



THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

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Defining And Developing Judgment

John Gookin, National Outdoor Leadership School

“This is the real core of everything I have to teach, be it in the wilderness or in a book. Judgment. I define judgment as the ability to relate a total experience to a specific activity. Learning judgment, assessing priorities, is as important as perfecting techniques; in fact the teaching of techniques (without commensurate judgment) can be dangerous.”

Paul Petzoldt, The Wilderness Handbook, (1974, p. 25)

How do we teach judgment? Experience alone doesn't develop judgment: careful reflection on experience does. One way to look at it is that when we reflect on experiences, we make generalizations that help us to

better predict what might happen in similar situations (Priest, 1997.)

Then

eventually we have a somewhat similar experience and fine tune our judgment again. Because each situation is unique it isn't enough to teach a system of rules. We need to teach students a thought process and the practice of consciously learning from their experiences.

Coaching Others and Teaching Others Coaching Skills

Competence at using judgment comes in different levels. A “competent” outdoorsperson shows wisdom regarding general outdoor skills and performs with more proficiency in their own specialized

skill areas. For a more specific breakdown of levels of competence, see the “five levels



| Novice | Advanced Beginner | Competent | Proficient to Expert |
|---|--|---|--|
| Unconsciously Incompetent at this Skill | Consciously Incompetent | Consciously Competent | Subconsciously Competent |
| Don't know what they don't know. Can't make judgement decisions | Aware of what they don't know. Ask for help in making decisions. | Competent, but correct actions are very deliberate. Need help with occasional decisions | Can perform well without much thought about it |
| Need basic instruction and directed experience | Need coached experience and instruction in integration | Need both coached experience and uncoached experience | Need to learn from and contribute to collective global wisdom. |

from novice to expert” from a previous article in *The Tracker*.

Note that in the above chart, people at different levels are learning vastly different things: but their ability to learn from experience is key to further development at any stage.

As instructors caring for the safety of our students, we need to assume that new students are novices in the world of outdoor judgment until they prove otherwise. Some students come to NOLS with more “common sense” than others. But it is really judgment we are trying to develop in our

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What's New in Volunteer Forces?

Cpl. Darren Goodman, Volunteer Forces Unit

By now most of you are aware that you are considered Disaster Service Worker Volunteers by the Office of Emergency Services and the State Compensation Insurance Fund (OES and SCIF). As such, you are eligible for Worker's Compensation Benefits in the event of your duty related injury or death. Your eligibility is based on your active membership with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, and a few other very important factors. It is those other "factors" I would like to share with you.

Let's start from the beginning. If you are injured during travel to and from an authorized search and rescue mission, you are eligible for compensation. If an injury is sustained while on an authorized mission or pre-approved, documented training, you are covered, and eligible for compensation. You are NOT, however, covered during travel to and from trainings. Like anything else, you have to do your part, to get what's coming to you!

File Required Documentation

- Be certain you have completed DSW Volunteer Registration, including the Loyalty Oath. (should have been in your original application)
- Notify your Deputy Coordinator or authorized Department representative of any and all trainings.
- This is extremely important! Even for the "Team hikes," which are very common, notification and documentation must be done.

Rule of thumb: IF WE DON'T KNOW; YOU DON'T GO!

Report Any Injury

Report any injury to your team commander or person in charge **immediately** or ASAP. Report it however slight, whether treatment is needed or not!

For example, A SAR volunteer was injured on a team hike. He did not report it to anyone, as he didn't feel it was serious. Months later, he experiences severe pain, which leads him to the doctor. After several doctor visits, he learns he has compressed vertebrae, and will need surgery. He subsequently reported the injury to his team commander, who sent it up the proper chain of command. However, due to the lack of documentation, or proof, there is no guarantee that this person's injury will be covered by OES, SCIF, or the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

Keep All Beneficiary Information Current

In the event of your death, the listed beneficiary will receive any compensation due on your behalf. If you have a change in marital status, or simply a change of mind, you must update your file.

Of course, it is my desire to never fill out another injury form, or attend another funeral. In the unfortunate event of either, it is important that you and your families receive all coverage that is available.

The Peculiarities of Judgement

Sonny Lawrence, Cave Rescue Team

I'll be real up front with you. This is not an article about the rescue of the two teenage boys in Devore this winter.

That story is worthy of a detailed discussion. But no, this is a discussion about a process that is occurring which impacts us all. The process flavors our performance as SAR members. I had hoped to put these ideas to print after the Rope Rescue Oversight Committee (RROC) had given me feedback about my performance on said Devore Rescue. But alas, RROC's plate is full with various tasks and my memory fades, so the writing begins. I look forward to RROC giving me feedback in such a manner that all of us can benefit from continuous quality improvement.

So there we were, the San Bernardino Central Mountain Search and Rescue team was looking for the last perished soul from

the Waterman Canyon mudslide. While knee deep in mud, the call came in that two teenagers were hung out to dry

on a steep cliff in Devore. My mind flashed on burned out dirt hills from last October's record breaking fires. I imaged none of our usual anchors being able to work. Despite no snow within miles, I called for everyone to grab their ice axes to use as anchors. Another member wisely added snow pickets to the list.. Off we went to Devore.

Thirty seconds into the debriefing, I asked that West Valley SAR and Wrightwood SAR be called. It was obvious that this was a technical mission. As always, especially in winter, daylight was at a premium. Unfortunately both teams were tied up in horrendous ice conditions on a search on Mt. Baldy. They could not come.

Right or wrong, like it or not, the Central team was present and ready to save those two lads.

Three teenagers had been "hiking" that day. Their route traversed through canyon bottoms and brush, leading them to a nearly vertical, rotten, crumbly face. With great horror and sadness, two of them watched the third grab for a bush, lose control and tumble hundreds of feet to his death. This left the two friends in a terrible predicament. One, about 5 feet higher the second, had a fairly good stance. He could not sit but he could shift his weight back and forth. The second, lower climber was attached to the mountain much like a cat on a chalkboard. He was at the exact location his friend had fallen to his death. That greatly added to the already unsettling psychology of the situation.

Thankfully the San Bernardino County Sheriff Aviation crew had a plan! They wanted to run it by us. So Jack Nelson, Central's most senior technical person and I flew up. Aviation wanted us to down climb to the two climbers, attach a special harness to each so that Aviation would send down a crew member on a steel cable and hoist each up individually. This seemed reasonable on the ground!

We did the fly by. What seemed like sufficient scouting time was in reality a few microseconds. I could clearly see a horizontal huge ramp way that traversed to the 2 kids with a big bush next to them. Great! Easy plan! I grew up climbing on cruddy rock glued to thin air. No problem there. Big bush to tie them off to, once again, no problem. It would have been homicidal to drop in from above. One small loose rock might have sent one or both to join their friend.

...the call came in that two teenagers were hung out to dry on a steep cliff...

See "Peculiar" on p. 6

Judgement

Continued from page 1

students. This judgment includes both specific technical skills areas, and people skills. **To learn this judgment students need to learn how to make decisions, and they need practice in the setting they are in.**

Students also need to **not learn dogma**. When we teach dogmatically, we are providing simple rules that only work in identical situations. This doesn't set students up to make wise decisions later. More importantly, it doesn't train students to think for themselves. The bottom line is that situational judgment is what teaches students to think for themselves. But to do this well, we need to get students to think through real problems, then reflect on their **thinking process** so they become cognizant of how they thought it through (or didn't). The long-term goal here is that students need to problem-solve with great foresight, not great hindsight.

Here's an example of the thought process for decision making for crossing an avalanche slope. These are questions the leader should be asking the entire group before finalizing a decision:

- Are we experienced enough to make this decision?
- Are we educated enough to know what it is we don't know about this?
- What can go wrong?
- Is it late in a long day? (= more tired and less alert)
- Are we rushing because of a time table?
- Are we all fresh and alert? (= coordinated and thinking clearly)
- How would we cross if we did?
- Should we go?

Teaching Risk Analysis

Students can learn how to use judgment sooner, and develop a set of language tools for discussing judgment, by learning about **possibility/risk analyses**.

Students need to learn that sometimes it is OK to take risks, but only if the likelihood of a serious accident is very low. Charles "Reb" Gregg LLB uses this model as a simple tool for keeping an eye on both probability and severity of consequences in risk management.

Managing Risks By Probability And Severity

| Possibility of Accident | Low Consequence of Risk | High Consequence of Risk |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Low | OKAY | STOP? |
| High | OKAY? | STOP! |

Knowing that things can and do go wrong is part of good judgment.

Learning From The Mistakes Of Others

We professionals connect to them by reading the accident column in "Sea Kayaker," by reading "Accidents In North American Mountaineering," by reading AWA's whitewater accident reports, by reading "American Caving Accidents," by working with more senior staff, by getting additional training through seminars, and by soliciting the advice of people who have deeper experience bases than we do.

Learning Judgment

"The best way to learn and to become truly skilled at something is through continuous practice and experience, good judgment is a byproduct of this. The student learns to live with the natural elements rather than against them. One must learn to master the things he is capable of controlling and to bend with the elements he cannot control. A rash decision or simple failure of equipment is capable of precipitating disaster if one does not have the ability and the judgment to accept his limitations." From instructor John Cooper, 1971 in the first edition of the *NOLS Alumnus*.

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What is the Rope Rescue Oversight Committee (RROC)?

Shirley Keebaugh, West Valley SAR

The Rope Rescue Oversight Committee (RROC) was formed under the direction of then Deputy Chief Mike Cardwell, to perform the following mission:

The Rope Rescue Oversight Committee shall biannually review each search and rescue unit affiliated with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department that engages in any level of rope rescue to ensure that the techniques and equipment used by each unit meets basic safety standards established in the search and rescue

industry. The committee shall not impose the doctrine of any specific search and rescue organization; rather, its mission is simply to inspect for fundamentally unsafe techniques and equipment.

At the time of RROC's formation, Deputy Chief Cardwell wrote, "Unfortunately, rescue professionals kill and cripple a few of their number every year in preventable accidents, and there is an emerging group of SAR "experts" who seek to make a living picking apart what you and I do. While the California Disaster Services Act protects volunteers from liability in all but the most outrageous situations, it does not protect your coordinators or the County, the Sheriff or any other non-volunteer in the chain of command. Our aim is to safeguard you from first, injury and the County, etc., from liability."

When rescue units are reviewed by RROC, there must be a minimum of three (if possible) RROC members, none of who may be members of the team being evaluated, present. The rescue units' evaluations will address both technique and safety

equipment, and the evaluations will be documented, to include any appropriate recommendations, by a memorandum that is forwarded by the RROC coordinator to the Specialized Services Bureau Deputy Chief via the Volunteer Forces Division Commander with copies of the memorandum directed to each evaluated unit's commander, coordinator, and the commander of the unit's parent station or division.

There is no limit to the number of members the RROC can have, but the committee currently accepts no more than two members from any single team. It is RROC policy that members of the RROC shall:

- Be volunteer members in good standing of a search and rescue unit affiliated with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
- Volunteer for a minimum two year commitment to RROC
- Be approved by his/her station or division commander
- Have a documented history of current rope rescue training by an approved organization
- Be highly regarded as competent and experienced in rope rescue
- Be appointed to the RROC by the Deputy Chief of the Specialized Services Bureau.

When RROC was formed, Deputy Chief Cardwell wrote, "The requirement that a prospective RROC member be "highly regarded as competent and experienced in rope rescue" is an attempt to guard against inexperienced folks who

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Peculiar

Continued from p. 3

So goes my ability to evaluate ramps and bushes in a microsecond from a few hundred feet away peering over shoulders in a helicopter. In a word, I was wrong. The peculiarities of judgment steadfastly grabbed my mind.

Aviation was cool. They flew four of us hundreds of feet above the subjects. We were totally lost. Aviation guided us to the cliff by radio and loudspeaker. Unfortunately Jack Nelson had a fractured rib and had to stay on the ground. I was team leader. We got within 40 feet of the cliff hangars, but due to the nature of the mountain, could not see or hear them. I roped up and crawled between scorched trees and large shrubs to the edge. Aviation continued directing me. I kept weaving my way through rocks and trees until I reached the ramp. It was sort of like caving, above ground style. Secondary belay points had to be crafted to address the friction from the main anchor as my course changed. With in a few minutes, I had voice contact. I climbed beside and below the youngsters. One fellow, the cat on the chalkboard, was giving out. He was fatigued. Lucky it was warm weather. On a cold day, it would have been difficult to hold on so long. His partner asked that I rescue him first. Due to the circumstances, that was my only choice.

Suddenly the bush shrank! Odd how that happens. It became $\frac{1}{4}$ the size it appeared from the helicopter. It looked bombproof in the microsecond fly by, but looked like a few twigs up close. My perceptions of the mountain from the air did not match my experience once I was hanging on the cliff. So I anchored him to my rope and the bush. Later Shirley Keebaugh suggested by radio adding a second rope. That went well.

Now, alter egos are curious things. Interesting how, when I am engaged in a rope-technically-oriented projects, the voices of Don Welch, Wrightwood SAR and

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RROC

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spend a week and a few hundred dollars and come back as an 'instant expert'. We're looking for well-trained *and experienced* individuals to serve on this committee. We struggled over which training organizations we would accept for current training to qualify a SAR volunteer for RROC membership. I realize that there is other high quality training out there. In fact, I'm sure the list of 'approved' schools will grow. If we end up in court defending ourselves, however, I want to be able to show that the training we require for our safety experts comes from organizations that are virtually undisputed as representing the industry standard." The currently approved organizations which provide rope rescue training are: CMC Rescue School, Rigging for Rescue, Ropes That Rescue, On Rope!, National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC), and Volunteer Forces which presents the Technical Rope Basics Course (TRBC) and Personal Vertical Skills (PVS).

The RROC sets the rope rescue standards by which rescue units in San Bernardino County will perform rope rescue. These Rope Rescue Standards and an explanation of the three levels of rope rescue certification can be found at the following web address:

<http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/sheriff/voluntrs/Documents/RopeStds.pdf>

The Equipment & Practices Standards established by RROC can be found at the following web address:

<http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/sheriff/voluntrs/Documents/EPStd.pdf>

Calendar

For information or to submit an event, contact the editor at editor@thetracker.info. Appearance of items in this section does not necessarily imply endorsement by the SAR Council or the County of San Bernardino. Call if you have any questions about a particular listing. To save space, persons to contact and numbers for multiple listings of *Department-approved training providers* are consolidated in one place at the bottom of this page.

August

Aug. 21—Rope Training

Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Aug. 25—Central SAR Fundraiser

An evening at the Improv. See www.thetracker.info/calendar for flyer.

September

Sep. 15—Inland Empire SAR Council

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

Sep. 18—West Valley SAR Search Scenario

Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Sep. 22-26—Direction and Control of the Search Function

Hosted in Yosemite. See www.thetracker.info/calendar for a flyer.

October

Oct. 1-3—Morongo Basin Search and Rescue Desert Run

For more information call 760-369-9999, or visit www.desertrun.org

Oct. 2-3 & 16-17—BSAR

Contact Darren Goodman in VFU (dgoodman@sbcscd.org) for more information.

Oct. 9-11—SAR City

For more information visit www.sarcity.org

Oct. 16-23—National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) Level I and Level II Cave Rescue Seminar

Week-long NCRC seminar at California Caverns, CA. Contact Mark Kinsey (mkinsey@caverescue.net) for more information.

Oct. 16-17—West Valley SAR Map & Compass Training

Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Oct. 30—Personal Vertical Skills Check-off

Rialto Airport. Contact Mark Kinsey (mkinsey@caverescue.net) for details.

November

Nov. 6—West Valley SAR Fall Classic Charity Softball Tournament.

Download the flyer at www.thetracker.info/calendar for more information.

Nov. 17—Inland Empire SAR Council

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

Nov. 20—West Valley SAR Night Scenario

Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

December

2005

January

Jan 19—IESARC Meeting

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

February

March

Mar 5-6 & 19-20—BSAR

Contact VFU for more information.

Mar 16—IESARC Meeting

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

April

May

May 18—IESARC Meeting

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

June

July

Jul 20—IESARC Meeting

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

August

September

Sep 21—IESARC Meeting

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

*Course / Provider

BSAR / Vol Forces
CMC Rescue School
On Rope I
Rigging For Rescue
Ropes That Rescue
TRBC, PVSC, NCRC / Vol Forces
Mountaineering / Vol Forces
West Valley SAR Training

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Peculiar

Continued from p. 6

Shirley Keebaugh, West Valley SAR, pop into my mind. I suppose those we respect have much more of an influence in our thinking than we believe. It a pleasure to have them inside my head. No dear readers, I don't need antipsychotic medication.

Out of the multitude of possible lessons this event has, there are two that strike me as the clearest. Yes, it is possible to drag a second rope through hook and crook down onto a face in order to increase the safety factor. That lesson is simple.

Here is the difficult one. It is the lesson we all struggle with in various aspects of our daily life. How can a person focus on crumbly rock, scared kids, a rocky ramp, steep angle, anchors; all in microseconds, meanwhile eliminating from his consciousness the sound of the helicopter, radio chatter and his own fears. In other words, how does a person engaged in say, golf or tennis or numerous other intense activities, eliminate the extraneous input such that only the critical information makes its way to consciousness; allowing only the pertinent detail needed to safely save those children come through?

Judgement

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The best way to learn judgment is the best way to learn anything. Just keep doing all of these things:

- 1) Seek knowledge via **formal education**, reading and networking with others.
- 2) Use **mentors** and coaches.
- 3) **Practice**, practice, & practice, learning from each experience by reflecting and predicting.
- 4) Maintain a personalized **self-development plan** based on feedback you get from nature and from others.

A goal for professional wilderness educators shouldn't be to just have judgment. It should be to have **good judgment**.

Good Judgment: the ability to arrange all available experiences, resources and information in a common sense way to get positive results.

References

- Petzoldt, P. (1974). *The Wilderness Handbook*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.
- Priest, S. (1997). *Effective Leadership In Adventure Programming*. Human Kinetics.

Classifieds

Contact the Editor to place or remove any item.

SBSD Commuter cups with star and motto. \$16. Features generous 16 oz. capacity, stainless steel construction, double-walled insulation and fits virtually all auto cup or mug holders.



SBSD Search and Rescue decals. \$5. The decals are 3.5" X 3.5" and can be stuck on the outside of just about anything or on the inside of a window. The price is \$5.00 each and can be purchased by contacting SarDesertRun@aol.com or calling 760-369-9999.

Earrings (1/2") \$10 and **Lapel Pin/Tie Tacks (5/8")** \$8. Fund-raiser for Morongo Mounted SAR Team. For ordering info contact Kim Miller at millerkm@29palms.usmc.mil or call Kim at (760) 367-1148 or (760) 367-1148 evenings.



SBSD Coffee cups \$5. High-gloss ivory coffee cups with gold-colored SBSD star on the side is microwavable. Available at Volunteer Forces.

SBSD SAR Pens \$10. High-quality, refillable ink pens with SBSD star and "Search & Rescue" on side. Great gift idea! Available at Volunteer Forces.



Custom SAR/Expedition Topo maps. \$14.95. See the web site for full details!

Garmin Offers NASAR Members Discounts. NASAR has an agreement with Garmin to distribute its entire line of consumer GPS products and a handful of its aviation products to the SAR community. Join NASAR at www.nasar.org, and shop the store at www.nasar.org/garmin/default.php.

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