obtaining permission from the family of the deceased person to let K-9 teams come in and work the scene after it has been processed by your agency. This type of training can be invaluable to your local K-9 unit, providing an opportunity to expose their dogs to scent that would mimic what they would search for in the "real world".

## **June, 2009:**

### *USAR - or Urban Search and Rescue:*

CLSAR was recently able to attend the annual USAR training in Grantsburg, WI. This annual event is hosted by KERT, K-9 Emergency Response Team, every Memorial Weekend. Last year Hugo, MN was devastated by tornados the last night of the USAR training and several K-9 teams from CLSAR, KERT and Northstar SARDA were able to respond and assist in the search of the affected area.

Our tip for June is to encourage agencies to set up an emergency plan and include your local SAR teams, whether they are K-9 or low angle rescue, or even mounted posse. These groups are well-trained in USAR events and can provide invaluable assistance at no cost to your department. Don't wait until you are in the midst of a disaster recovery to know who you can call.

## **May, 2009:**

### *Live or Deceased?*

K-9 teams in our area are many times trained as dual-purpose dogs, finding both live and deceased subjects. There are times when a dog working a live scent will defer to the

scent of human decomposition. They do this independent of handler commands, and the question is asked "when and where did the live scent stop and cadaver scent start?" There is no clear cut answer to this question. The determination of when the cadaver scent becomes stronger than the live scent is something that handlers, experts, and even scientists would struggle to answer.

The tip for this month is, bring in scent specific dogs as soon as possible to verify if the scent is there, trailing dogs can check for trails, air scent dogs can search sectors. By waiting even 24 hours, the scent picture can change for the dogs, and if the subject is deceased, determining where the subject was before they died can be harder for the K-9 to follow up as they will defer to the stronger scent source - or human remains.

## **April, 2009:**

### ***Flood Stage:***

This past month has been a busy one for many agencies in our area because of flooding. High water, ground saturation, rapid melting, additional snow and rain. Water searches take on a whole new meaning when you are faced with a drowning on a river this time of year. Tips for working with K-9 teams in these situations are quite simple.

1. Every K-9 team has the right to say no; each has different levels of experience based on their training and testing, each knows what is safe for themselves and their K-9 partner,
2. Everyone wears life vests or PFD's, fully buckled, zipped or tied,
3. A floatable rope should be hooked to the K-9 in case they go overboard. The rope is less likely to be caught in underwater debris and can be seen and grabbed quickly on the water,
4. A sharp knife that can quickly cut the rope if the K-9 or the rope gets tangled in debris and threatens the K-9's life,
5. If at all possible, wait for the water level & speed to go down before risking other lives.

We all know that # 5 isn't always possible. There is pressure from the family, from media, and the community. If it isn't possible, take the extra precautions to ensure everyone makes it home after the search.

## **February / March, 2009**

*Time off for the new puppy!*

## **January, 2009:**

### ***Bloodhound or Lab? Air Scent or Trailing?***

When you have a missing person search, one question that we are asked is, "*What kind of dog do I ask for?*" For a long time, the belief was to always call a Bloodhound, no matter what the scenario happened to be. In reality, no matter what the breed, a tested SAR K-9 should be able to do what they are trained to do at a search. The question should be, "*What discipline of dog should I call in?*"

- ***Track/Trail:*** If you have a confirmed point last seen (PLS), these dogs can help locate the trail of the person utilizing a scent article, depending on the age (generally under a week) and conditions.

- ***Air Scent:*** These dogs do not require a PLS, but can search larger sections of land faster. They are sometimes trained to be scent specific as well. Air Scent dogs generally aren't affected by time or conditions, as long as the person is still out there.

Used together, a track/trail dog can determine a direction of travel and air scent dogs can then be "leap-frogged" ahead to search sections in that general direction, or areas around the PLS. Feel free to ask questions regarding the K-9 team's training and testing procedures if you are uncertain. A good team can produce training logs and even recommendations from other Law Enforcement agencies.

## **December, 2008:**

### ***Snow and searching:***

With winter upon us, the question comes up about how snow can affect the ability of K-9's to search. Like any other season of the year, it really depends on the severity of the weather.

Snowfall can be a hindrance or a help for K-9 teams. Heavy snows can hamper searching by covering trails made by the missing person. Heavy winds can scatter and disperse scent making trailing more difficult. Combining heavy winds and snow can make it dangerous to search at all. That is extreme weather however.

In reality, snowfalls generally help K-9's as well as their human counterparts. It can refresh aged scent by adding moisture to it. It also can help preserve tracks. Even if it snows after the person walked away, their tracks many times "freeze", leaving a crusty print under the snow that mantrackers can look for as well.

## **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.