



# THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

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## Converting Cell Phone Coordinates

Michael Follett, Sergeant, Volunteer Forces/Emergency Operations Division

Last winter, as a patrol supervisor, I was faced with a unique problem. The Big Bear SAR team members and I had an evening search in progress. The victim had a cell phone. We had sporadic contact with the victim, and as in many cases, he could not articulate his location well enough for

the SAR team to pin point his location. We had his cell number and cell provider. I contacted the cell provider

and they gave me a coordinate system I did not recognize. Later I learned almost all cell providers utilize coordinates in Decimal Degrees. The coordinates looks like this 34.207541 latitude 116.8411 longitude. We gave this coordinate to 40 King and they

did not recognize it because they deal in latitude/longitude listed in degrees minutes seconds. We were rather frustrated because we had a known location for our victim but were unable to translate it into something tangible for our use. The out-of-bounds snow borders spent a very cold night on the mountain. They were certain they were on the North side of a ridge, which was searched, and of course, they were actually down the South side. Early the next morning 40 King located and transported them off of the mountain.

Later that week, my friend Scott Cordner of Big Bear SAR, researched decimal coordinates and found a mathematical formula for converting decimal coordinates into latitude/longitude. After making the conversion to UTM, the coordinates were

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*40 King needs the coordinates in latitude/longitude of degrees, minutes, seconds, but the ground teams need them in UTM format*

## A Volunteer's Take on the Golden Guardian Event

Jon Usle' Wrightwood/Phelan SAR

The memo from Volunteer Forces read: 300 volunteers need for the Golden Guardian exercise at Glen Helen Park on November 14, 2006. A disaster drill, it sounded interesting so I signed up. I was given a memo that thanked me for volunteering, gave a suggestion on clothing to wear and to bring a change of clothes for afterwards and a map of the parking lot and venue.

On Tuesday November 14, 2006 I waited in line for my 0500hrs check in. We were officially checked in and sent to breakfast. As usual, the Sheriff's Culinary Department did an outstanding feast for all in attendance.

After chow we waited for our 0800hrs briefing. They scheduled plenty of time for 300 volunteers to check in. To help pass time, we had a DVD player with movies in the main volunteer tent. Some of us watched the experts from the Fun Corner put moulage make-up on some of the day's victims.

The volunteers were asked to divide in to 2 separate groups: victims and non-victims. Victims were then lead in groups to the make-up/moulage areas. Victims would be made up for their injury of the day and assigned to a specific location. 14 of the victims even cleared to be eligible for a helicopter ride if needed. Non-victims would be drunk and disorderly, panicky,

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# **What's New in Volunteer Forces?**

Deputy Dave Pichotta, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

**G**reetings! I can't believe December is almost here. As I sit here writing this, I'm wondering what has happened to the past year. There is still so much going on around here we don't have much time to stop and wonder anyway.

We are in the process of bringing our newest unit on line, the Medical Reserve Corps. This unit is designed to supplement existing community emergency response to natural disasters such as fire, flood, earthquakes and epidemics, as well as acts of bioterrorism. The MRC will be established as a local and regional resource providing care to disaster victims.

The addition of this unit to our department pushes the total number of Volunteers to over 2000; this is an amazing number of

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## **Golden Guardian**

stamped and a pain in the butt for all professionals responding to the scene.

I chose to be a non-victim, I figured I would be more mobile and able to see more of what was going to be happening in this exercise and it paid off too. Where else in life can you go toe to toe with a law enforcement officer or EMS personal, get in their way or interrupt them from completing their task without the immediate fear of going to jail.

At our briefing they introduced us to the people in charge of the volunteers, they would all be wearing a dark blue vest with the word "controller" on them. Then they gave us our portion of the day's scenario: we are at a 4-day country music festival when a terrorist or terrorist's ruins the festival with an explosion. We were told there would be a few large explosions up on the hill to our east and a flash-bang even closer. The initial explosions would be the signal for everyone to go into character. Each victim would be given a basic script along with a card giving an assessment of their injuries for EMS personnel.

people who volunteer their time to this Department and this County.

Here's some good news, the repeater is now up and operating on Onyx Peak. This is a very important piece of our SAR radio plan as this repeater covers a large portion of Big Bear, the Morongo area and down the front side into Angeles Oaks. This repeater can also be heard from Sheriff's Headquarters in San Bernardino.

Thank you for all you do!!

*Dave*

A safety briefing followed with who would be monitoring today's activities as well as keeping well hydrated. Red Cross Disaster Services teams would be on hand to provide everyone with plenty of water to stay hydrated.

When the briefing ended we went out to be divided into groups with the victims. My group went to the beer garden. Controllers placed us in starting positions and we waited for the boom.

Like on a movie set, when the boom went off, everyone was in character for their roles: victims were moaning, crying out for help or missing loved ones, some laid perfectly still with only their eyes opened in disbelief of what was happening. The non-victims were busy, looking for the next beer or getting in the way of law enforcement.

Initially we had 3 deputies in the beer garden, the "blast" injured one and that left 2 deputies dealing with a couple hundred actors. Putting them in a precarious situation.

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## Cell Phone

right where 40 King found them! While the formula looks daunting, give it a try and with a little practice, you can do it.

Converting decimal coordinates to latitude/longitude

Decimal degrees = Degrees + minutes/60 + seconds/3600

Example: convert 34.207541 decimal degrees latitude to degrees, minutes, seconds. Keep in mind that 34 will remain your degrees and the math conversion will determine the minutes and seconds.

1. Take the decimal digits and multiply by 60 (60 minutes to an hour) to calculate minutes:  $.207541 \times 60 = 12.45246$ . The number of minutes is the whole number 12
2. Next, divide the number of minutes (12) by 60:  $12 / 60 = 0.2$
3. Now find the difference between the minutes and the original decimal portion:  $.207541 - .02 = .007541$ . This number (.007541) is the decimal seconds.
4. Next, multiply the decimal seconds by 3600 (there are 3600 seconds in an hour)  $.007541 \times 3600 = 27.146$ . The whole number 27 is the seconds.

34.207541 Decimal degrees latitude = latitude 34 degrees 12 minutes 27 seconds.

Ok, so you think you got it? Now figure out the decimal longitude of 116.6411 using the above formula.

Now if you can access the internet while on a search, the easy way to do this conversion is to go to <http://www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/bickel/DDDMSS-decimal.html> and fill in the boxes.

40 King needs the coordinates in latitude/longitude of degrees, minutes, seconds, but the ground teams need them in UTM format. There are two easy ways to convert latitude/longitude into UTM coordinates. Enter the latitude/longitude on your GPS and then change the coordinates in the set up menu on your GPS to UTM. It will automatically make the conversion. From the internet go to [http://gis.wvdep.org/convert/llutm\\_conus.php](http://gis.wvdep.org/convert/llutm_conus.php) and fill in the blanks. The datum used is NAD27 and this particular location is in Zone 11. Remember to enter the degrees minutes seconds for the latitude and degrees minutes seconds for the longitude. Same goes for UTM coordinates, one set of digits for the Easting and one set of digits for the Northing.

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## Missing Hiker, San Jacinto

Christine Stuehrmann, SBSB Search Dog Team

A mutual aid request for wilderness search dogs and handlers came out from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department on 09-07-06. A hiker had become separated from his hiking buddy on their way down from the peak of Mt. San Jacinto (10,834-foot summit) on Monday, 09-04-06. His friend, after realizing they were no longer together on the trail, attempted to locate him, but was not successful. Riverside County proceeded with their team call-outs and later asked for mutual aid support from San Bernardino.

SBSB Search Dog Team's wilderness dog handlers, Dennis Bentson and his dog Kyla, and me with my dog Laddie, got ready to deploy. We were to meet at the station at 0400 on Friday to carpool out in the Team

vehicle to the command post at the parking lot of the Palm Springs Tram.

Our Team Commander had given us a head's up with the information that we were to be flown into the starting point of our search area. Dennis and Kyla have had quite a bit prior helicopter experience in his ten years with the Search Dog Team. But even though Laddie and I have gone through the Helitac Class twice, and have been hot-loaded, neither one of us has ever flown. I was graciously reminded by our Team Commander that I might have my hands full with my Big Golden Retriever! Those of you who have met Laddie on other deployments might remember how wonderfully gregarious he is, not to mention how big! I reviewed all that I would need to

See "Missing Hiker" on page 4

## Cell Phone

You can also use [http://www.cosports.com/tools/gps\\_coords.htm](http://www.cosports.com/tools/gps_coords.htm) to make all three conversions, but it is a bit confusing because it lists the UTM coordinates in degrees and minutes, not the same format we use in the field.

All three coordinates that share the same physical location:

Decimal degrees: latitude 34.207541 - longitude 116.6411

Latitude Longitude expressed in degrees, minutes, seconds: latitude 34 degrees 12 min. 27 sec. longitude 116 degrees 38 min. 27 sec.

UTM: 533166 Easting, 3785026 Northing.

The UTM coordinate system offers the following benefits:

A square grid. UTM Provides a constant distance relationship anywhere on the map. In angular coordinate systems like latitude and longitude, the distance covered by a degree of longitude differs as you move towards the poles and only equals the distance covered by a degree of latitude at the equator. Since land navigation is done in a very small part of the world at any one time using large scale maps. The UTM

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## Missing Hiker

remember regarding such activities: Have the harness on the dog and cinch it tight, keep him under TOTAL control, and keep a death grip on him until he is tied down to the chopper floor. Yeah, right! I slept better that night after trying to put my flying concerns into the back of my mind.

We arrived at the parking lot and signed in by 0530. Riverside had deployed a tracking dog and handler earlier in the week to the peak to determine the possible direction of travel of the missing person. They came to the conclusion that since the tracking dog gave indication that the person HAD BEEN AT the peak, and found no direction of travel AWAY from the peak, that the missing man was still somewhere AT the peak. So, the high probability area was considered to be the peak and the trail they took just below the summit. Dennis and I were being


system allows the coordinate numbering system to be tied directly to a distance measuring system.

No negative numbers or East-West designators. Grid values increase from left to right and bottom to top

Coordinates are decimal based. Ones, tens, hundreds and so on. No more minutes and seconds to convert.

Coordinates are measured in metric units. All UTM coordinates are measured in meters. Most of the world has already adopted the metric system. Now you won't need to remember how many feet are in a mile. And what's that in yards?

Now that you are armed with this information you might want to share it with the sergeant in charge of the next search you are on that involves cell phone coordinates.

I assure you; most of them will not know and will be grateful you located the missing victim right away by making this simple conversion. Of course you must be diplomatic in the way you deliver the information to the sergeant, they are a finicky bunch! 

deployed into the field as the first two teams on that Friday, and into what was being considered the highest probability area. Dennis and Kyla were deployed via helicopter first as Team 1, and Laddie and I were Team 2. Dog Ops advised us that they were hoping that we would deploy together in the same area and really saturate our search area. Dennis and I were glad they agreed with our hopes to be deployed in that manner. It is so nice when a plan really comes together! Saturating an area with two dogs works GREAT! Kyla and Laddie work totally independently of each other, and yet they both work very nicely with either one of the handlers.

Before boarding the airship, I spoke with Coby of Riverside who was acting as Dog Ops about my concern with having a heavily water-laden pack and a big dog

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## Golden Guardian

Help seemed very slow on coming. 40 King arrived in about 10 minutes, and told all deputies on the ground to go to a specific radio frequency. Then within 30 to 40 minutes outside assistance arrived in the form of ambulances, fire equipment, law enforcement and medical teams.

During that first 40 minutes, I was requested to change my role three times, from belligerent customer at the snack bar, to harassing the officers keeping us contained, to helpful bystander providing assistance and comfort to victims.

My final assignment was from responding fire personnel. I was assigned to assist a fireman in the triage area. This was a very educational part for me and I now have a better understanding of the intricate workings of triage.

As additional personnel arrived on scene, non-victims were ushered to a holding area near the exit gate and contained there, till we were searched, interviewed then escorted to the exit gate by law enforcement.

After passing through the exit gate the scenario ended for us. We were sent to

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## Missing Hiker

stayed there for two days. He said he had seen/heard the helicopters on Tuesday and Wednesday, but nothing on Thursday, thus becoming a bit concerned about his survival by Friday. We were told that when the crew got him up to the chopper, he literally "flew" into it. He is one lucky guy! He only has scratches and bruises from climbing, sliding, scooting along the rocky terrain to his last location. It appears he will be just fine!

Dennis and I continued along our downhill trek as the radio started calling teams out of the field. It was getting gusty, and some teams were in locations that the airships could not go into. We were all given our pick-up destinations. Dennis and I advised command post that we were proceeding to a lower elevation than our original drop-off point and onto Round Valley for our pick up. Once there, Dennis set out flagging tape for the helicopter's use in determining

lunch, asked to complete a critique and then attended a debriefing of the day's events.

This was a small part of the overall exercise. While our part was being played out, the detonation area was being tested, suspects were being interviewed, people in white suits were testing ground areas for contamination, victims were transported to decontamination tents and were "sprayed" with water and bleach, glad I was a non victim. Airships were landing and removing critical patients, ambulances were transporting other victims to nearby hospitals.

The disaster was fake, but the professionals involved in this process, were not. All participants treated this scenario with respect to what they could learn from it and made the day a success. This experience has brought some of my previous training into better focus. When we (Sheriff volunteers) respond to a scene we are busy preparing for our assignment. We are too busy to stop and watch everyone else doing their jobs. Today we were able to watch them in action, while portraying our roles. They did an exceptional job in my opinion. 

his landing strategy. We waited our turn in the pick up rotation, and Dennis "flagged down" the Black Hawk as we saw him approaching our meadow. Pretty impressive! We had to struggle through a mushy meadow with very tall grass to get to them. Dennis and Kyla loaded first, then me and Laddie. I am sure you can all picture this: Full Pack, Big Dog, Little Me, Tired Legs, Obnoxious Muddy Meadow! Well, I lost my footing twice, and by the second time I went down out of sight (hidden from view by the tall grass), the crewman was there at my side. It's amazing how much sign-language one can understand when the need arises. He motioned to take my pack, and I motioned "thank heavens!", and off we went. Laddie was a little bit hesitant with the bigger, louder Black Hawk, but he got in willingly anyway. We were belted in and off we went. Dennis pointed out that

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## Missing Hiker

who has never flown before. I just want to be able to get up and into the helicopter with me and my dog in one piece! She was very understanding and said they would take care of us. She carried my pack and handed it over to the flight crew (after stating something along the lines of “my God, girl, what do you have in here!”) and Laddie and I approached the airship after her. I am so very proud of Laddie! He walked right up to the chopper, and hopped right in (it sits lower than the ones I have trained on over at Aviation, and the skids are under, not sticking out from the sides of the airship - so I did not have to pick him up and place him in - thank heavens for that!).

The crewman hooked Laddie's leash to the floor, I climbed in and secured myself and my pack. It being my first flight, I knew it was going to be an experience no matter what, but add to this that we are in a small “patrol” chopper, and we flew with both doors open and the crewman sitting with his feet hanging out - Oh My! I was so in tune to making sure Laddie and I were settled properly and belted in, I was not aware of too much else - at first anyway.

Once I decided that Laddie was in heaven (big grin on his face, lots of pats from me, and then A LOT of pats from the crewman) I decided to take note of my surroundings. I was already very aware that the doors were open, and, yes I was being blasted by the rotor wash, BUT, looking out at such a high elevation to begin with, and now climbing even higher, and being blasted with the open doors, I decided to turn my attention back to Laddie. Yikes! Thank you, Big Dog, for the confidence written all over YOUR face!

We landed in a tiny meadow along Wellman Cienega near the trail we were to clear on our way up to the peak. The crewman dropped my pack for me, and steadied

Laddie and me as we exited onto the mushy meadow. I was directed to stay right there, but stay low as they took off. All went well, and I made my way over to Dennis and Kyla. We reviewed our map and came up with our game plan. Knowing Dennis can out-hike all his Search Dog Team team mates, I knew hard work was ahead of me. We started up the trail and worked the dogs at areas of interest, but stayed focused on our main search area - The Peak. At first we felt no breeze, but it was wonderfully cool! As we ascended, the day's breezes started up and we had great air movement in which to work the dogs - both when ascending and descending the mountain. We finally reached the peak, and of course, my legs were not holding up as



Laddie with GPS Unit

well as Dennis'. We dropped our packs and Dennis and Kyla finished the uppermost area of the peak, and I finished clearing my area - no boulders, and level - to save my legs for the miles of downhill hiking to come. We started back down and thankfully I was rested enough that I was able to make good time (slow but steady) and never got weak, “noodley” legs.

Not too long after we started our decent, we heard over the radio “Subject has been found” then “Can you repeat that traffic!?!?!?” then “Subject has been located and loaded”. It seems that one of the helicopters located the man as they were returning to the command post for another pick up. The man had been finding shelter under some rock outcroppings for the past two days. He had lost the trail right after leaving the peak on Monday. Once he figured he was lost, he followed a creek down the north side of the mountain. He had worked himself downhill for the first several days, then got trapped above a waterfall. He could not move back up the creek due to the steep terrain. He

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# 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.

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

## Missing Hiker

with Kyla's age at ten years, this might be her last helicopter deployment. At the same time it is Laddie's first! One (of the four) crewman took a picture of us with my camera. I thanked him and he replied with "too bad we can't offer on board movies"! My first deployment involving air insertion - and it winds up being TWO helicopter rides! The Black Hawk is much louder and shakier! It didn't bother Laddie at all, and of course, Kyla was doing just fine - teaching the younger dog everything she knows about flying!

We wound up hiking around seven miles and after reviewing my map, it looks like we may have had a total of 2,000 feet elevation gain. Laddie's GPS shows 9 miles, which makes total sense! It was one kick-a-- hike! I am ready to do it again, and soon! I am definitely going to start wearing my full pack while training my wilderness dogs to build my backpacking muscles back up again!

Laddie was a little tender-footed by the next morning. My guess is he has a few sore muscles too, as do I! ☺

### Rescue Net

If you are a HAM radio operator, IESARC has started a Rescue Net on Keller Peak every Tuesday at 2000 hrs. The frequency is 146.985 with standard offset and the PL Tone is 146.2. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Ward at:

**rockywinds@aol.com**

### 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**

### 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**

## 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")** \$15 and **Lapel Pin/Tie Tacks (5/8")** \$10. Fund-raiser for Morongo Mounted SAR Team. For ordering info contact Kim Miller at kim.m.miller@usmc.mil or call Kim at (760) 367-1148.

**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/helicopter2](http://www.cafepress.com/helicopter2) 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](mailto:SARInfo@sbsar.org).

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