



The Official Newsletter of GPSAR RESCUE ME

Greater Philadelphia Search & Rescue

When a person is lost or endangered, seconds can mean the difference between life and death. Fortunately, there is available, a dedicated search and rescue group - Greater Philadelphia Search And Rescue (GPSAR).

Founded in 1979, GPSAR has a primary response area within the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, however, GPSAR has been requested by, and responds to missions in other States as well.

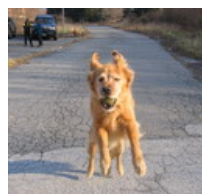
2006 In Review

What we did and didn't do

The year 2006 has been a busy year for Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue.

We have spent many hours in training both the human and canine members of the team and individual members have worked to enhance

their own personal credentials.



Most of the team members have at least DCNR Field Team Member certification as

well as NIMS and ICS certifications.

This year has been a time of membership flux as some people have moved out of the area.

Team numbers remain strong, however, as a number of new people have joined.



Education / Outreach / Searches

The Fun Stuff

Details: The members of GPSAR attended a record number of details this year. The team was especially busy with details during the September/ October fire season. As usual, the Fort Washington Fire Expo was the largest of the fall details as it is attended by most of the fire and rescue agencies in the Greater

Philadelphia area. Attending details gives the team an opportunity to educate the public on how not to get lost and what to do if they do become lost. The public can also learn how to summon help from the team in a missing person situation. In addition, other public service agencies that attend the details get to

know the team and the services that it can provide and thus are more likely to call us if there is a lost person report. At the end of October, members of GPSAR went to New Jersey to help to train the Sea Cadets. The two days of training included teaching skills such as knot tying, first aid and patient packaging.

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TRAINING TOPICS

Training Never Stops

The team continues to train twice a week all year round. There are day and night trainings and search tasks that are set up in buildings as well as outside. Varying training conditions in this way helps the team to prepare to deal with a variety search conditions for the human members and scent conditions for the dog and handler teams. Canine training: During the past six months, two young dogs that have trained with the team

since they puppies were certified for trail. Several other new young dogs are also progressing well in their training. Recently, several experienced search dog and handler teams have joined GPSAR and these new members are a welcome addition to the team. Technical training: A portion of each day of training has been set aside to work on practicing some sort of human SAR skill such as land navigation.

Among the skills that are being emphasized are knots, compass work and pacing distances. In addition, considerable time in some training sessions has been devoted to rope skills, including rappelling down slopes, self-rescue with and without climbing gear, and rope rescue with the Stokes basket.



GPSAR trains inside and out all year long!

In Review - The Trackers

Search and Rescue teams often operate in unfamiliar terrain, under stress, and in inclement weather. Accurate navigation is essential for effective search and rescue operations, but navigation often poses a challenge for task teams on the ground.

Navigation difficulties in the field may produce further problems for operations and planning staff in the command post, such as

uncertainties in evaluating the coverage of search segments from debriefing reports. A task team may not always understand its directions and may or may not cover the area that it was assigned to search.

Technology can supplement the fundamental of teaching SAR team members strong land navigation skills. Tracks recorded by GPS receivers can be retrieved when debriefing a task team

to provide an approximate record of the area covered by a task team.

Transmitting GPS positions as telemetry by radio can provide live assurance to both a task and command that a task is searching a particular area, and can further provide live maps of the locations of task teams and other assets for the incident command staff. Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue (GPSAR) has deployed a system for

monitoring the location of task teams in the field using APRS (the Automatic Packet Reporting System), over amateur radio and mapping workstations using the special purpose open source GIS (Geographic Information System) application Xastir.



Field searching at Valley Forge

TECHNICAL TOPICS

Water Rescue

Members of the team attended a water rescue course and six members completed the course and were certified. One of the weekend trainings was devoted largely to water rescue, which gave team members an opportunity to gain experience with the team boats and water rescue gear.



“The best laid plans are torn apart by a failure to visualize alternatives and possibilities that might ultimately impact the outcome of the mission”

Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
Magnetic Compass	GPS	Magnetic Compass
Prussik	Gibbs	Prussik

In Our Opinion:

SAR Councils



At the beginning of 2006, GPSAR joined the Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council (PSARC) on a probationary basis. In November, the team completed the required probationary period and was accorded full membership in PSARC. As a result of its

membership in PSARC, the team is on call for searches in a much larger area than it served before, In addition to being available for a full call out for searches, GPSAR can offer various technical support services to other PSARC teams such as

communications. In addition to PSARC, GPSAR is also a member of the NJ Search and Rescue Council and regularly attends the meetings of that organization.

Member News

Things Change

Member recruitment and retention is always an issue with volunteer organizations. Over the years we've seen our #'s jump around and recently they've stabilized with a dedicated group of people numbering in the high 20's.

Now there are all kinds of numbers in SAR but some of them are inflated.

The reality is that most teams have less than 30 people and many have less than 10.

With this in mind we ALL have to work together for the benefit

of the subject of the search. We can't do it alone and the subject deserves our best effort.

More and more we're seeing the public involved in searches and in many cases we manage them.

Much of our job has become management of resources even though no one considers themselves a manager for the most part.

The sooner we realize and adapt to the changing roles that we are playing the better off the entire system will be.



**Greater
Philadelphia
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Rescue**

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