



# THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

October 2005

Volume 14 Number 10

## Smoke in the Morongo Basin

Dave Nicolet, Commander, Morongo Basin Mounted SAR

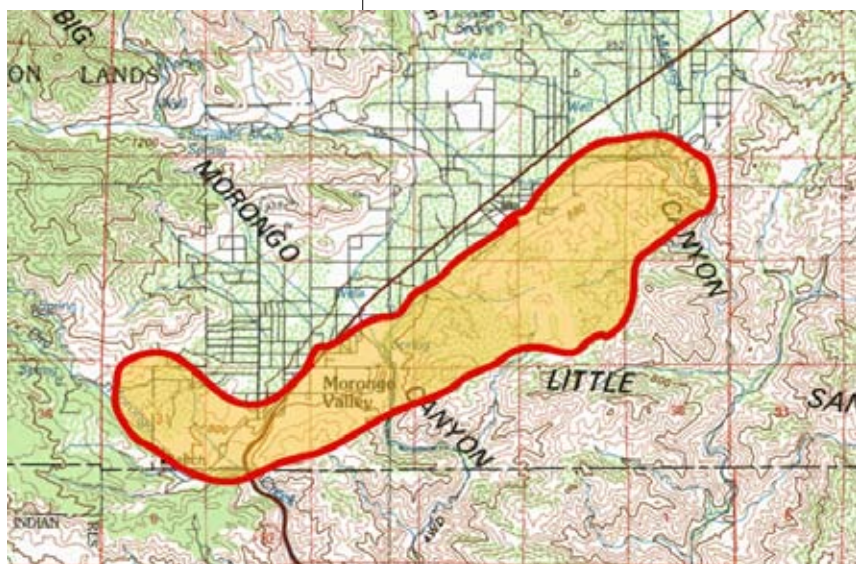
In the past year, we all have been astonished by the support displayed by the Sheriff Department when our volunteers are in need. The San Geronio tragedy and the accident involving the

canyon and the fire started about a half mile northwest of us up on the ridge. I heard the fire engine come around and watched as the flames got away from them on this very windy day. At first it was blowing away from our location, but after 10 minutes or so the wind picked up and shifted east. I advised Georgia, my wife, to get our bird and 5 dogs ready to go. I no more than said this when the wind gathered more strength and shifted to the southeast. The fire was now burning down the canyons toward my ranch.

As I ran into my house the phone was ringing. It was our team coordinator Dep. Jim Thornburg. He called to inform me that we had a call-out. I agreed and told him that the call-out had to be to my ranch. I explained that I needed horse trailers NOW. Jim assured me that we would round up as many as possible.

For a frantic 20 minutes I moved vehicles from around my house to a large clearing. I also managed to get my horse trailer hooked-up and my horse loaded. At this time, Georgia had returned from moving the dogs and we loaded her horse. She asked what we were going to do with our other 8 horses. Before I could answer I looked down my drive and out of the flames and smoke came the cavalry.

Our team's assistant coordinator, Dep. Tom Boyles, in his pick-up and horse trailer, was leading a convoy up to my house. Our Vice Commander, Gavin Jordan and his wife Kathy, and Mark Scragg, the son of our former Vice Commander



members of the Apple Valley Posse are examples of how much the Department is willing to pitch-in when things do not go well for its volunteers.

Never in my wildest dreams could I have anticipated that support would be displayed to my wife and me. Considering that our experience wasn't even close to those of San Geronio and Apple Valley, I really didn't think or expect that any show of support was needed or would come our way. How wrong I was. The Department, our team members and members of other teams proved us wrong. Let me share my story with you.

On June 22nd we had a huge wild-fire here in Morongo Valley. We live in a

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# What's New in Volunteer Forces?

Lt. Glenn Grabiec, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

As you can imagine, Hurricane Katrina has ended up impacting our office from the disaster preparedness perspective. Many citizen groups and public entities are requesting speaking engagements; political entities are holding disaster preparedness forums; and we are reviewing and updating all of our plans on the department and county level. Rest assured that even though we are knee-deep in this endeavor, we have not forgotten about the SAR-side of things and are continuing with plans I have mentioned in my previous articles.

If you recall, one of the items I mentioned was the potential formation of a team to monitor standards in mountaineering skills. Recently, I have obtained approval from our new Deputy Chief, Bill Cates, to go forward with this project. He has also very supportive of the plan to seek out snow and ice travel training for our team members. Frank Hester from the Wrightwood team has been a driving force on this project, and it looks like it may come to fruition soon.

Another area I have mentioned

Continued from next page

## Thurman

Teams with these checkpoints, checking the resident ID's for reentry into the area.

On October 3rd, when all of the communities had been reopened to residents, the San G and Valley of the Falls SAR teams continued to patrol the highway and fire area to eliminate any possible copycat fire starts. This was done to deter any other fires in the area, which proved to be success-

in a previous article was the desire to provide ICS training to SAR members. Shirley Keebaugh is spearheading this effort and you may see the training come available soon. Shirley has made some great contacts in the fire department and it appears they may provide the training for us.

As a reminder, wish list time is almost upon us, so remind your team commanders that they need to bring up the subject at your next meeting. I am not sure how flexible the equipment budget will be this year, but we still need to have those wish lists in place.

Finally, I have just finished reading the instructor evaluations from the latest BSAR course. The student reviews were outstanding! Thanks again to those that instructed in this course. It was apparent that it was well-received and much appreciated by the students. If you are interested in seeing those evaluations, Dave Pichotta has them in his possession.

*Glenn*

ful, and no other fires were reported.

The multi command system allowed top personnel from each agency to communicate face to face on all decisions to avoid mis-communications. In turn, causing a smooth process in carrying out tasks.

I would like to thank those employee's who responded to help, for a job well done.

# A Bit Too Hot in Thurman Flats

Shannon Kovich, Deputy San G/Valley of the Falls SAR SarTech II

*The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say "I." And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say "I." They don't think "I." They think "we"; they think "team." They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but "we" gets the credit. . . . This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.*

*Peter Drucker*

The above quote speaks tons about the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Employee's, and when I say employee's I mean both paid and unpaid



staff. The "Thurman" Fire is a perfect example of the dedication that these employees put into their work.

The fire started on the northside of Hwy 38 near Mountain Home Village, it was in steep terrain and moved very quickly up Green Canyon heading for the Mountain Home Creek Peak. The community of Angelus Oaks was in the direct path of the raging fire. All of the local emergency agencies responded quickly, closing down the highway and coordinating arriving aircraft for water drops. It was quite the sight, emergency equipment all over the road, aircraft inbound, and personnel running around pulling hoses and talking on their radios.

Last year the United States Forest Service and AmeriCorp staff worked very hard on establishing a three hundred foot wide firebreak around the community of Angelus Oaks, hoping to stop any fire threatening the area. This firebreak only slowed the Thurman fire for a moment, before it jumped the break and continued on. If it was not for the heavy response from the USFS, CDF, and County Fire, the fire would have really gotten way out of hand. On the other hand, Law Enforcement had their hands full when fire gave us the order to evacuate the local communities.

The preplan established by the Yucaipa Sheriff's Station worked out great, speeding the process of evacuation, and also increasing the important documentation needed to record those citizens who decide to stay at their residences. Sheriff personnel responded with lights and sirens to the Angelus Oaks area from stations such as Central, Big Bear, Highland, Victorville, and others. Residents were advised of the latest fire conditions, open roadways and locations of evacuation centers established in Big Bear and the City of Highland. Those residents, who decided to stay, were advised to stay in their homes.

Once the fire agencies started to gain control over the fire in the proceeding two days, we started to reopen many of the communities in the area. This process involved manning checkpoints at key intersections to allow residents only into those areas. The San Bernardino Mountain Search and Rescue Team assisted the San Gorgonio and Valley of the Falls SAR

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# SAR “Finds”

John Amrhein, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

This issue is for those of you who want to learn a little bit more of what goes on behind the closed doors of the Command Post motor home during a SAR event. If your interested in what kind of voodoo these search managers use to manage a large SAR event read on.

The voodoo used in the state of California and many other states to manage a SAR incident is called ICS, the Incident Command System.

The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) has made it quite simple to learn the basics of ICS, and it's free. You get a certificate and you don't even have to leave home. Visit the following website for EMI's brochure and all the directions to get started:

[training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/ISBrochure%20011805.doc](http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/ISBrochure%20011805.doc)

I recommend the following courses for a good overview:

ICS-100 (Course # IS-100)

ICS-200 (Course # IS-200)

NIMS-700 (Course # IS-700)

They also offer a lot of other good courses if you're really interested in emer-

gency management.

## Blood-sucking arthropods

What's the best way to rid yourself or your dog of a tick?

- a. Hold a burning cigarette close to it?
- b. Cover it with Vaseline?
- c. Put some gasoline on it?
- d. Put some gasoline on it then hold the lit cigarette close to it? Important Note:

Have a fire extinguisher handy if you use this method.

Well if none of those sounds right to you (good but if you picked D “Here's your sign”) a company called RFG has come up with an alternate method called Rid-A-Tick. They sell the first and only medical patch to use FDA-approved 3M medical tape to remove embedded wood and deer ticks from humans and pets. They claim a harmless odor stimulates the tick to withdraw from the host body and then encapsulates the insect for easy removal. So don't get ticked off get Rid-A-Tick...Hey, maybe I can sell them that slogan. Check it out at [www.rid-a-tick.com](http://www.rid-a-tick.com)

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## Morongo

Continued from p. 1

Ron Scragg, where bringing the elements to lend a hand.

Very quickly, with fire now on three sides of us, we loaded my horses. Shouting at the top of my lungs, “GO GO GO” I watched Georgia take my truck and trailer, with the others following, disappear into the smoke and flames.

Jumping into my motorhome after a few minutes of trying to find it in the

smoke, I headed out. I knew that I would be living in this motorhome for sometime because my ranch would not be there when I returned. Heading up and out of my canyon, I found myself completely surrounded in flames. I made it out, but, was even more convinced that the ranch would not survive.

Reaching our evacuation point at fellow member Ron Scragg's ranch, we

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# Lost on San G...Again

Shannon Kovich, Deputy San G/Valley of the Falls SAR SarTech II

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*Compassion is the basis of morality*

*Arnold Schopenhauer*

**A**s a member of our search and rescue community, we all have a certain level of compassion for those persons who become lost in our many mountainous areas of the county. Sometimes some of these lost souls push our patience, especially when they have been rescued in the past under the same circumstances.

Eitan Bino is a member of a Jewish hiking club from the Los Angeles area. If you remember about a year ago, the San Gorgonio and Valley of the Falls SAR Teams carried out a female who had fallen

and broken her ankle from the High Creek Camp area of the San Gorgonio Wilderness.

Well, we were called out again the night of 100905 at about 1800 hrs for 4 members of a hiking club who had become lost on the Vivian Creek Trail. When the Valley of the Falls SAR Team arrived on scene, and got the whole story, we found out that we were dealing with the same group as before.

The other eight members of the group had exited from the wilderness area from three different trailheads. One hiked out through the Poop Out Hill Trailhead, several from the Vivian Creek Trailhead and the others from the old Falls Creek trail. They all regrouped at the vehicles, which were parked at the Vivian Creek Trailhead and

reported the last 4 hikers as overdue.

As the team was starting to group and arrive, two of the four overdue hikers walked out. The Reporting Party advised that one of the overdue hikers was well prepared and knew the area. This is why the decision was made to not send any team members into the field that night. Trail blockers were used to confine the hikers to the wilderness area until the next morning when the aircraft arrived. We coordinated the arrival of the rescue helicopter and other team members for first light. Around 0100 hrs on 101005, the last two hikers walked out through the Vivian Creek Trail. All of the group had started up the trail to the summit together, but became separated due to the different hiking speeds of each member. Not knowing the area, and not being prepared for the weather and navigational needs, they soon became separated, and each group found their own way off the mountain.

As members of the SAR Community, we try to prevent incidents like this through preventative SAR displays and training the public on the minimum required equipment for such hikes. As we can see in this SAR incident, we will always have folks who take these dangerous mountains for granted and not prepare themselves in the case of emergencies. D

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*“...we will always have folks who take these dangerous mountains for granted...”*

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## Morongo

decided that we needed to get into town to set up a command post. When we arrived in town we found Deputies Boyles and Thornburg, set up the command post, and started with evacuations. Within 15 minutes and without phone calls, we had 15 of our team members in the CP ready to go to work.

We had worked for about 4 hours when I saw station Lt. Don Miller pull up in his unit. He walked over to me and asked if I wanted the bad or good news. I nodded yes and he said, "The bad news is that your new white vinyl fence does not do

dogs and brought our horses home. As we were unloading, Gordon Fristad, one of our fellow members, came pulling our team's water buffalo; he had made the drive to the Sheriff's Office in Joshua Tree to pick up the tank and fill it with water. He explained that since we had no electricity that our well won't work, and he knew we would need water for our stock. We thanked him for his thoughtfulness as he left.

Shortly after Gordon had left I looked down my drive and I saw a SAR vehicle approaching. Out stepped Mike Ward, the director of our SAR Council, and other members of the Central SAR Team. They had taken time to get the directions to my place from the CP and came by to see what they could do for us. Georgia and I deeply appreciate that they all asked if we were O.K. and that they would lend any support that we needed.

As we look back we are amazed with the help and offers of help that we received, without it we don't know what may have happened. Deputy Thornburg with his phone calls. Deputy Tom Boyles with the trucks and trailers and Lt. Don Miller with the information about our ranch. Fellow members Gavin and Kathy Jordan and Mark Scragg hauling our horses. Ron Scragg for letting us bring our animals to his ranch and Gordon Fristad for getting us water. Mike Ward and his fellow Central SAR team members offering their support.

Also, hats of to all of our unit members. Their experience and knowledge really paid off when they all rallied to get to the CP, fully equipped, in uniform and ready to perform their duties. And perform they did. During the night they moved over 65 horses and provided a lot of moral support to other horse owners who thought that they might need our services. They all did one heck of a job.

With all of this, there is one image



Surveying the damage. Notice the melted white, vinyl fence.

well in the heat. The good news is that your house, barns and tackroom are still standing". I was totally surprised at this news. I thanked him for finding the time to check on my place. His information made it a lot easier for the rest of the night as Georgia and I performed our SAR duties.

After a long night we were able to return home, where we found everything standing but a bit scorched and charred. We had fencing melted into strange shapes, a burned down gazebo, power poles with transformers down and 40 of our 75 trees damaged. We thanked our lucky stars.

Later that morning we retrieved our

# Calendar

For information or to submit an event, contact the editor at [editor@thetracker.info](mailto: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.

## 2005

### May

May 14-15—West Valley SAR Training  
Rope Training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for information.

May 18—IESARC Meeting  
19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

### June

Jun 4—West Valley SAR Training  
Night ELT exercise. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

### July

Jul 2—Valley of the Falls SAR Pancake Breakfast and Raffle  
Visit [thetracker.info](http://thetracker.info) for more information.

Jul 16—West Valley SAR Training  
Rope rescue training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

Jul 16-17 & 23-24—Technical Rescue Basics Course  
Contact Mike Schlaw at VFU ([msclax@sbscd.org](mailto:msclax@sbscd.org)) to sign up. A \$50 deposit is required.

Jul 20—IESARC Meeting  
19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

### August

Aug 12 & 13—Air Rescue Team Fundraiser  
“Hollywood Bowl Style” concert in La Verne. Tickets are \$55.00, which includes food. Contact [stephen.miller39@verizon.net](mailto:stephen.miller39@verizon.net) for more information.

Aug 20—West Valley SAR Training  
Rope rescue training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

Aug 24—Central Mountain Rescue Annual Fundraiser, “An Evening at the Improv”.  
Visit [thetracker.info](http://thetracker.info) for more information.

### September

Sep 17—West Valley SAR Training  
Search exercise. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

Sep 21—IESARC Meeting  
19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

### October

Oct 1-2—Morongo Basin SAR 26th Annual Desert Run Fundraiser.  
This exciting event is held on Soggy Dry Lake in the Johnson Valley OHV. This is a fun family event, not a race. There will be food, music and prizes. So bring your motorcycle, quad, buggy or 4x4 and have enjoyable weekend. For more information call (760) 369-9999.

Oct 3—San Geronio Search and Rescue Team Calvert & Johnston Memorial Golf Tournament  
Golf Tournament and fundraiser 12:00pm-7:00pm Shandin Hills Golf Club. See registration flier and sponsor information at [www.thetracker.info](http://www.thetracker.info).

Oct 7-9—SAR City  
Hosted by Barstow Desert Rescue Squad. Visit [www.sarcity.org](http://www.sarcity.org) for more information.

Oct 14-16—West Valley SAR Training  
Map & Compass training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

Oct 15—Personal Vertical Skills Check-off  
Hosted by the Cave Rescue Team. Sheriff's Aviation in Rialto. Contact Mark Kinsey ([mkinsey@caverescue.net](mailto:mkinsey@caverescue.net)) for more information.

Oct 22—West Valley Softball Tournament  
At The Epicenter in Rancho Cucamonga. For information call 909-207-2444 or 909-605-1341. Download the flyer at [www.thetracker.info](http://www.thetracker.info)

### November

Nov 19—West Valley SAR Training  
Night scenario. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

Nov 19 & 20—Winter Alpine Basic Mountaineering Course  
Sign up with Dave Pichotta in VFU ([dpichotta@sbscd.org](mailto:dpichotta@sbscd.org))

### December

*Course / Provider	Contact Name	Phone	email/URL
BSAR / Vol Forces	Dave Pichotta	(909) 387-0678	<a href="mailto:dpichotta@sbscd.org">dpichotta@sbscd.org</a>
CMC Rescue School	John McKentley	(800) 235-5741	<a href="http://www.cmcrescue.com">www.cmcrescue.com</a>
On Rope1	Bruce Smith	(423) 344-4716	<a href="http://www.onrope1.com">www.onrope1.com</a>
Rigging For Rescue	Mike & Joanie Gibbs	(970) 325-4474	<a href="http://www.riggingforrescue.com">www.riggingforrescue.com</a>
Ropes That Rescue	Reed & Jayne Thorne	(520) 282-7299	<a href="http://www.ropesthatrescue.com/">www.ropesthatrescue.com/</a>
TRBC, PVSC, NCRC / Vol Forces	Don Welch	(760)244-7340	<a href="mailto:ww26sar5@aol.com">ww26sar5@aol.com</a>
Mountaineering / Vol Forces	Frank Hester	(760) 242-0855	<a href="mailto:flhester@aol.com">flhester@aol.com</a>
West Valley SAR Training	Bob Gattas	(909) 980-8820	<a href="mailto:boobali@gte.net">boobali@gte.net</a>

that will forever be etched into my mind. Later in the day when all had left we were standing in our barn, commenting about how lucky we had been. When out of nowhere, we looked up and there stood three people. From our S.O. stood Capt. Jim Williams, Lt. Don Miller and Sgt. Boswell. All three came forward, hugged Georgia and assured her that everything would be alright. They then came over, shook my hand and told me very sternly that if I needed anything that I was to get a hold of them. I assured them that I would.

I can honestly say that I was truly moved by this genuine show of support. I was amazed that despite losing a deputy the morning of the fire in a car crash, and the fire still burning, that they had taken the time to check on Georgia and me. I told them how very grateful we both were for their assistance. All three just smiled and nodded their heads when Lt. Miller said, "Just remember, WE ARE ALL FAMILY".

Georgia and I are now part of a group of folks that includes the San Geronio Team and the Apple Valley Posse who have received amazing support in a time of need. We know that all volunteers of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department are involved in, and are a part of, one big family.

## 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.

**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](http://www.nasar.org), and shop the store at [www.nasar.org/garmin/default.php](http://www.nasar.org/garmin/default.php).

**Air Rescue Team.** The Air Rescue Team is selling T-shirts and baseball caps. To purchase them contact Diana at VFU (909-387-0641) or Kathy at Aviation (909-356-3800). Go to [www.cafepress.com/helicopter2classifieds](http://www.cafepress.com/helicopter2classifieds) to purchase these items.

### Join the SAR Email List

To improve communication in the county, there is a new email list called SARInfo. This email list will facilitate county-wide discussions for those who subscribe. To subscribe, send an email to:

**SARInfo-subscribe@sbsar.org**

When you are ready to post to the list send email to SARInfo@sbsar.org.

### Subscribe to The Tracker

To get on the email distribution list send an email to:

**tracker-subscribers-subscribe@sbsar.org**  
**Current issues, back issues, supplementary materials, the calendar of events, and IESARC**

**minutes are available at:**

**[www.thetracker.info](http://www.thetracker.info)**

### Articles Wanted!

The Tracker needs you! Please send articles to share with your colleagues. Send in a mission report or a trip report. Write an article about a team training. The Tracker has a wide national audience. Anything related to search and rescue is worthy of publication.

Please send submissions to:

**[editor@thetracker.info](mailto:editor@thetracker.info)**

### Hug-A-Tree

NASAR has taken over the Hug-A-Tree program, and they are in the process of updating the program. They are interested in contacting any past presenters. If you are a past presenter, or are interested in becoming a presenter please contact NASAR at :

**[hugatree@nasar.org](mailto:hugatree@nasar.org)**