

MASAR 2011 ANNUAL SPRING TRAINING

The MASAR Spring training was held over the weekend of 30 APR and 1 MAY in Alfred, ME. York County Emergency Agency (YCEMA) hosted and provided logistics support and MidCoast Search And Rescue (MCSAR) provided operations support including development of the mock search scenario, a site survey to find the best places to execute the scenario, and identifying and briefing participants necessary for it. The search was held in the Massabesic Experimental Forest about 3 miles from YCEMA and the Command Post (CP). MASAR teams represented were MCSAR, MESARD, LCSAR, WRT, MMESAR, MDISAR, FSAR, and DIRIGO SAR.

SATURDAY 30 APR –

The Maine Warden Service ran the CP and took the opportunity to train Wardens who had not worked as part of their Incident Management Team (IMT) under the instructive eye of LT Kevin Adam. The search teams consisted of two equestrian teams (2-3 horses and riders each), one air scent dog team, one trailing dog team, and a ground search team.

The basic scenario that was briefed to the various search team members and the wardens in training was as follows:

On Friday afternoon approximately 1530 April 29th Gail (50 YOF) and her son Colin (22 YOM autistic) left for a walk in the Massabesic Experimental Forest in Alfred. The note they left in their car said they intended to walk from the gate along Ida Jim Road, follow the Littlefield trail to the Clayton Trail and then back to the Ida Jim Rd and out but they did not return. The family called 911 at 2000 and the call was relayed to the Maine Warden Service who did hasty searches that night and called out all MASAR units for a search commencing first thing Saturday morning. Other than Autism, there are no known medical issues for either subject. Colin is a very functional Autistic but sometimes reacts to strange or stressful situations poorly. He is very interested in movies. The weather is what it is, real world, and both were dressed properly for their walk (40's overnight in in the 60's that day).

What only the team that had set up the scenario and LT Adam knew was the rest of the scenario:

Gail and Colin heard noises, wandered off the trail to see what they were and came upon an assault. The perp had killed her victim and attacked Gail who was knocked down an embankment. The mother was no longer mobile with a possible spinal injury. Colin ran off and is hiding from everyone and may or may not respond to searchers. The perp chased Collin for a short distance then exited the woods. When she heard on the TV there was a search for them came to the CP and volunteered to help in the hopes that somehow she might cover up her deed. If at some point Collin sees the perp he will act out in a meltdown (non violent).

The CP was subjected to the usual barrage of information and arrival of search teams and quickly sorted out how to deploy teams placing the airscent dog team inside the loop trail the subjects were supposed to have walked on (approximately 75 acres) and the trailing

dog team started at the vehicle with a scent article for the mother. Two equestrian teams were deployed, one searching the loop trail and the other the gravel road it connected to and other trails. The ground search team was deployed to grid on both sides of the loop trail after the horses had completed. They were to start downwind of where the air scent dog was deployed AND unbeknownst to them they had taken the perpetrator of the crime with them who conveniently positioned herself at the end of the line that would come closest to the crime scene. At times the perp seemed to be trying to move the grid line closer to the trail and away from the crime scene to the point that the team leader (unaware of the crime aspect of the scenario) pulled her in closer to the trail and assigned someone else to walk the far edge. One member of the ground team did raise a question about the perp to the team as to what seemed like odd behavior.

Shortly after noon, one equestrian team's horses all alerted to something in the woods providing a general direction to the riders who then spotted the mother, dismounted, and found her injured on the side of a hill. They reported their finding to the CP and requested medical assistance. (during the debrief they would report that in retrospect they felt the alert was more towards the cadaver scent than the person as both were in fairly close proximity but at the time they were unaware of the hidden body so found only the mother).

At nearly the same time the K9 airscent team found the son very well hidden under a large blow down. To continue the search problem, the dog team was extracted and the second horse team deployed in the direction where the son was and they found him quickly.

As good fortune would have it, the team doing the grid search had several EMT's in it and was redirected to the site where the mother was to render medical assistance and extract her. Before the medical team arrived, the trailing dog team arrived where the mother was and the CP redeployed them with a scent article for the son and they started a track searching for him. This track quickly came upon to the hidden body (with cadaver scent on it) and the dog alerted to something hidden in a pile of brush. As this was a crime scene a Warden and crime scene technician were dispatched to the scene. Investigation quickly confirmed a dead body (played by Herb the dummy) and the scene was now clearly a crime scene. The grid team was now split into a medical/evacuation team and an evidence team. The medevac team took care of the mother (and yes, the perp was an EMT and helped with the medevac which seemed to really disturb the mother any time she got near her). The evidence team searched an area approximately 150 yards around the site of the mother and found abundant evidence.

As this was all happening, the son was brought out to where his mom had been brought down to the road and reunited with her. When he saw the perp getting close to his mother he pushed her away and shouted for the perp to get away from his mother for fear that she would hurt her again. The Warden on scene quickly removed the son to behind his pickup truck, presuming the autistic son was over stressing and started to distress him. Pretty quickly the story unraveled who the perp was and the Warden returned to the

group, removed the perp from the proximity of the mother interrogated her and very quickly realized her role, took her into custody and handcuffed her.

SUNDAY 1 MAY

Four classes were offered:

- Back to basics of map, compass, and GPS presented by Roger David of LCSAR and MESARD
- Working with dog and horse teams in SAR presented by Michele Fleury of MESARD and Collin Hoyt of MMESAR
- Working with the media in the SAR environment presented by Bob Bohlmann of YCEMA
- Working with Autistic subject for first responders presented by Jim Bridge of MESARD (2 CEH's were approved)