

Maine Association For Search And Rescue

Meeting Minutes

5 October 97

Meeting is called to order at 1600 hours, at Sidney Warden Service Headquarters, by MASAR President John McDonough.

Present

John McDonough, Al Martin, Randy Armour, Steve Hudson, Mark King, Pete Laveway, Warden Deb Palman, Bob Baribeau, Andy Robidoux, Warden Tim Peabody, and Keith Heavrin, Jr.

Announcements

If any unit fielded members at either of the Baxter Park fatalities that occurred near the end of July (one was a drowning and the other a heart attack), please make out an incident report for that deployment. MASAR would like to have those reports available for the next scheduled MASAR meeting on the 7th of December. Baxter Park personnel will be invited to the meeting for the purpose of debriefing the incidents and engaging in constructive dialog to cover how the pilot program initiated by the Park has worked for them, suggested improvements, gear, wilderness protocols, and other topics that could help us all do a better job. Please mail the reports to Keith Heavrin, Jr., MASAR Secretary, Rt. 1 Box 13, Harborside, ME 04642, in time for him to make copies for the meeting. Your input would be very helpful.

Al Martin relates that the United States Congress has passed a federal Good Samaritan Act. It will now be very difficult for volunteers to be sued at the federal level. State level has been covered for some time. Steve will see about getting a copy of this new law.

If your team has an E-mail address, please forward it to Randy Armour <rivers@telplus.net> for MASAR's records.

Secretary's Report

At the beginning of the secretary's report Bob Baribeau and Andy Robidoux initiate a discussion of the Baxter Park heart attack fatality that occurred the week before the last MASAR meeting. They indicate that a more extensive account should have been included in the minutes but was not due to none of the members who worked that incident being present at the meeting to give a report. Concerns are then discussed and shall appear under Old Business later in these minutes.

There being no omissions or corrections to the minutes from the meeting held on 3 August 1997, Steve Hudson moves that the minutes be accepted as written. Seconded by Randy Armour. Vote is unanimous in favor.

Treasurer's Report

Pete Laveway hands out several financial statements covering transactions by MASAR for the last month. Some discussion of amounts and where the money went with general agreement that we need to make a couple small changes to the report as Pete writes it up. Steve and John suggest that we have the report broken down into separate parts to clearly separate Custodial monies MASAR holds for things like the night sun account from the monies that MASAR has.

A third category just for dues and dues status is also desirable.

Steve suggests that Pete look into getting the custodial monies into a CD or some other invested form that will do a little better at interest earning than the savings account where it now resides. John points out that we might create a problem tying the money up in a CD and making it inaccessible.

Pete asks if anyone knows about billing on the pager voice mail box. Randy says it was only something like \$5 per month. Al says there has been some confusion involved with the company's change-over and that he may be paying it without knowing. Al suggests letting it go till something happens to it or it stops working.

Al moves to accept the report as written, seconded by Steve. Unanimous vote in favor.

Committee Reports

Standards Committee

Steve Hudson reports that the questions for the BASAR test are delayed due to problems with graphics, but they will be mailed out within a couple of weeks.

Keith Heavrin announces that MESARD has completed the last of the steps required to become a fully certified and grandfathered MASAR dog unit, with the approval of their application for grandfathering to the new MASAR Ground Searcher Standards. Steve presented the unit with a letter to that effect and much appreciated congratulations were accepted. This final step places MESARD as the only dog search unit in the state to meet the requirements of the new MASAR Dog Search Training Standards, so far.

Steve asks if any new developments have occurred with other dog units in the state. Keith reports that to his most current knowledge both of the other dog units are still using a below average training standard that is weak in its field testing requirements compared to most dog training standards. Tim Peabody notes that he has a brochure from SDNE indicating that they would like to field safety-tested dogs for search and rescue. He also shows correspondence written by the director of York County Emergency Response Team indicating that they have now decided to re-field dog teams after pulling them from the field for re-evaluation. YCERRT says it has a certified cadaver dog available.

Keith responds that even Andy Rebmann, a nationally known cadaver dog trainer, would not "certify" any dog for cadaver search due to the legal ramifications. Andy prefers to proficiency test dogs, after careful training, then to require re-testing yearly. Keith also adds that MESARD does train its teams on cadaver scents and

includes training for this mission capability in its monthly training, but would not confer certification for it in their standards. It's just too sticky an issue legally.

John says he would like to see us hold one of the MASAR and Warden Services statewide training exercises somewhere in a more southern part of the state to provide an opportunity to include some of these southern units. Keith relates that it would be good to encourage these teams to upgrade their requirements and that if they do it would be a great help for providing competent dog teams for southern Maine. Tim relates that there are a lot of searches down that way and that some of the areas are large. Keith adds that it is difficult for MESARD to provide dog teams to the far southern part of the state as it is three and four hours away for most of MESARD's membership.

Steve relates that ASTM is working on a national search dog training standard that should help. Keith notes that the last correspondence from NASAR indicated that they are also addressing dog training standards. It is hoped that these efforts will work to upgrade the training level of groups not training to accepted standards. Steve will forward a copy of the MASAR Dog Standards to NASAR for their reference.

Greenville Statewide Training

Al Martin gives a lengthy description of the training weekend, from setting it all up in pouring rain to the various aspects about it that did and didn't work well.

In the area of things we can work to improve were: radio communications at the exercise were very poor, with a lot of unnecessary traffic and a malfunction of the main CP radios. Tim says this was addressed by the Wardens debrief and the radios are functioning properly now. Al says he felt the Wardens in charge should have accepted the offer of Dirigo's radio to use when theirs clearly weren't working. Tim relates that this was also addressed at the Wardens debrief.

Tim noted that this exercise saw a lot of new people in the CP and it was a learning and training experience for them too. Andy relates that some of the deployed teams were put out by having been assigned to search areas where there was no victim to find. It would have helped to have the exercise plan explained ahead of time. Some discussion ensues about possibly setting exercises up with multiple victims.

Also discussed was the failure of GPS units to perform at this search. Three separate GPS units became inoperable by being unable to acquire satellites in the area of the victim's location. There was some confusion generated by different teams being fielded having the same team radio numbers assigned to them.

Keith forwards that it would have been helpful to take a few minutes at the start of the exercise to have the CP wardens introduce themselves and lay down a few ground rules at the start, to help some of the newer volunteers understand some of the protocols that make these exercises run smoother. In this way the unnecessary radio communications and things like where to check in and when could have been dealt with and limited some of the confusion. It also would give Operations a chance to say how they wanted to run the exercise. It was generally agreed that the radio communications glitches caused most of the confusion and seemingly poor coordination of effort at times.

Among the things that worked well at the exercise: Al gave an overview of the T-card system used to keep track of volunteer resources and it is considered one of the things that worked really well. Most of the teams involved felt they had been deployed in a timely manner and that handling of resources went pretty well. Andy Robidoux said he felt the exercise went very well. Keith related that the crime scene set up at the location of the victim was really first rate and very realistic. It presented a number of well thought-out challenges for the teams that worked that part of the exercise.

The classes on Sunday morning were briefly discussed and described as helpful. Al asks if Warden Service intends to switch to the UTM navigation system instead of using Lat./Long. Tim relates that he is resisting it because all the computers, documents, etc. are set up to use Lat./Long. The trend seems to be towards using the UTM system and it will cause a lot of problems to switch it over. Gary Sargent's Crime Scene Preservation presentation was described as exceptionally good.

At about 1730 hours John McDonough turns the meeting over to Al Martin and departs.

Old Business

Further discussion of the fatalities in Baxter State Park in late July took place. Lacking reports from those units which worked with the park this summer, it was decided to delay further discussion until the next meeting, when Baxter Park can have a representative present, and we can discuss ways to improve the SAR volunteer assistance program tested this summer.

Jonesport Search

Randy Armour was OD the night of Friday, October 3rd, when he got a page from Sunrise SAR about the search. He then was called by the Washington County Regional Communications Center. Randy kept asking who was the Warden in charge of the search. Once the Warden Service arrived Randy started calling in the first volunteer units by 2330 with calls to Dirigo and MDISAR. Randy relates he had trouble reaching several groups and was unable to get some at all. MESARD had sent all but two dog teams to a NH training weekend and hadn't left word as to who remained to respond to a call out. Finally Deb Palman sorted that out and got two dog teams besides herself to respond.

Randy relates that he was unable to get hold of Lakes Region and a discussion ensues about a periodic update of callout information. Randy instructed people responding to the search to assemble at the Blueberry Hill Experimental Farm on Rt. 1. He figures about 30 to 35 people responded initially. All in all probably 45 or so were eventually deployed into the field.

The victim was a 75 yr. old bird hunter who got lost, spent the night by covering himself all up and getting a good sleep, eating breakfast the next morning then walking out on his own. He was spotted on one of the roads at 0830 or so Saturday morning and was in better shape than most of the searchers.

A discussion on how to possibly mark the intersections with signs to direct incoming volunteers to search scenes is briefly discussed. Randy suggests orange

cones could be easily dropped out of the vehicle at intersections, part way down the correct turn. If needed, a sign could be poked into the top of the cone. They'd be easy to pick back up too.

Sedgwick Search

Keith relates that on September 5th MESARD was called by Warden Devlin at 2230 hours to respond the next morning early to a search for a possible suicide in Sedgwick. It was the same Gretchen Hartman who MESARD had searched for in May after she had again taken a drug overdose and walked into the woods near her home on Rt. 175.

It was suggested to Warden Devlin that dogs do make an excellent night search tool but it was related that the people on the scene were tired and securing for the night. Keith called the MASAR OD and informed them of the search and the callout. MESARD arrived at 0700 hours with three dog teams and were very efficiently briefed then deployed to an area, directly across from the victim's home, where both Warden Calvin Hale and Warden Pat Devlin felt there would be a high probability of the victim being located. The area had been searched by as many as 80 fire department personnel and locals during the night, but they had not penetrated much farther than a couple hundred yards deep from the road.

The dog teams deployed and searched in a corridor pattern with the three teams separated by about 100 yds. and advancing in a grid parallel to Rt. 175. About half a mile into that first pass the dog team on the end got an alert, which the handler radioed in, then he followed the dog approximately 200 yards or more up and over the hill to where the victim was found. The victim was still up and walking but clearly heavily medicated. She was able, with help, to walk out where she was picked up by an ambulance.

We secured an hour and a half after arrival. It was noted that the MASAR OD was never notified of this search except for the call from MESARD.

Jackman Search

Keith relates that at 0215 hrs. on Monday morning the 22nd of Sept MESARD got a call for a couple of dog teams to respond to a search for a 94 yr. old fisherman who had been missing since 1000 hours the previous Friday when he'd left a note on his table at his camp and gone fishing. The scene was all the way out to the end of the Hardscrabble Rd, about 27 miles from Rt. 201.

Paul Magoon arrived at the scene and was deployed into a drainage area at around 0400 hours. Keith Heavrin pulled in to where the vehicles were parked at 0700, after a four and a half hour drive, just as Warden Roger Guay found the victim. He was down and suffering severe hypothermia. Paul Magoon, an EMT, was gotten to the location to assess the victim's condition and begin some steps to help. The wardens called for blankets and anything else to assist in warming the victim. The location was .87 miles off the end of the road down a rough ATV track. The victim had just bought a new ATV and it was located several hundred feet away up

the drainage.

It was decided to Medevac the victim out as moving him down the rough trail and then a rough truck trip would be more time consuming and ill advised for his condition. Several Wardens started a fire and warmed water bottles to place on the victim's torso to help stabilize him and prevent heat loss. He was wrapped in a warm sleeping bag while a site was prepared for the helicopter to land the basket. He was lifted out to Greenville and sent by ambulance to Bangor where he eventually died from his experience. His core temperature when he got to Greenville was 84 degrees. It was generally felt the people on scene did all they could to help the victim.

New Business

None

Meeting is adjourned by Al Martin at 18:45 hours.

The next scheduled MASAR Meeting will be held at Warden Service Headquarters in Sidney on Sunday December 7th at 1300 hours.

Note the time change.

Units who fielded teams to the Baxter Park fatalities at the end of July are reminded to please mail an incident report to Keith Heavrin at your earliest convenience.