



THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

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NCRC 2004

David Bullock, Cave Rescue Team

The National Cave Rescue Commission was formed in 1979 to train rescuers and track rescues related to caves. It is a component of the National Speleological Society which is a non-profit group of over 50,000 cavers who are dedicated to preserving caves and cave environments. The NCRC *does not* do cave rescues, instead it trains rescuers in the latest cave rescue techniques. Every year the NCRC sponsors a national week long cave rescue seminar.



In 2004 there was also a regional week long (actually 10 day) seminar located at California Cavern in Cave City. Most of the SBCSD Cave Team members attended.

NCRC trains rescuers on 4 levels:

- Level I - Team Member
- Level II - Team Leader
- Level III - Incident Command / Rescue Management
- Level IV - Instructor

To qualify for the Level I training you must be able to ascend and descend a rope within a certain time limit. You must also be able to don your harness and tie a collection of knots. If you have passed the Intermediate PVS you will have no trouble with the Level I prerequi-

sites. To take the second level you must have completed the first level. Most of our group was taking the Level I course.

The training started with an introduction to climbing gear starting with outdated hardware and moving on to the modern equipment we use today. We then moved on to litter packaging and transport. The cave environment makes travel difficult and subterranean litter handling is quite a challenge in comparison to topside transport.

After the first day of training the sky opened up and a torrential downpour flooded our campsite and kept us wet for a week straight. We first practiced litter handling outside in a simulated cave



environment which consisted of a rough trail through the woods. Instead of sticking to the trail we took the litter through tree forks; under logs and slabs of concrete; and across a river.

When we were crossing the river which was more of a drainage ditch under a bridge, I decided to see how deep the water

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What's New in Volunteer Forces?

Cpl. Mike Schlax, Volunteer Forces Unit

Hello to everyone! I want to take a few minutes and make everyone aware of our recent staff changes here at Volunteer Forces. Congratulations to Lt. Virgil Merrett for a well deserved promotion to Captain. He is heading up the new transition team that will open the Adelanto Detention Center sometime in the fall. All of us at Volunteer Forces want to say thank you for all that you have done for our division, and you will truly be missed. We also want to say welcome to our new lieutenant, Glenn Grabiec. Lieutenant Grabiec was recently promoted and reassigned to the Volunteer Forces Unit. He is coming to us from the Barstow Station where he spent several years as both a Patrol Watch Commander and Administrative Sergeant.

BSAR is finishing up it's final weekend of testing on March 19th and 20th. We have a full class and expect great results from its graduates. On a

higher level we have 12 students from various teams in an intensive "Ropes That Rescue" workshop. This class will also conclude on March 19th and 20th with an extensive weekend of fieldwork. These students have a made a huge commitment to their teams and the SAR community by being involved in this workshop. I want to say thank you to all of those involved in making this workshop happen. All teams will see the results and benefits from this workshop as we prepare for the summer season of searches for those who get lost and go over the side. We anticipate hosting a second workshop in August. Take Care and Be Safe!

My First Winter Pack

Barbara Pitiak-Rolsten, Valley of the Falls SAR

This winter is my first season with the official “SAR Winter Pack.” My pack has never been as equipped for survival prior to the BMC. I had all of the items on the list required for the course, no more, no less. When we checked in Sonny Lawrence weighed our packs and mine topped out at 58 pounds. Not a big number until it calculates out to be sixty percent of my body weight. That is equivalent to an individual weighing 185 pounds carrying a 111-pound pack. It still perplexes me that some individuals claimed that their packs weighed in the forty-pound range including all of the BMC requirements. Were they joking? Every ounce really does count.

“...I was all suited up in my ‘alpine armor’...”

I’ve never been one to conscientiously weigh my pack, as many like to do. That has

now changed. I have always been ‘light and compact’ in body size and as I grew up it became second nature for me to have to carry the same weight or to wear the same “*One Size Fits All*” as others had to if I



wanted to participate in the kind of activities I gravitated towards. In the past I didn’t have a lot of choices so I learned to

make something work without worrying about its weight or size. I had no choice.

Fortunately in more recent years the sizing system for outdoor adventure gear has expanded. There has been a trend towards “light” and “lighter” gear that seems to have turned packing into an art for some. My pack has already lightened up as I switched to some of the lighter gear. I still carry a good amount of weight since many of these newer products are still a bit too costly for what they are worth. Maybe after a few more experiences carrying this pack perhaps this attitude might change.

My first real rescue operation with my winter SAR pack took place earlier this year when I was on a rescue for a woman who slipped down a chute off of the Vivian Creek trail near the Wilderness sign. *Team one* went up the Vivian Creek trailhead; *Team two* was the fire department, and Cliff Walter’s and myself was *Team three* going up Vivian Creek.

Entering the field our two radios worked. Once we were out in the field neither one of our radios would transmit or receive. We had no contact outside ourselves. I am usually pretty fast at climbing/scrambling up hillsides. This time would prove to be a little different. When the call came in I was doing winter training with my team members Jack Nelson and Barbara Dickinson (*Team one*) so I was all suited up in my full “alpine armor”—even worse, I still was wearing my 30 meter 9.7mm dynamic daisy chain (kiwi-coil) from training with my pack over it. Cliff had a mini daypack that undoubtedly carried the basics for this particular situation. It didn’t occur to me that he was not SAR until he asked me, “Why do you guys carry so much stuff when it isn’t necessary.” Later I learned that he is Rodney Walters brother (San Gorgonio SAR). This was my first winter callout, I was excited, and after having spent all of my money on the requirements for the winter pack I wanted the gratification of carrying it.

See “Pack” on p. 4

One Wrong Step

Shannon Kovich, San Gorgonio SAR & Valley of the Falls SAR

The San Gorgonio Wilderness can be a tough and dangerous place to hike in. There is plenty of snow and plenty of ice, and ice shoots. On January 15, 2005 around 1200 hrs, The Valley of the Falls, and San Gorgonio SAR Teams were called out to assist a hiker who fell off of the Vivian Creek Trail near Vivian Falls. The 19-year-old female hiker fell about 200-300 feet down an ice chute.

Just out of luck, several members of the San Diego Mountain Rescue Team were in the area and assisted in contacting the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office for assistance. The victim was well out of sight from the trail, the father of the fallen hiker some how made his way down to his daughter Alissa.

Sheriff's Aviation assisted once more in getting the victim out of this rough area. Would you believe we had three helicopters respond to the incident. The patrol ship

located the victim and gave the searchers a Lat/Long to speed their response. The first rescue ship was not able to get to the victim, the second finally was able to reach the victim just after our own Cliff Walters arrived on scene. Walters on foot, normally he can be seen behind the controls of the rescue ship. Well, Walters is now a volunteer with the San Bernardino County Fire Dept stationed in the Community of Forest Falls.

Well, the victim was hoisted out without incident and flown to the Loma Linda University Medical Center, where she was treated for her injuries. Alissa Sauter, 19 yrs, of Covina sustained a broken left leg, minor head trauma and many bruises and cuts on her legs and shoulders. Overall, she was very lucky for the distance she fell. D

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Pack

Cliff continued to charge up the steep creek while I was slowly lifting both my body and pack weight up and over wet boulders, regularly jumping across the rushing water with my full winter pack weight on my back all while taking care not to slip on the slimy and loose rocks. I was still in the process of getting used to the large protrusion that was anchored to my back. I felt like a turtle—I was slow and was carrying my house with me on my back. I learned a lot about my winter pack and its use that day.

I've learned that there will be some situations where I can dump some of the contents. In time, I will gain experience that will help me justify what to take and what not to take. In this case we had to leave immediately and facing the choice of having time to only drop my entire pack or bring the entire pack with me I chose to err on the side of caution. D

SAR "Finds"

John Amrhein, Volunteer Forces

This month I want to throw out a plug to a store that specializes in search and rescue related gear and strangely enough their web based store is called Search Gear. Those of you who have gone to SAR-X or SAR City are aware of them because they usually have a nice array of goodies available in the vendor areas. Pretty near anything related to SAR you can find in their catalog, like hard to find SAR rockers for your helmet. They even carry a complete line of equipment for search dogs. Their prices are competitive and they will gladly quote a large team order. Check them out at:
www.searchgear.com

Here's something for all you search managers out there. At this site you can download 30 integrated ICS forms which were specifically designed for SAR operations. The forms are designed to provide an overview of the ICS organizational structure, clear ICS section responsibility for

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each form, linking of information between forms and incorporation of the latest SAR mathematics into the development of an effective Operations Plan. The forms are in Microsoft Word and can be modified to fit your team's requirements. Basically what they've done is take the "smoke" (fire dept. influence) out of the ICS forms and made them extremely SAR friendly. You can find these forms at:

www.sarinfo.bc.ca/lcsforms.htm

Also check out their Home Page for more good SAR info:

www.sarinfo.bc.ca/sarinfo.htm

Lastly, here's a site everyone should check out especially all you mounted and posse people: www.airscentinghorse.com

Please keep sending **YOUR FINDS** to: jamrhein@sbcscd.org 

RROC Updates

Rope Rescue Oversight Committee

Personal Vertical Skills (PVS)

The Rope Rescue Oversight Committee is continuing to review the County rope rescue standards. We have currently revised the Personal Vertical Skills (PVS) requirements for county rope rescue technicians. Please visit rroc.sbsar.org for a link to the new requirements.

Technical Rescue Basics Course (TRBC)

The next TRBC is scheduled for the month of July. Please watch *The Tracker* for the exact date. There was a June date that was erroneously published in the previous *Tracker*. If you will attend this course to

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NCRC

was and promptly disappeared from sight. As it turns out the water was deeper than than my 6 foot stature. A moment later when another rescuer was attempting to



cross around the other side he also disappeared from sight and was promptly pulled out. This was the humor highlight of the

training and resulted in several minutes of boisterous laughter and countless retellings of the story.

In the following days we covered many topics ranging from medical considerations to cave environment to vertical

recertify, advanced notice is required. Please contact Don Welch (760-244-7340) to sign up. If you do not sign up ahead of time, you will not be permitted to recertify.

RROC Meetings

The RROC committee is made up of two representatives from each rope-rescue certified team. RROC would like to invite one representative from each SAR team in the county to attend meetings in a non-voting capacity. If your team is interested, please have your commander submit the name of your representative so that he/she can be contacted about upcoming RROC meetings.

rescue. We then practiced the vertical techniques inside and outside the cave. And finally we did a walkthrough where we were given several scenarios inside the cave and were then on our own to execute the rescue. The walkthroughs were not complete rescues, as once we packaged the patient the rescue ended and we were given a different scenario.

The training and walkthroughs all culminated in one final event known as "The Mock". We put our names in a hat and one by one we were called to the rescue. This was done to simulate a real rescue, as opposed to everyone arriving at once. The scenario involved half a dozen lost cavers and later a father of one of the lost subjects.

We started with a hasty search of the cave which didn't turn up any of the patients. The thorough search started turning up patients, several of whom had minor injuries which required rigging a haul system in a confined space. After the initial subjects had been extracted from the

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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.

2005

March

Mar 5-6 & 19-20—BSAR

Contact VFU for more information.

Mar 12-13—BMC Field Practical

Cancelled

Mar 16—IESARC Meeting

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

April

Apr 16—Personal Vertical Skills Check-off

Hosted by West Valley SAR. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for information.

Apr 30—West Valley SAR 9th Annual Run for Rescue & Safety Fair

Visit www.thetracker.info/calendar/FlyerRun&Fair05.pdf for more information.

May

May 14-15—West Valley SAR Training

Rope Training. Contact Bob Gattas (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) for more information.

Jun 11-12 & 25-26—Technical Rescue Basics Course

Contact Mike Schlax (mschlax@sbscd.org) at VFU for more information. *TRBC moved to July (TBD).*

July

Jul 16—West Valley SAR Training

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

Jul 20—IESARC Meeting

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

August

Aug 20—West Valley SAR Training

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

September

Sep 17—West Valley SAR Training

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

Sep 21—IESARC Meeting

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

October

Oct 14-16—West Valley SAR Training

Map & Compass training. Contact Bob Gattas (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) for more information.

November

Nov 19—West Valley SAR Training

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

December

*Course / Provider

BSAR / Vol Forces
CMC Rescue School
On Rope1
Rigging For Rescue
Ropes That Rescue
TRBC, PVSC, NCRC / Vol Forces
Mountaineering / Vol Forces
West Valley SAR Training

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NCRC

cave, we learned that there was another patient who had gone in through a vertical entrance a half mile from the main cave entrance.

This subject was down about 100 feet at the bottom of a vertical shaft. He had a broken ankle and was still in his climbing gear so we decided to raise him to the top with a counterbalance system. One end of a long rope was tied to his harness and the other was ran through a pulley. I then attached my ascending gear to the short end and began ascending, but as I was already at the top I didn't go anywhere and the patient moved up the shaft. Friction and



the fact that I was banging into the walls of the shaft and not hanging freely made this a strenuous ascent or lack thereof, but

eventually the patient passed me by and was out of the cave.

The mock was a great success and everyone involved had a great time and learned valuable skills. The entire training went very smoothly despite the rain. The instructors were knowledgeable and entertaining teachers. Another highlight of the Western Regional NCRC was the food, which was excellent and plentiful. I am looking forward to attending the next NCRC and taking the Level II course.

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.

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 Helen at Aviation (909-356-3800). Go to www.cafepress.com/helicopter2classifieds to purchase these items.

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www.thetracker.info