

Black Diamond SAR Council

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The Coordinator's Desk

First, let me congratulate those that finished the Ground Search and Rescue College at Hungry Mother. It's always exciting to see our membership advance, and we've got several new FTMs and FTLs. This is a huge deal because we have that many more members that can respond without their Field Training Officer.

Remember folks, this is the state minimum standard, so let's work very hard to train up and receive as much training as we can!

Secondly, let me thank those BDSAR members who came and helped during either of the two weekends. It takes a little pressure off when you've got some extra hands around to help. You did a great job as well, and the Instructors appreciated it.

Thirdly, I wanted to let you know that we have several new members coming on board. This greatly enhances our roster as some of them are trained and others are working towards their training, or moving to get into the next class. Please welcome them with open arms so they feel comfortable enough to come and train with us.

Fourth, please watch the calendar as we are about to get busy once again. November and December should be down time unless we get a real mission, but we've already added a training, or two, in those months. No rest for the weary!

Fifth, thanks goes out to everyone that responded on the four missions that we had

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in one week. Yes, the Grayson Highlands incident ended shortly after call-out, but I felt great about the numbers that were responding. The Chilhowie incident didn't take long and neither did the Hungry Mother Semi-Tech, but they all could have been much longer calls.

Lastly, please read the newsletter below very carefully as there is information regarding the annual Lisa Hannon Award, and a new joint venture with Grayson Highlands State Park.

Jess Sparks had a great comment about the OneCallNow system and asked that Mike and I put a time on the call when we start the narrative, in case someone gets the call late. Great idea, and we will try to implement that from now on. If I don't, you have permission to smack my hand til I remember.

I hope to see everyone on the next mission! Your response shows the Responsible Agent that BDSAR takes Search and Rescue, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, very seriously. It doesn't do us any good to have a roster of 60+ when the same folks are the ones that show up.

Upcoming Training Events

Mike Maggard - Training Officer

- December 3 - 4 Wilderness First Aid by SOLO in the Dogwood Room of Hemlock Haven
 - March 31, 2012 - BDSAR Invitational
 - April 18 - 22, 2012 - VASARCo SAR Conference
 - May - Blue Ridge Parkway SAREx - will not be held at Rocky Knob in 2012
 - May - Hike day at Grayson Highlands State Park - See Newsletter below for more information
- June, July, August, and September - we will be at BackBone again, but we hope that more persons will come to work on any training they want to. This is the perfect time to build relationships with your SAR family and also to improve skills that you haven't used or forgotten. For instance, I would love to see the SignCutters working on different scenarios, while others are on the rock!

Congratulations to the following persons for completing GSAR and coming away with Certificates!!

- Candace Stevens - Field Team Member
- Mike Stevens - Field Team Member
- Dustin Folk - Field Team Member
- Anthony Holmes - Field Team Member
- Zachary Hupp - Field Team Member
- Doris Wheeler - Field Team Leader
- Stacey Gulbreath - recert - Field Team Leader
- Daniel Murray - soon to be a member - Field Team Leader
- Rick Christ - soon to be a member - Management Team Member

A new venture for Grayson Highlands State Park

Black Diamond SAR is currently working on an agreement with GHSP to get a campsite dedicated to SAR Personnel through the busy season. BDSAR will advertise this to other groups within the Virginia SAR program. Essentially if you sign up you will be the first person the park contacts if there is a SAR Incident in the Park. That being said, we will have some mandatory training for those BDSAR members that wish to represent BDSAR in this important role. This training will include what to do in the first couple of hours til other BDSAR members can get on scene.

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When you need gear... don't forget A&L Outfitters! In addition to being a fully authorized dealer for Petzl, PMI, True North, and Eagles Nest Outfitters... they can also get many other name brand products for your outdoor adventure and as a **BDSAR member, you'll get a discount!!** So give Rob a call today... 276-706-1150 or e-mail him at aloutfitters@comcast.net.

Lessons Learned - Bill Keith

Can there be too much information?

I recently responded to a search that had been ongoing for several days. I arrived early and was the first task to launch that morning. The task for my 3 person team was to cut of sign at the PLS and surrounding area. These areas had been searched by SAR teams the evening before, so our task was to search these areas in daylight, cut for sign and to improve the POD for the area.

There was not a formal briefing that morning, so before leaving for the task there were many casual conversation and comments. The operations were being conducted in one room, so many of these conversations were related in investigations and information dealing with the background of the missing subject. As searchers, we are hungry for information so I paid close attention to all of those conversations and “off the cuff” comments. I also made a mental note of the conversations with a local law enforcement officer that he had seen a person who matched the general description of the subject walking along the highway near a community where the family owned some other land. As an experienced operations office, all of that information went into my mental files.

While on task we spoke with both neighbors and family members, who added some additional information to my mental files about his background, routines and habitats. We encountered fellow BDSAR member Rick Christ whose team had been sent to assist. Rick covered the drainage near the house that may not have been searched the night before. Upon completing our tasks, Rick and I spoke standing on a footbridge near the neighbor’s house. Rick went on to another area of interest to run a task while I returned to debrief and go to work. Although we had good conditions for searching, I reported a POD for unresponsive subject at 25%. I had planned to return after work to look at the area again due to unsettled thoughts but the search was suspended later that day.

Several days later I became aware that the body of the subject was found in a “ravinenear a footbridge” ! So evidently the reported pod was accurate considering there was a 75% probability that I missed it. The subject was reportedly barefoot when he left, which was supported by the fact that one shoe was still in the yard. I had found many tracks near the footbridge none of which were from a bare footed person.

Some of the lessons learned for me included the need to **always** separate operations from plans and investigations. Those sections have a job to do and considering theoretical and statistical data, alternative scenarios, bastard search and questionable background of the subject are all part of that job. However, I feel it can also negatively impact operations. I cannot speak for anyone else, but I know my mental state (and possibly my ability to interpret sign) was affected by excessive information and speculation. And having been in those other jobs before, part of my brain was running those other scenarios and not staying in the moment.

In the future, I hope to consider my PODfor unresponsive before I leave the task area. Although my 25% was adding to pod’s from the day before; it is not good enough for me. I have had to suspend searches in the past where the body was found in the search area at a later time. This is the first search in which the body was found in **my** task area, very near a feature where I stood. The moral of the story: get the information you need, search like you know the subject is there and if something is still bugging you...go back and look again.

A New Venture – Grayson Highlands State Park - Continued

Black Diamond will handle the calendar. When persons from other groups ask to participate, their group leaders will be approached and we will ascertain those person's readiness for this job. Please do not be upset if we ask that you take someone more able to do this job with you.

I can't stress how important this job is if there is an incident in the park. All it takes is the incident to be mishandled one time for us to never be called back to the Park. Ever.

Over the next couple of months, we will be working with the Rangers at GHSP to develop an Operating Guideline which everyone will follow. This guideline will state our actions while in the Park and how we will respond with local Fire and EMS agencies.

We are trying to schedule a SAR First Responder class in February at Mt. Rogers, and one of the Rangers is currently handling that. The Instructors for this class will be hand selected to help build the relationship between Virginia SAR and that area.

Also, please look for an early May date for all of us to meet over there and walk most of the trails that are not the Appalachian Trail. If we walk those trails with a GPS then those tracks can be downloaded into Terrain Navigator to give the Park a good map that we will use for all incidents.

Last but not least, we will try to work with the Park to get a couple of good portable radios over there for the summer with their repeater frequencies in them. When you arrive, you can retrieve the radios and use them to communicate with the Park.

What you need to know about the Lisa Hannon Award

It's time to submit nominations for the Lisa Hannon award.

This award is in memory of Lisa Hannon, a former Incident Commander who died while en-route home after a mission. See below for more information about Lisa.

The award is to recognize an outstanding SAR member who:

- 1) Actively participates in Search and Rescue, especially by responding to missions
- 2) Has built bridges among SAR teams
- 3) Displays the qualities of Lisa - optimistic, professional, always a kind word for everyone, serious, enthusiastic about SAR, significant life achievements

Any VASARCO affiliated person can submit a written nomination to the Awards Committee Chairperson. The nomination needs to describe how the nominee meets the criteria.

Nominations need to be received by Bryan Saunders (bsaunders@bdsarco.org) no later than February 1, 2012. The award will be presented at the SAR Conference in April, 2012.

Details about Lisa Hannon:

Lisa Hannon - an ASRC IC who died in the line of duty on May 3 1994.

Lisa attended the University of Virginia where she majored in international relations and English literature. While in college, she joined the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group, a member group of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC), where she served as the equipment officer, incident staff training officer, ASRC Board of Directors representative and preventative search officer, which included her active involvement in coordinating the Hug-A-Tree program that teaches children how to survive and be found if lost in the woods.

Operationally, Lisa rose through the field and management ranks to become an ASRC and VA state incident commander, the highest certification possible in the ASRC and VA state search and rescue program. She was one of two female ICs in the ASRC at the time.

She was a certified VA emergency medical technician and member of the Scottsville, Virginia, Rescue Squad, serving on a regular weekday night crew. Lisa graduated UVA in December 1993 and began working part-time while looking for a job in the area of international aid and development. During the Spring of 1994, she trained and was certified in April as an Outward Bound instructor in order to fine tune her group leadership and mentoring skills and help others through outdoor experiential education.

On Monday May 2, 1994, the West Virginia State Police called the Virginia Department of Emergency Services to request assistance with a 3-day old massive search for a five-year-old boy, Victor Shoemaker, lost in the mountains of Hampshire Country near the town of Kirby.

Lisa responded as the initial IC for Virginia and the state liaison for all VA SAR resources. She was to be the highest SAR trained and most experienced SAR person on-site. However, she would have to figure out the political and command structure of the mission and determine in what role she or others from VA could help.

That night, Lisa together with the other search managers successfully established an incident command system organization under a single IC, Lisa, for mission coordination. As someone later recalled, when she arrived on scene and began to organize the effort, a calm began to settle on the search base. When her relieving ICs arrived, John Panches-ASRC-SWVMRG, and Dave Carter ASRC-TSAR, they found a well-organized search operation.

Lisa left the mission base on a bright clear morning about 8am to make it back to the DC area in time for her afternoon job, since a fellow co-worker had taken her original morning shift. While driving along US Route 50 about 20 minutes after leaving base, she is believed to have fallen asleep, her truck striking a tree at full speed, killing her instantly. Lisa was 24 years old. She died in the line of duty, the first such death in the Virginia search and rescue program.

