



"Proudly Serving PA, NJ, DE, and MD since 1979"

RESCUE ME

"That others may learn"

Winter 2002

Final - 2002

The things we do.



We've done over 50 non search callout related activities so far this year.

These activities include missions, details, community education and more.

Some time ago we realized that if everything is on our side in an emergency and everything goes right we might be able to save a

missing person. That happens but, unfortunately, sometimes it doesn't. What we decided would be best is to educate. Perhaps in this way we could help dozens or hundreds of people. And it's worked.

When the phone doesn't ring in Emergency Services that means that everything is going okay for the most part. Maybe boring, but okay.



To combat the boredom we train as much as we can. We can have anywhere from 4 - 10 things in a given month.

It's been our pleasure to speak and serve throughout the 5 county area and parts of New Jersey this past

year. Without seeming too ambitious we hope to do even more in the year to come because we're here to help.

Thanks to everyone that has allowed us to help throughout the year of 2002.

From our family at GPSAR to yours...may the upcoming year be a better one for you and yours.

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Unit News - Mounted

Our Mounted Unit is undergoing a reorganization. Many thanks go out to all that have worked with the unit but frankly it's growth had stalled.

Equines have proven themselves over the years as invaluable partners in the field. GPSAR as one of the teams having an equine unit in the area certainly knows the importance of our equine partners.

With the changing environment and times



that we've been called to work in the need has been shown that equine has to be taken to the next level. Like all units, members of equine, must first and foremost be groundpounders. With that in mind we should have a fully revamped unit in the upcoming season that will be there to benefit anyone needing it's expertise.

Thanks for everyone's support.

In Review

There is not enough to be said about protecting gear from the elements. There are a few items out there that do this really well and they are cheap insurance for our gear.

While everyone doesn't need the level of protection that our water unit does we can all benefit from that equipment.

Two great items are the SeaLine selection of water safe packs located at <http://www.cascadedesigns.com/sealline> as well as a great camera bag for anyone who does outdoor work. The DryZone 200 by Lowepro (www.lowepro.com). This thing is a an



ergonomic dream with the skin of a tank for your camera gear. Expect to see more on this product in the near future after full field testing is over.

Together all of these items are peace of mind. Because how functional can we be if our FULL attention is not on the task at hand. We don't need to worry about gear.

Lets let these products help us with that part of our jobs.

Another product that warrants mention (we've said it before) are the items from Aquapac located at <http://www.aquapac.net/>.

What to look for in a SAR team

Pennsylvania has no state standards regulating search and rescue (SAR) teams or their activities. SAR in Pennsylvania resembles the Wild, Wild West in that there are no boundaries and no rules. One need only pull up a wagon and call it home.

So, what makes a good SAR team? When a person interested in joining a team or a public official looks for a resource, what should they look for? These are but a few of the questions that you might come across. The following are purely subjective but hopefully helpful guidelines that will help address these questions BEFORE an emergency occurs.

Personnel

- *How many members does the team have?* Too few members and the team won't have enough people to independently function on a search. The team won't be able to have more than one shift or possibly even more than one task team in the field.

Conversely, if the team has many members but only a handful attend trainings and meetings, it may indicate internal problems or that it has more names on paper than bodies in the field.

In either case, a team with too few members is potentially unsafe and ineffectual.

- *Are members professional?* Is the team a social club or a professionally run emergency service organization? A team doesn't have to be all work and no play, but focusing too much on socializing means it forgot its intended purpose.
- *Do members get along?* Not everyone has to get along all the time, but members should treat each other professionally and respectfully.
- *Is the membership diverse?* Differences such as background, age and experience often mean interesting growth and evolution. Different people may bring several options to solve a problem, thus increasing the chance of hitting on the safest and most efficient way of performing a task.

Administration

- *Is the team insured?* Insurance protects the team and its members. A team that uses donated dollars for fancy equipment instead of insuring its members has questionable priorities.
- *How often does the team hold business meetings?* Whether or not they take advantage of it, team mem-

bers should have the opportunity to contribute to team management and decisions.

Training

- *How often does the team train?* Anything less than once a month for ground searchers means the team probably exists for the glory and not for the victim.
- *How organized are the trainings?* Do members stand around with no direction? Often there are periods of inactivity, but are members gearing up for the next activity or trying to figure out what to do next? Are trainings long enough to make them worth the effort to attend? An organized training usually means an organized search.
- *Does the team train on varied terrain and weather conditions?* All searches don't happen on perfect spring days and rarely in the location where a team trains. Being able to safely adapt to all types of conditions is essential.
- *Is outside training encouraged?* Teams can't function in a bubble. Oftentimes training with recognized specialized organizations introduces new and safer ways of doing things. It isn't always necessary to re-invent the wheel.

Community

- *Does the team provide community education?* A team that accepts public donations should give back to the public in the form of education. Searches don't happen as often as fires and ambulance calls. The time waiting for a search should be spent preventing a search.
- *What is the team's relationship to local officials?* Local fire and police departments call the SAR teams. A team should be proactive and reach out to public officials. Organized search and rescue techniques are new to most law enforcement personnel.
- *Does the team claim to provide unrealistic services?* In other words, a team located in Delaware shouldn't claim to provide avalanche rescue.

For anyone looking for a search and rescue team, the answers to these questions may mean the difference between a successful relationship and a disaster.

From the Chief

I'd like to take this chance to thank everyone that has helped GPSAR. We've come along way in a short period of time and it couldn't have been accomplished without the hard work of many many people.

Looking back over the year I am please with the increase in activities the team has taken on and the increase in responsibility taken on by the membership.

I'm proud of everyone. We've seen more retention of members this year than I recall in quite a while as well as a growth.

What is different about this year is that in the past I can recall us having large #'s on paper that were just names and not people that actually trained or participated much at all. That always happens in volunteer organizations but I remember 75 names on paper and getting 13 out for searches.

Well that has changed this year. We thinned the herd as it were but raised the participation. In essence our members are now much more active members.

We have about 45 on paper and are seeing 27 at activities. That translates roughly into a participate increase from 13% to 60%. That's a start to be proud of. In effect we've become a little more efficient with our best resource... our people.

We've worked with other teams and done things that would have been unheard of in the past. We've

reached out to people and put problems behind us. Ultimately that is the only way to progress.

There are some great things planned for the next year. While not trying to be mysterious I, unfortunately, have to come across that way because I don't want people to be disappointed if some of them don't come up. Several are due in the next month or so. Believe me, they're worth the wait.

Well we started the year with a search in Jersey and it looks like we'll end on that same note.

Now we'll raise the bar a bit and strive for more in the new year.

Thanks again to everyone for everything with some special thanks going out to the teams officers.

Mark G. Hopkins, Chief

My 2002 team top 5 inside jokes.

- #5) TJ's motivational talk workshops**
- #4) Golf carts**
- #3) Cujo**
- #2) One word....Rich!**
- #1) 80 ft up?**

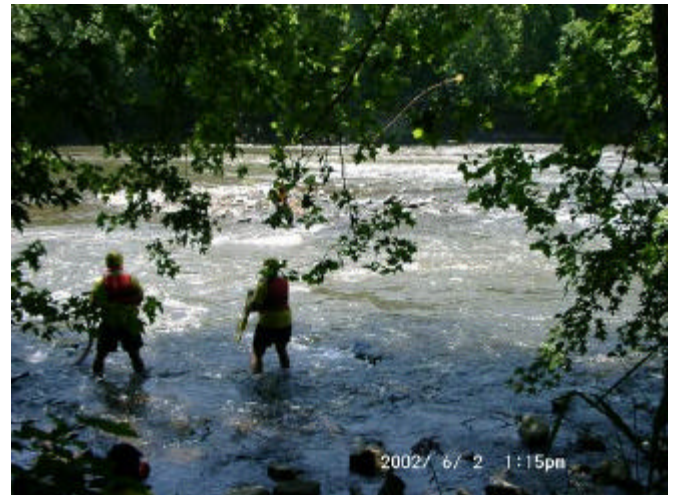
In Focus - Water Training

Three years ago when I proposed starting a water rescue unit, the response was “Sure, go ahead. (Pause) But why do we need one?” To be honest, I wasn’t exactly sure of the need, but I went forward anyway. Today, through creativity and committed members, the GPSAR Water Search and Rescue Unit has dug its heels into the team.

Because team members are so widely scattered geographically, it is impossible to have the unit arrive first on any scene. That was the major concern when starting the unit. What was the point if the fire department or other rescuers much closer to the accident would more than likely have the rescue completed before we even left our driveways?

Unfortunately, while on a search, too many times we witnessed rescuers entering boats without the proper water safety equipment—no PFDs, no helmets, and no throw bags. We decided that it just might be possible that the unit would be needed to rescue a rescuer. GPSAR’s unit is trained to have the proper equipment for the job.

This past summer unit members pushed the limit of “use what you have on hand to perform the rescue” and to not rely on high tech, expensive equipment. The unit experimented with horses and slingshots to get a line across a body of water. Team members on horseback practiced throwing the throw bag to members in the water and bringing them ashore. They used the horses to carry a line across the water to another rescuer. Slingshots were also used to get a throw bag to a rescuer on the other side of a river. Both worked, and both need work.



But what is important is that unit members were willing to try something different—and have fun in the process.

We learned that kayaks work extremely well when searching on the water. Kayaks are low, they allow the searcher paddling to better see into the water with less glare. Kayakers can also see up steep riverbanks that are normally inaccessible to foot searchers. Kayaks are naturally slower than powerboats, thus forcing the searcher to see more instead of zipping up and down the river and missing most of it.

Several members of the canine unit began training water search dogs this summer. Water unit members accompanied the dogs and handlers on the boat to ensure the safety of both the dog and the handler as well as to navigate the boat while the dog and handler concentrate on searching.

For support, the water unit enlisted the assistance of other team members for communications and land support. Members with radios alert those in the water of oncoming boat traffic. They also alert fishermen downstream of oncoming throw bags that “escaped.”

The future holds continued training with the dogs and practicing basic and advanced skills so that they become second nature. Unit members will also provide water safety presentations to groups as well as team members.

Greater Philadelphia Search And Rescue
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(877) 598-5618 - www.gpsar.org
911 for emergencies in Montgomery

GPSAR

Mailing
Address
Goes
Here

Outreach—The best use of downtime



We've done some new things and re-vamped some old ones in the past year.

One new one is evidence searches. The picture is from when we were called to assist our compatriots over at Gloucester County Search and Rescue with a search for evidence in a ongoing trial...and that's about all we can say about that.

We've also been asked participated in displays, demonstrations, talks and trainings for more organizations that we've ever done in the past. Recently we had to turn down requests due to distance but are more than happy to accommodate all that we can.

Education of the youth that might be doing our job in the future is one of the most rewarding things that we can do. The return on the time investment is felt almost immediately.

We've worked with the Scouts, Sea Cadets, and members of the Civil Air Patrol over the past year and expect to expand to work with more youth organizations in the near future.

Everyone likes a good call but the things that we say and show when we do training and community outreach can literally expand the scope of our ability to help by motivating others to do the same.

We can't be everywhere but we can educated people in our travels and so far this has been very successful.

