



Saskatchewan Multi-Jurisdictional Search and Rescue (SAR) Exercise 2008

Final Report



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A JOINT SEARCH AND RESCUE EXERCISE WITH THE PARTICIPATION AND COOPERATION OF THE FOLLOWING PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES



Government
of Canada
National Search
and Rescue
Secretariat

Gouvernement
du Canada
Secrétariat national
Recherche et
sauvetage



SARSAV



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
Corrections, Public
Safety and Policing



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I. Background

SARSAV (Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers) is the Saskatchewan organization formed as an umbrella group for all civilian ground search and rescue teams in the province. SARSAV works in close cooperation with police and public safety agencies in providing SAR and other emergency services to the people of Saskatchewan.

SARSAV was the recipient of a federal NIF (New Initiatives Fund) grant from the National Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS), an independent federal government agency reporting to the Minister of National Defense. This funding is administered on SARSAV's behalf by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing (CPSP), specifically Public Safety and Sask911.

One of the conditions upon the disbursement of the grant was that SARSAV had to use a portion of the total monies for training of SAR volunteers in a multi-jurisdictional exercise. The multi-jurisdictional exercise's focal point will be a simulated search and rescue deployment within Saskatchewan, with SARSAV volunteers taking a lead role in the execution of the scenario.

The scenario development, location and date selection, and partner agency involvement were all developed with a focus on exercising a large variety of resources in a realistic ground search and rescue situation. It is in the spirit of the NIF grant that SARSAV volunteers were partnered with a multitude of responding agencies and groups.

Specific goals and objectives were developed by the Steering Committee for each of the major groups participating in the exercise. This assisted with keeping all participants gainfully occupied during the exercise, and leaving them with a rewarding and worthwhile training experience. Readers are invited to review the *Planning Guide* for more information.

Each agency or group was responsible for evaluating their own performance both during the exercise and at a post-exercise wrap up. These evaluations will be used to identify lessons-learned and assist to remedy any operational deficiencies that arise.

This final report on the multi-jurisdictional exercise was jointly prepared by SARSAV and Public Safety, and will be made available to all participants.

II. Participants

A number of agencies and organizations were invited to participate in the multi-jurisdictional exercise. They included:

- ***SARSAV***
SARSAV is the recipient of a federal NIF grant (New Initiatives Fund) from the National Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS) and is a primary stakeholder in holding this multi-jurisdictional search and rescue exercise.
- ***Public Safety and Sask911***
Public Safety and Sask911 is a division of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing (CPSP). CPSP is the primary government liaison for search and rescue in Saskatchewan. CPSP also has disbursement control over the federal NIF grant for SARSAV.
- ***CASARA***
CASARA (Civil Air Search and Rescue Association) is a Canada-wide volunteer aviation organization dedicated to the promotion of aviation safety, and to the provision of air search support services to the National Search and Rescue Program. CASARA volunteers piloted their own aircraft and provided aerial support to this ground and water based search and rescue mission.
- ***RCMP***
In Canada, outside of federally owned National Parks, the RCMP is the default police force of jurisdiction and has primary responsibility for land and inland-water search and rescue. In SAR deployments, an RCMP trained Incident Commander (also called a Search Commander) is appointed. The RCMP will also supply a Search Manager in concert with civilian Search Managers from groups such as SARSAV.
- ***SERM / Local Park Management***
Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management is the primary stakeholder in maintaining the operations of Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks. SERM personnel will typically have advanced knowledge of local features and topography and would be of great assistance in local logistical support within a Provincial Park. SERM provided water craft support for this exercise.

- ***Local EMO / RM Council***

Local representatives from the Rural Municipality of Wawken (#93) will have primary jurisdiction over local logistical and support issues. The multi-jurisdictional exercise will present the Local EMO coordinator with a unique opportunity to test operational readiness in the event of a large scale emergency deployment.

- ***Wawota EMS***

Local EMS from Wawota provided medical support for the exercise, both for the participants, as well as an active role in the simulation.

- ***ARES – Amateur Radio Emergency Service***

The ARES is composed of licensed radio amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service. Regina ARES is a core and founding component of SAR Regina, and assists with the provision of radio communications at a large number of SAR related events. The Regina ARES group has access to a mobile communications relay truck, which is frequently deployed to emergency scenes.

Participation Levels by Group

Agency/Organization/Group	Number of Personnel
SARSAV	22
Steering Committee	7
Public Safety and Sask911	3
ARES	3
CASARA	8
RCMP	8
Wawota EMS	3
SERM	1
Local EMO/RM/Village Council	1
Estimated Total Number of Exercise Participants	56

III. Funding / Expenses

Food and mileage expenses for volunteers attending the multi-jurisdictional exercise were covered by the NIF grant. Mileage was paid on a per/km-travelled basis. The current SARSAV reimbursement rate is \$0.3906/km. A decision made late on the date of the exercise, due to the low SARSAV attendance, was to allow reimbursement of accommodations for SARSAV personnel also.

For SARSAV and ARES personnel, SARSAV served as the collection point for expenses and for reimbursement. The deadline for expense submission for reimbursement was September 30th. For other personnel, Public Safety and Sask911 assumed responsibility for expense collection and reimbursement.

Subject to Public Safety and Sask911 approval, other expenses related to the multi-jurisdictional exercise were potentially reimbursable. Participants and stakeholders were encouraged to get clarification from CPSP (Corrections, Public Safety and Policing) on the particulars of expense reimbursement prior to any expenditure being made.

Participating groups and agencies were also encouraged to utilize their own training budgets wherever possible to minimize the burden on the SARSAV NIF grant. In-kind contributions were to be recorded and sent to the Public Safety designated financial contact person.

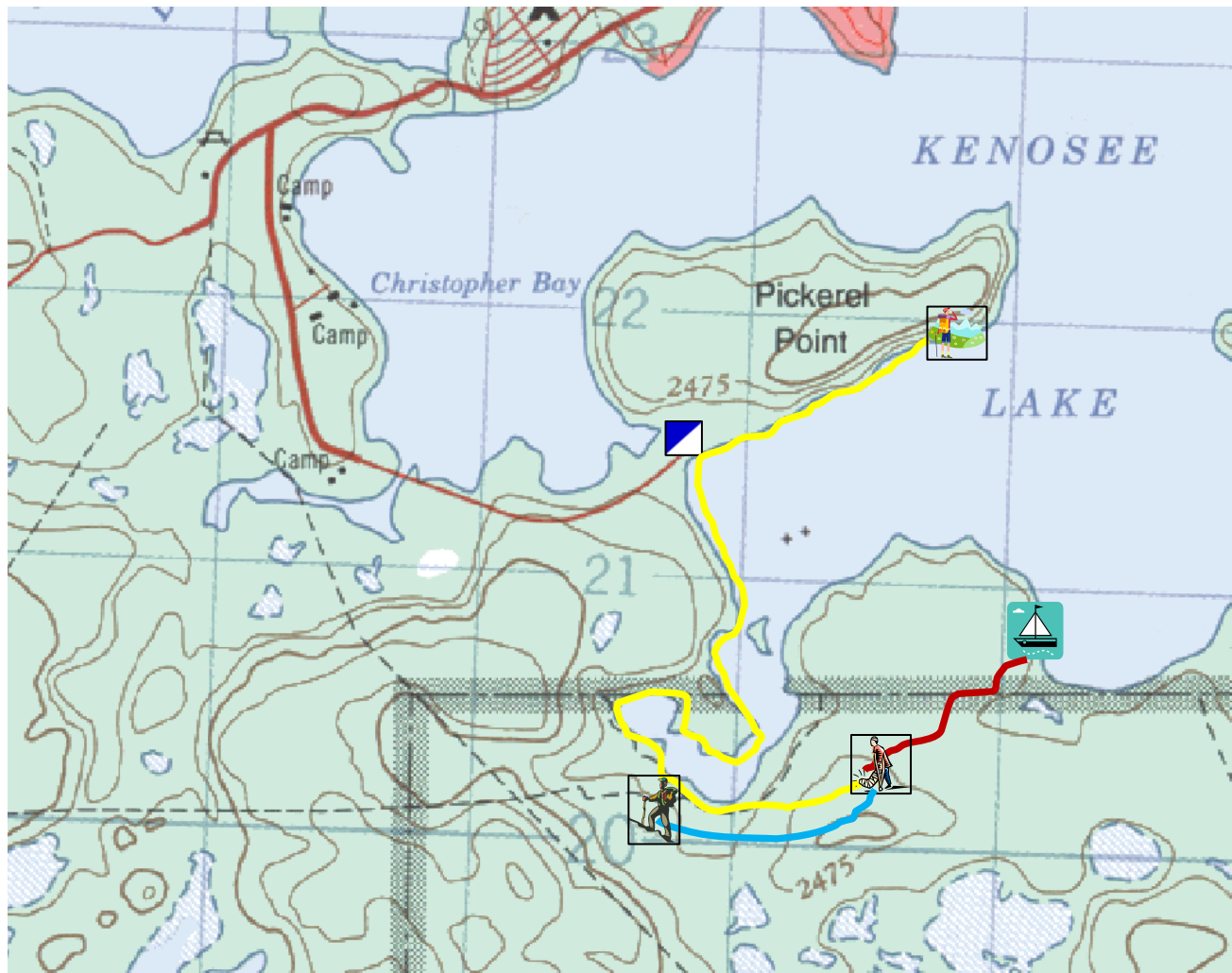
Financial Report:

Meals		
Kenosee Inn		\$2809.17
Mileage		
SARSAV Volunteers		\$ unavailable
ARES		\$ unavailable
Accommodation		
Steering Committee		\$ unavailable
SARSAV Volunteers		\$ unavailable
Miscellaneous		\$ unavailable
Total Expense		\$ unavailable









IV. Command Post and Staging Areas



V. Map Overview of Scenario

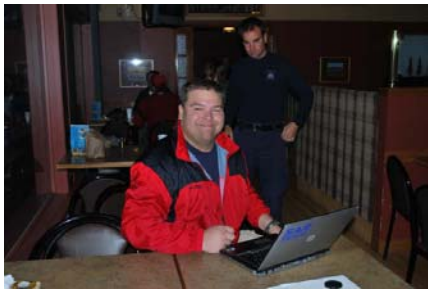


KEY

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  | - Incident Command Post (13U FR 92942 21524) |  | - Location of missing boat |
|  | - Son's path (left father first, follows shoreline) |  | - Common path (father, son, and friend) |
|  | - Friend's path (left later, trying to intersect a snowmobile path – does not quite reach it, but would be able to respond to nearby whistle calls/yelling) | | |
|  | - Father's location (injured leg – immobile) (MGRS 13U FR 93468 20320) | | |
|  | - Aunt (mobile, and walking around shorelines back to civilization) (MGRS 13U FR 93714 21904) | | |
|  | - Son (mobile, and heading west to intersect trails he knows in the area) (MGRS 13U FR 92614 20237) | | |

VI. Activity Overview on Day of Exercise

The work began pre-dawn with an early morning meeting of the Steering Committee members and the three “victim” volunteers. Emergency/contingency procedures were reviewed, cell phone contact information verified for all participants, and pre-exercise tasks were assigned. The meeting took approximately half an hour, and the subsequent tasks another hour – including delivering the victims to their field insertion points.



Road signage was placed at appropriate highway and park-internal intersections to guide participants to the command post, as well as notify the public as the exercise being held. The road sign contained a map to get to the Command Post – useful for the media, which had not been pre-notified of the exact location.



The ARES truck and various volunteer groups were the first units to arrive at the Command Post. Once the RCMP command truck and ATV's arrived, the exercise was officially kicked off. The Wawota ambulance service arrived shortly after 09:00hrs.

Jody Herperger from the Steering Committee gave the local RCMP officer an updated briefing on the missing persons, including detailed physical description information that was not available to the RCMP the previous night. Photos of the initial two missing persons (father and son) were provided at this time.





During this time, the volunteer teams began to assemble their gear and prepare for field deployment. The Command Post was working on forming the search strategy and prioritizing their search areas. Teams were formed by the Search Manager, and Team Leaders were briefed.

Team Leaders began their subsequent briefing of their teams. Communications and navigation (GPS) standards and special safety hazard information were communicated clearly.



Various Steering Committee members were tasked to observe individual components of the exercise. The RCMP's Alan Laughlin and Jocelyn Bishoff (shown to the right) primarily reviewed the RCMP component of the exercise. CPSP's Yvette Wright was tasked to observe the Command Post directly, with a focus on ICS functionality. ARES' Terry White was focused on communications, and SARSAV's Scott Wright and CPSP's Carl Friske focused on the volunteer components of the exercise. Clarence Demchuk recorded notes on CASARA performance.



Cpl. Greg Groff was tasked to coordinate media liaising during the exercise. Cpl. Groff, SARSAV's Scott Wright and Jody Herperger spoke with various media representatives throughout the day. Special attention was also given to invited guests and dignitaries who attended, included David

Schafer of the Manitoba Office of the Fire Commissioner (pictured on the right), the Honourable Darryl Hickie (Minister of Corrections, Public Safety, and Policing), and Duane McKay (Saskatchewan Fire Commissioner).



Local RCMP officially handed off Incident Command duties to the Hasty Team Incident Commander (Hugh McLaughlan of the RCMP) at approximately 09:30hrs.



Communications was established with the Carlyle airport CASARA Command Post, and CASARA announced their operational readiness around 10:00hrs. Ground teams entered the field from about 10:20hrs to 11:00hrs.

At 11:07hrs, the Steering Committee advised the Search Manager (John Bradley) that there was a third missing person. John assigned co-Search Manager George Cheney to perform the interview. Jody Herperger from the Steering Committee acted “in-sim” to supply the scenario information to George.



At about 11:35hrs, a “scenario modifier” envelope was issued to an RCMP ATV driver to deliver to a random volunteer. This envelope notified the volunteer of a serious family emergency that would require him to leave the exercise immediately. During this time period, a field lunch was made available at the Command Post, and set up on the ATV trailer. However, most volunteers did not get a chance to eat until after 14:00hrs.

The first missing person, “Aunt” Cathy, was found shortly before noon by a SERM boat carrying a SARSAV search team. EMS was dispatched to meet them at the boat launch. Cathy was in good medical condition, and returned to the Command Post at 12:15hrs. It is undocumented as to whether she was interviewed by the Search Manager or Incident Commander (or other designated individual).



Noah, the “son”, was found at about 12:45hrs, and at 13:26hrs, he was brought back to the command post via ATV. He was also in good medical condition. Noah had passed on key information to the field SAR team on the location of his father. However, similar to Cathy’s situation – it is unclear whether there was any further questioning done once Noah returned to the Command Post.

A mitigating factor in Noah’s follow-up questioning would be that Fabian (the “father”) was located during the period Noah was being transported (13:24hrs). The SAR team reported Fabian had an injury that prevented easy transport. During Fabian’s extrication, a second “scenario modifier” envelope was delivered to the SAR team involved in the evacuation. The recipient searcher received a simulated head wound that required field first aid treatment. EMS also “treated” Fabian and performed a simulated transport to a medical facility.



With all victims located and all teams returned-to-base, field personnel were demobilized at about 15:00hrs. There was confusion with the release of CASARA resources (initially thought to have happened earlier), and they were confirmed to be released at about 15:30hrs.

A short field debrief session was held, separately for both the participants and for the Steering Committee. There seemed to be a misunderstanding on the part of some of the volunteers that thought this was the sole debriefing session, and they departed home shortly thereafter – missing out on the formal debrief session.

For those that remained a meal and full debrief session was held at the Kenosee Inn.



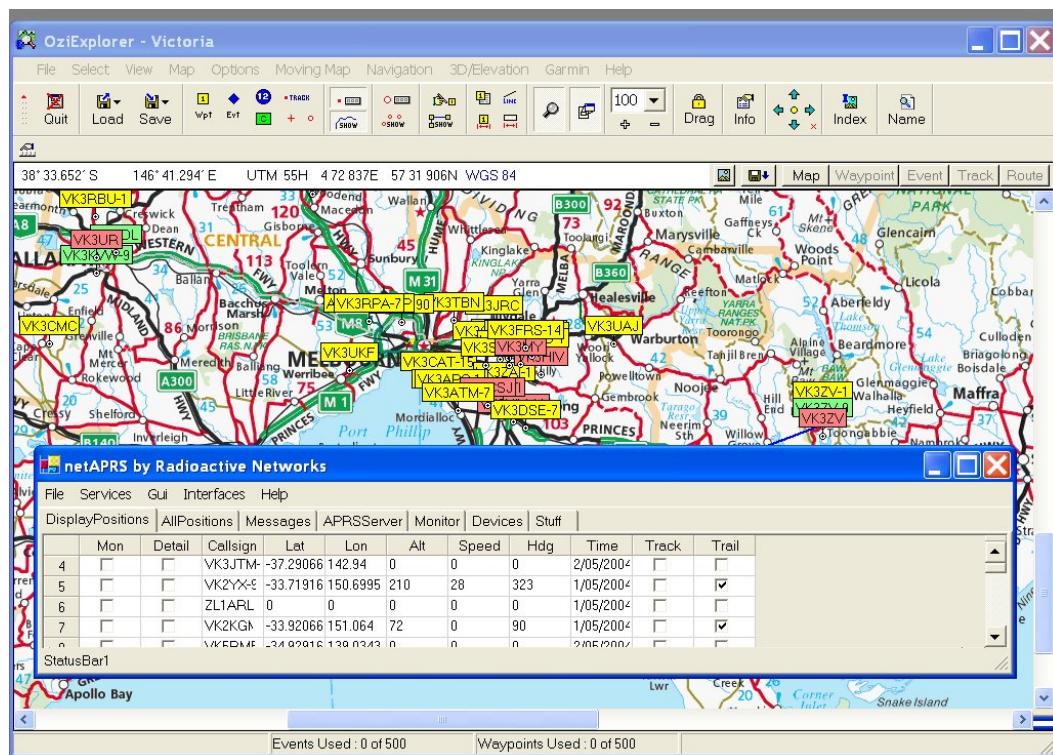
VII. APRS Experiment

A total of six transmitters were issued to SAR volunteers. Four Byonics and two BigRedBee units were used. Unique call-signs were assigned to all units (i.e. VE5SAR-1, VE5SAR-2, etc.). Standard ¼ wave antennas (approximately 19” long) were attached to all six transmitters (all shared a common reverse-SMA connector). One BigRedBee transmitter was assigned to a command post person, and the other to an ATV driver. The four Byonics units were assigned to SAR ground personnel.

The base station consisted of:

- modern laptop, running Windows XP
- Byonics PICPAC decoder connected to the laptop via a serial cable
- Radio Shack VHF scanner, tuned to 144.390MHz. The audio output (headphone jack) was connected to the PICPAC via a short cable.
- Magnetic mount omni-directional scanner antenna, mounted to the vehicle roof (at a peak height of about 3 m).

Due to time constraints, only one software configuration was extensively tested. This was a combination of OziExplorer with netAPRS software. A sample screenshot of this configuration is shown below.



The system performed well, especially given the limited height of the scanner antenna and the relatively wooded area that the exercise was held in. The radios were preconfigured to broadcast position updates at regular two minute intervals. The command post beacon was the most reliable – few, if any, position reports were missed during the four hours of the experiment. The OziExplorer map quickly showed updated location information for every team as the radio beacons were received.

For the remaining five units, various levels of reception were observed. The ATV driver's transmitter would work very well when within about 1 km of the command post, but would frequently drop out of range when outside of that distance. The furthest observed distance from the base station was just over 2 km, which was about all that was expected given the forest density and antenna heights. In any event, teams did not actually extend much past the 2 km perimeter.

The four field (SAR volunteer) transmitters would occasionally reach the base station – and the Byonics units fared better in that regard – typically checking in every 10-20 minutes. The lone field-placed BigRedBee unit was not heard from until the team approached the base station at the conclusion of the exercise. For the most part, the transmitters were being worn on the waist belt of the carriers, which would substantially block the majority of their antenna signal.

All of the observers who were shown the OziExplorer interface immediately recognized the benefit such a system could provide for the Incident Commander. Most commented that the system would have cleared up a few team location problems witnessed during the current day's exercise!

User comments on the wear-ability of the radios were generally positive. One of the six users felt the unit was overly bulky and did not integrate well into his pack management system. The remaining five carriers generally forgot they were wearing the devices until the end of the day.

Independent battery longevity tests by the manufacturers show that both units would last multiple days at the once-every-two-minutes transmit rate. The Byonics unit has the edge in this regard in that the GPS is shut down in between transmissions, leading to perhaps up to seven day operation in room temperature conditions. Battery life does not seem to be a prime consideration in deployment of these devices.

APRS Recommendations

The testing indicated great potential for these portable position beacons in SAR work. Some recommendations as to how to make it work better include:

- To improve coverage, the most basic improvement would be to put the base station antenna on a mast of some sort – at least 4m or greater. In open terrain, this single change may increase range to 10km or more. Possible integration with the existing antenna masts on the ARES vehicle is a possibility.
- Encourage the users to mount the transmitting unit as high as possible on their backpack/vest. While this does increase the “nuisance” factor of the antenna snagging on branches/shrubbery, the range increase would be exponential.
- The use of portable, battery operated digipeaters (digital-repeaters) would greatly improve signal reliability. These would be placed at a location in view of both the SAR teams and the base station (usually on a high spot, such as a hill) and serve to maintain communications when pure line-of-sight is not available. The cost is about \$200-300 per unit. Use of CASARA aircraft to serve as airborne repeater stations would potentially increase range dramatically.
- The laptop and base radio equipment was run off of a 100W inverter (perhaps 50W actual power consumption). Power needs seem quite low, but must be accounted for in a battery-only Command Post environment.
- Because APRS technology, when used on this particular frequency, requires an amateur radio license, effort should be made to pre-identify SARSAV volunteers who would qualify to carry the field units. Should a decision be made to run the system on a private land-mobile (LMR) frequency, then the personnel would not require these licenses. However, annual licensing fees would be incurred.

VIII. Exercise Chronology

- 06:30 Steering Committee meets for breakfast, reviews weather conditions, exchanges cell phone numbers for all participants, divides up morning workload. Lunches are obtained for the three victims to carry out to the field with them.
- 07:00 Directional signs are placed at highway entrances to park, as well as gravel road turnoff to final Command Post location.
- 07:35 Steering Committee members and victim volunteers (Fabian, Noah, and Cathy Folk) arrive at Command Post and victims begin to gear up.
- 07:55 GMRS radios (Garmin 530HCx) on channel 5 are issued to the 3 victims. A communications check is completed. Jody carries a forth radio. Fabian and Cathy also carry cell phones, and these are also operationally verified.
- 08:04 Fabian, Cathy, and Noah leave the Command Post area to head to their assigned locations.
- 08:30 Volunteers have started arriving at the Command Post area. They are told the exercise will officially begin sometime after 09:00hrs once the RCMP has setup a Command Post.
- 08:39 ARES communications van arrives
- 09:00 RCMP mobile Command Post arrives.
- 09:01 Wawota EMS arrive with BLS ambulance (3 personnel)
- 09:02 Cathy confirms with Jody via cell phone she is now in position.
- 09:04 Fabian confirms with Jody via cell phone he and Noah have arrived at Noah's assigned spot. He and Noah will stay together until the searchers close in – to keep each other company. Fabian reports there is enough time for both to head over to Fabian's assigned location, and then leave a detailed trail back to Noah's location. Fabian will also try to lay a reverse track to Cathy's location. Fabian reports that Noah's assigned location is almost right on a snowmobile path, and anticipates that Noah will be found very early in the search.
- 09:12 Steering Committee members had discussion of the requirement of photo-ID for all participants in the exercise, especially with so many people unfamiliar with each other.
- 09:20 the first CASARA aircraft contacts the ARES radio operator, indicating the flight is inbound from Yorkton, and is approximately 10 minutes out of Carlyle.
- 09:28 Alan Laughlin and Constable Reddekopp (Carlyle Detachment) discussed handling of Incident Commander transition duties, and how to properly hand-off IC responsibilities to the arriving IC.
- 09:31 RCMP ATV trailer and drivers arrive.
- 09:33 APRS test transmitter #2 issued to Josiah Jordan.

- 09:54 SARSAV volunteers and EMS personnel worked for about 10 minutes trying to setup the RCMP tent. No success. It was left on the ground un-deployed until the end of the exercise.
- 10:10 Jody performed welfare-check with Fabian via cell phone. He and Noah have relocated Noah about 200m towards Fabian's position (MGRS 93014 19904) – to avoid Noah having to stay in an open swampy area with too-good of visibility.
- 10:13 Jody performed welfare-check with Cathy via cell phone.
- 10:21 The Steering Committee had a brief discussion about whether to advise the three victims of special local wildlife hazards mentioned in the Incident Commander's briefing. It was decided that all the hazards had already been discussed in the victim pre-brief, and no new hazards required communication.
- 10:22 Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan is preparing to shuttle search teams to their start positions via ATVs.
- 10:27 APRS test transmitter #1 issued to Bob McKay.
- 10:32 APRS test transmitter #3 issued to George Cheney.
- 10:34 Announcement that NAD83 was the map datum to be used today. This superseded a previous announcement that NAD27 was the preferred datum.
- 10:36 APRS test transmitter #4 issued to Collin Halvorson.
- 10:46 APRS test transmitter #5 issued to Tom Van Nus.
- 10:46 CASARA update given to teams. If CASARA plane is observed flying in tight circle over a fixed point, take a bearing to that point and call it into the Command Post to help triangulate the position.
- 10:50 APRS test transmitter #6 issued to RCMP ATV driver.
- 10:52 Duane McKay arrives on scene.
- 10:53 Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan observed driving search teams to their assigned locations via the ATVs.
- 10:58 More search teams observed entering the field.
- 11:01 Jody contacted Fabian via cell phone and advised him to leave Noah and proceed to his designated spot.
- 11:07 Jody reports to Search Manager John Bradley that there is a 3rd missing person, previously unknown to the searchers (this is Cathy). John Bradley assigns "Deputy Search Manager" George Cheney (recorded on ICS org chart as Planning Chief) to interview Jody to obtain details.
- 11:10 CASARA aircraft observed initiating their search pattern over the LKP.
- 11:11 Command Post begins documenting process for radio activity. CASARA notifies that first aircraft has launched from Carlyle at 11:10, and bingo time is 20:48.
- 11:11 Jody briefs George for approximately 5 minutes, provides photograph of Cathy. Explains she is the Aunt of Noah, sister of Fabian.
- 11:14 Search Manager John Bradley radios all search teams on GMRS that there is a third missing person. The Incident Commander does not hear this call.

11:15 Minister Darryl Hickie arrives on scene.

11:17 Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan briefs Minister Hickie on the situation.

11:18 Jody performs welfare-check with Cathy via cell phone.

11:20 Search Manager John Bradley radios all search teams on GMRS with the details George has recorded from his interview with Jody. Specifically mentions Noah will be wearing an orange toque.

11:21 Jody advises Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan that 65 lunches are available for pickup at the Kenosee Inn. He will have to arrange logistical transport.

11:22 John Bradley gives logistical briefing to a volunteer.

11:24 Global TV news crew arrives on scene. Jody directs them to the Greg Groff for comments on the exercise.

11:29 Command Post requests update from Team 3 on ATV status. Reply is not documented.

11:30 Steering Committee agrees to release Constable Reddekopp back to his regular real-world duties.

11:35 First scenario-modifier envelop delivered (Jody handed to RCMP ATV driver and instructed him to hand to the first volunteer he saw on his travels).

11:36 Command Post requests position update from Team 3. Position reported is 92486 21187.

11:46 *Leader Post* reporter on scene. Jody directed her to the Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan.

11:48 Cathy spotted by SERM boat operator with SARSAV volunteers onboard. SERM boat will transport her back to boat launch.

11:51 Ambulance dispatched (code 3) to boat launch to meet Cathy when she arrives.

11:52 Cathy is interviewed on the boat. Searchers radio Command Post to report that Cathy says Fabian had a twisted ankle and could not travel.

11:58 Another update received from the boat regarding Cathy's interview. Cathy reported to searchers that she last saw Noah and Fabian about 2km west of the boat (LKP).

12:02 Cathy checked out by EMS at boat launch. No medical issues of note.

12:08 Team 1 reports position as 92610 20625.

12:09 Team 2 radio check

12:10 Team 3 radio check.

12:13 Command Post requested Team 1 to return to base.

12:14 SERM boat advises Command Post they are searching the north shore of Pickerel Point.

12:16 Cathy brought back to Command Post. Unknown whether Search Manager John Bradley or Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan met with her for interrogation. She was observed soon after sitting on the ATV trailer.

12:20 Team 5 notifies Command Post they are at the park boundary and the entire team is together.

- 12:24 Team 3 reports position as 92534 20522.
- 12:25 Jody and EMS crew discuss the last dispatch. There was concern expressed that no SAR resources were assigned to the escort the ambulance to the location – they had to find the boat launch on their own. Fortunately, one person had some local knowledge.
- 12:26 Command Post issues orders to all teams to proceed to area #1.
- 12:29 EMS (Dianne Bunz) begins to work on developing medical plan on ICS form.
- 12:31 Command Post requests teams 2, 4, and 5 to proceed to 93532 20652.
- 12:33 Command Post requests team 3 to proceed to 92884 20510
- 12:40 Team 1 radios Command Post they are returning to base.
- 12:40 Team 5 reports to Command Post they have aural and visual contact with Noah.
- 12:42 Team 5 reports position as 92972 20115
- 12:45 After some confusion on the radio as to whether there was a find, Command Post reports over the radio to all teams that Noah has been found.
- 12:50 Command Post retasks CASARA to team 5's position.
- 12:50 Command Post receives update from SERM boat operator he is bingo fuel (15 minutes remaining).
- 12:56 Team 3 reports very dense cover at 92780 20540
- 12:58 Team 4 advised transport will be available in 15 minutes.
- 12:58 Teams 2 and 5 report doing a hasty sweep along path.
- 13:00 CASARA notified Command Post of possible ground contact at 49°48'07" 102°19'12" (93071 20034).
- 13:03 Jody performs welfare-check with Fabian via cell phone. Jody notified Fabian that Noah has been found. Fabian advises he has put his small campfire out. Fabian reports that CASARA aircraft have flown over him at least five times. Fabian also reports the wind is sufficiently strong that smoke may not be visible.
- 13:06 CASARA reports to Command Post they will be returning to Carlyle for lunch and fuel – estimated 1 hour out-of-service.
- 13:13 Team 5 reports possible verbal contact – they are continuing sound sweep. Position reported as 93340 20506.
- 13:15 Team 4 reports that RCMP ATV team has picked up Noah.
- 13:16 Team 5 requests radio silence for sound sweep.
- 13:21 Team 5 has established verbal communications with Fabian.
- 13:24 Collin Halvorsen reports via radio that Fabian has been found. Collin passes along that Fabian is reporting an injured ankle (simple fracture) and cannot walk. Position reported as 93550 20482.
- 13:26 Noah arrives back at Command Post, and joins his mother (Cathy). No signs of questioning by the Command Post staff are observed.

- 13:30 Command Post contacts CASARA and advises that all missing persons have been found. No documentation as to whether CASARA was “released” from the search at this point.
- 13:33 Team 3 reports it is working way back to road to return to base.
- 13:35 Command Post advises all other teams to return to base.
- 13:36 Team 4 reports it is heading to Fabian’s location to assist in extrication.
- 13:38 Team 3 reports it is returning to base.
- 13:39 Team 5 reports it is en route to position 93511 20598 to meet ATV.
- 13:42 Team 4 reports meeting with team 2 and both are proceeding to Fabian’s location.
- 13:42 Team 3 reports position as 92780 20540 and is returning to base.
- 13:43 Team 5 reports they have arrived at the snowmobile/ATV trail.
- 13:45 Second scenario-modifier envelope delivered (Jody handed to RCMP ATV driver and instructed him to hand to the first volunteer aiding in the extrication of Fabian).
- 13:48 Team 5 reports that Fabian has been loaded onto an ATV for transport.
- 13:50 Jody provides exercise background information to *Leader Post* reporter.
- 14:03 Steering Committee has discussion on confusion regarding roles and responsibilities. General agreement expressed that standardized Incident Command vests (in appropriate colours, with suitable labeling) would be of enormous benefit.
- 14:27 APRS test transmitters 2 and 3 returned to Jody.
- 14:56 Team 5 extricating Fabian reports they have received the scenario modifier envelope, and that one of their team members now requires medical attention for “simulated” injuries.
- 14:58 EMS dispatched to ATV trail head to await injured searcher.
- 15:10 EMS now treating injured searcher at trail head/road.
- 15:12 Team 5 has arrived at Command Post
- 15:14 Team 4 has arrived at Command Post.
- 15:16 CASARA base (Clarence) phoned Jody to request permission to be released. Jody confirmed with Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan that they could be released. There appeared to be a lack of clear communications between Incident Command and CASARA.
- 15:18 Steering Committee met and agreed that EMS could be released. A short debrief session was held with EMS personnel prior to departure. They indicated that the ICS forms were something they had not seen before, and were not sure of the requirements to fill them out. Also, they expressed a need to be included on the regular GMRS communication with the field teams so they could stay abreast of the situation. The EMS unit did NOT have the VHF radio that was expected in pre-exercise planning, so all communication between the Command Post and EMS was done face-to-face only.

- 15:22 Two disjointed debrief sessions begin. The Steering Committee meets to discuss initial reactions to the search. Simultaneously, the Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan and Search Manager John Bradley begin a debrief session with the participants. Some of the participants (mostly the volunteers) seemed to consider this the “formal” debriefing, and did not seem aware that there was a formal debriefing scheduled for later after supper. Some participants leave the exercise before this news could reach them.
- 15:30 Participants signed out. Command Post decommissioning process started.
- 15:36 APRS test transmitters 1, 4, 5, and 6 returned to Jody.
- 16:10 Last resources departed the site.
- 16:16 Highway signage retrieved.

IX. Debriefing Comments

Steering Committee (Comments gathered prior to, during, and post-exercise)

- 1) Poor attendance by all groups. The RCMP team was split, with half attending a real search in northern Saskatchewan. SARSAV response was about 40% of expected, and ARES was about 20% of expected. This severely impacted the resource constraints imposed on the Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan.
- 2) Based on feedback from SARSAV volunteers, the lack of NIF grant (or other) funds to cover accommodation expenses for volunteers resulted in numerous cancellations and non-attendance.
- 3) Real-world communications terminology should have been used in the exercise planning. It was noted that “no-duff” appears to be somewhat of a standard when declaring real-world emergencies within the context of an exercise. *No Duff* is a term used during a disaster exercise to qualify the following information as being real - that is, not part of the exercise. It is also used extensively during military exercises for the same purpose.
- 4) ARES: poor attendance from the ARES group forced a Steering Committee member to actively participate in the exercise. This is an obvious disadvantage for a few reasons:
 - From a scenario security point of view, the scenario could be inadvertently compromised by involving someone who has privileged information.
 - There was no outside vantage point to objective review ARES team performance
 - The low attendance in the exercise does not provide a positive view of ARES’ ability to provide emergency communications services over multiple shifts.
- 5) Upon the initial Steering Committee tour of the Kenosee Park on September 6th, it was noted that the SERM personnel were not able to identify what locations a very useful winter snowmobile and cross-country ski trail map was available at during the winter months. The particular building they found the maps in was scheduled to be locked up. However, subsequent conversations with Joan Adams, the senior SERM manager on site, disclosed that the maps were available at several venues throughout the winter. Joan was also going to inform her staff of this availability.

- 6) Workers Compensation Board coverage was NOT available for volunteers during the exercise. This must be a high priority to get resolved, as it places volunteers at undue financial risk.
- 7) Ad-hoc amateur frequency of 145.50MHz FM was setup for use by the Steering Committee to communicate internally the day of the exercise. Also, victims were issued GMRS Garmin RINO radios set to channel #5. These communications arrangements should have been prepared in advance in the *Planning Guide*.
- 8) Steering Committee discussion on need for photo-ID for all participants, especially in larger scenarios where impostors could slip in. ARES personnel were wearing clear photo-ID cards, and some SARSAV personnel. But the majority of volunteers were not.
- 9) Jody and the EMS crew discussed the ambulance dispatch to pick up Cathy. There was concern expressed that no SAR resources were assigned to the escort the ambulance to the location – they had to find the boat launch on their own. Fortunately, one person had some local knowledge. SAR personnel (with maps) should have been assigned to escort/direct the response.
- 10) CASARA base phoned a Steering Committee member directly to request permission to be released from the scene. Jody confirmed with Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan that they could be released. What appeared to be a lack of clear communications from the Incident Commander to CASARA on an order to demobilize actually turned out to be a communications issue between CASARA and the Steering Committee on the post-exercise stand-down procedure.
- 11) A short debrief session was held with EMS personnel prior to departure. They indicated that the ICS forms were something they had not seen before, and were not sure of the requirements to fill them out. Also, they expressed a need to be included on the regular GMRS communication with the field teams so they could stay abreast of the situation. The EMS unit did NOT have the VHF radio that was expected in the pre-exercise planning, so all communication between the Command Post and EMS was done face-to-face only.
- 12) Radio communications in ARES van seemed to be very confusing at times. Perhaps headsets and more radio operators would help. Messages were observed being missed because radio calls went unheeded while the operator was busy on another radio.

- 13) Very low sense of urgency to the search. The time from arrival of RCMP until searchers entered the field seemed very long, and lots of mulling around.
- 14) ID problems brought up (personal photo ID and ICS vests). There was confusion on roles and responsibilities in the Command Post that may have been cleared up if key personnel were identified with coloured vests.
- 15) A lack of documentation. ICS forms were filled out sparsely, if it all.
- 16) Observed that the Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan was never made aware of a 3rd missing person. There appeared to be a lack of fluid communication between the Search Manager John Bradley (in the ARES van) and the Incident Commander Hugh McLaughlan (in the RCMP truck).
- 17) Ground searchers do not seem familiar with the debrief process (and the need for formal debrief). Some left before even the informal field-only debrief was concluded, much less the formal event-debrief.
- 18) May be a need for a CASARA protocol to be developed so that ground searchers can wave off and/or attract the attention of air observers.
- 19) Some confusion generated because one of the victims was wearing orange and was misidentified as a searcher, and summarily dismissed. Luckily, this error was caught quickly. May pose an education issue for ground SAR teams not to disregard such obvious clues. CASARA has indicated that yellow may perhaps be a better colour for SAR personnel as it is typically not in as widespread use as orange (a typical hunter safety colour).
- 20) The next exercise should consider incorporating more park resources. Possibly the National Park service in Prince Albert, where Federal resources would be involved.

All Participants (comments mostly gathered at the group debriefing session)

1. Radio communications seemed to work well. No real issues with using the GMRS radios.
2. Teams worked well autonomously. When initial deployments ran into obstacles, teams organized themselves to perform the tasks.
3. Good working relationships with external groups such as CASARA and EMS were noted.
4. SARSAV personnel were very familiar with SAR operational procedures, and ultimately succeeded in finding the 3 missing persons.
5. Good teamwork was exhibited, even though many people just met for the first time. The spirit of cooperation was high, and training was compatible, so everybody knew the terminology and tasks requested.
6. There was good balance within the teams that were assigned – a mix between experienced and newbie's. Medically trained personnel were interspersed between the teams uniformly – although this seemed to be a matter more of luck than planning.
7. The teams reacted well to the unanticipated scenario modifier emergencies thrown their way. The scenario modifiers were seen to be very realistic and added to the quality of the overall exercise.



8. The first scenario modifier envelope took team one out of the exercise at an early stage, and the Incident Commander did not reallocate the non-affected members of that team once they had returned to base.
9. A team-leader checklist would be useful to prompt the team leader to ask questions of the team members, including items in kit, skills inventory, health status, etc.
10. The phrase “no-duff” is more uniformly accepted to illustrate a real-world emergency within an exercise environment.
11. No sense of urgency was felt during the initial stages of the exercise. Deployment of teams to the field was haphazard and staggered.
12. Command Post was not adequately prepared for briefing. Ideally, take-away copies of the maps and information sheets should be available for team leaders to take back.
13. There was some difficulty in obtaining maps from the command post laptop
14. On numerous teams, it was observed that numerous individuals were spending time entering waypoints into their GPSs, slowing down the team. Ideally, this task would only be completed by designated navigator.
15. Having GPS units with topographical maps built in was a great asset, especially considering the lack of roads in the area. In addition, if all teams could be issued radios such as the Garmin RINO units (with built-in remote team position tracking), then all teams would be kept aware of the position of other teams within range.
16. A request for more GPS training was expressed, especially for some of the people new to SAR.
17. ARES standard radio frequencies are 146.52MHz or 147.33MHz simplex, or the repeater is available at 147.21MHz +.6MHz offset. Should have been included in pre-exercise *Planning Guide*.



18. CASARA aircraft operators expressed a need to identify the command post vehicles with roof markings. Suggestions included an “X”, or more informational, perhaps a radio frequency for communications (123.1 for example).
19. CASARA indicated there were navigational coordinate conversion issues between the MGRS system used by ground personnel and the lat/long system used by the air crews.
20. The basic principles of the Incident Command System appear to have been followed.
21. There were some flaws in how ICS was utilized, and many stem from improper documentation or complete lack thereof. Some of the confusion could have been cleared up by populating the ICS organizational chart with actual names.
22. The Incident Commander was assisting in equipment setup and transport of searchers, possibly because of a shortage of personnel. These are not normally tasks for the Incident Commander to carry out.
23. ICS documentation was sketchy at best. No ICS medical plan was retained by the Incident Commander.
24. The dual-command post concept did not function well, and left both SAR personnel and evaluators confused as to what functions were being carried out where. There were notable information flow problems between the Search Manager and Incident Commander (such as the presence of a third missing person).
25. Joining the ARES van with the RCMP command van by backing the two vehicles against each other aided in supplying both vehicles with power from a single generator, but created a congestion point that hampered operations throughout the day.
26. Scene security, especially at the Command Post was not observed. No direction was given to parking or ensuring emergency vehicles had proper exit routes. This may be a serious risk in a real-world search.
27. A designated press area was not setup, leading to some congestion at the Command Post.
28. ICS organization for logistical support to provide lunch was ad-hoc and did not adhere to ICS guidelines (refer to the RCMP report for more information).

29. The Command Post sign-in/check-in process could be used to determine special qualifications, capabilities, and equipment of individuals (such as advanced medical training, medical equipment, ATV's, etc).
30. Regular briefings to the Incident Commander by all subordinate positions were NOT observed.
31. In a large multi-jurisdictional incident such as this, the ICS position of Liaison Officer may have been greatly beneficial.

X. Recommendations

The recommendations are broken up by target participant group.

SARSAV Exercise Designers

- 1) If scenario modifier envelopes are used in future SAR exercises, the Steering Committee must ensure that the Incident Commander is aware that all members of the affected team are eligible to return to the search after the scenario modifier has concluded. The signed-off scenario modifiers must be retained for documentation.
- 2) In future SAR exercises, the phrase “no-duff” should be standardized upon to indicate a real-world emergency.
- 3) In future exercises, special emphasis must be made by the Steering Committee members to impart a sense of urgency to the Incident Commander.
- 4) In future exercises, the victim descriptions should include an entry for pets.
- 5) Map segments shown in the exercise *Planning Guide* should have UTM grid numbering shown (at a minimum, the top-left grid square should be identified).
- 6) Clear direction must be given to ensure that all participants are aware of the need for a full debrief session, regardless of what impromptu sessions are held in the field.
- 7) The review of the attainment of exercise objectives (referring to the *Planning Guide*, section **IX. Objectives**) needs to be scheduled by the Steering Committee as soon after the conclusion of the exercise as possible. In this exercise, the objectives were not SPECIFICALLY reviewed by the Steering Committee – hence, no final status is available for the degree of success in meeting the established pre-exercise objectives.
- 8) CASARA deployments should have a mandatory requirement for a NOTAM to be issued. This includes both exercises and real-world deployments.
 - The exercise planner for any exercises involving CASARA should ensure a notice-to-airmen (NOTAM) is issued for the exercise.

ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Services)

- 9) The roofs of the ARES and RCMP command vehicles should have markings that can be observed from the air to designate them as a command post.
 - The roof of the ARES radio vehicle should be marked with appropriate lettering/symbols as arranged with CASARA. A similar task has been assigned to the RCMP for their command vehicle.
- 10) When the ARES truck and RCMP command post are co-located, they should be parked in such a way that they can share electrical generator power, but not so as to create barriers to personnel entry. The RCMP vehicle should be the sole command post, and the ARES truck dedicated to communications.

CASARA

- 11) Given the concerns raised post-exercise on MGRS/UTM to lat/long coordinate system conversion issues, more research needs to be done on developing a workable and reliable system that meets the needs of both groups.
 - The RCMP team, in conjunction with SARSAV, should meet with CASARA representatives to dive further into the issues experienced during the exercise.
 - Fundamental differences exist in maps used by the different teams. CASARA normally uses lat/long maps only, while ground teams are generally using 1:25000 or 1:50000 maps with primary UTM markings.
 - The RCMP, SARSAV, and CASARA should make a joint recommendation on a standard of coordinate communication going forth.

SARSAV Membership and Executive

- 12) A standard GPS for searchers should support topographical maps.
 - SARSAV should make a recommendation to the membership to standardize on the same GPS technology as the RCMP teams are using – namely the Garmin 60 (or compatible RINO 520/530) series.
- 13) GMRS radios, with their higher power than FRS, are the preferred communications tool. Combination topographic-capable GPS and GMRS integrated radios, such as the Garmin RINO series, offer many advantages to field personnel in keeping track of fellow teams.
 - SARSAV should standardize on using only GMRS radios (preferring the Garmin RINO series, with integrated GPS and associated team position marking technology).
- 14) A team-leader checklist be developed (laminated and attached to kit) to assist the team leader in performing a full orientation of his team (skills inventory, kit, health issues, delegation of duties within the team, etc).
 - SARSAV should form a committee to produce a sample checklist for distribution and review by SAR membership.
- 15) The team leader should emphasize that GPS duties fall to the designated navigator and that other team members should not slow the team down by duplicating this effort.
 - SARSAV Team Leader training should be updated to include specific roles and responsibilities assignment for navigators. Similarly, only one individual should be tasked from each team to maintain radio contact with base, and all others should turn their base-channel radios off or to very low volume. All radios should be muted when in the Command Post.
- 16) Photo-ID for all non-uniformed participants should be mandatory.
 - SARSAV should enforce mandatory photo-ID for all members.
- 17) ICS training should be mandatory for all SAR personnel. Incident Commanders and Search Managers should strive to be certified to ICS200 or higher. A very high standard must be set regarding filling out the forms.
 - SARSAV must ensure that all members are receiving ICS training.



- 18) EMS personnel were not assigned a dedicated liaison to handle local site navigation or communication.
- SARSAV should plan to provide a GMRS radio to EMS units at a response site, as well as a dedicated person to assist with navigation duties.
- 19) The lack of WCB coverage for the SARSAV volunteers is a serious concern and liability for the organization.
- SARSAV should plan on using the good will generated with Minister Hickie to pursue getting WCB coverage in place as soon as possible.
- 20) SARSAV, in cooperation with CASARA, should undertake a program to re-evaluate the choice of orange as a “standard” colour for SAR personnel. CASARA experience has shown that yellow may be a more viable colour, providing easier identification from the air, and less chance of misinterpretation.
- A working committee to this topic should be created by SARSAV and members invited from CASARA, the RCMP, and other affected SAR groups in Saskatchewan.

RCMP SAR Team

- 21) The scene sign-in process be modified to question the individual upon arrival to determine special qualifications, capabilities, and equipment of individuals (such as advanced medical training, medical equipment, ATV's, etc).
- The RCMP team, in conjunction with SARSAV, should review sign-in sheets in the ICS hierarchy to ensure such information is captured and utilized.
- 22) A mechanism to make copies and printouts must be available within the Command Post. A multifunction 11”x17” colour laser printer would be ideal, if size permits. This would allow much more efficient briefings and map distribution.
- The RCMP command vehicle should be equipped with suitable computer and printing equipment to provide colour printing and photocopier functionality. Waterproof paper should be stocked.



- 23) CASARA deployments should have a mandatory requirement for a NOTAM to be issued. This includes both exercises and real-world deployments.
- The RCMP standard operating procedure for involving CASARA should be verified that it includes a requirement to issue a notice-to-airmen (NOTAM).
- 24) The Incident Commander must ensure that the Command Post is secured, and that people are identified properly before granting access. A designated area to brief the press – away from the Command Post – must be assigned. Parking areas and egress routes must be enforced by an appointed individual.
- 25) Always-displayed photo-ID for all non-uniformed participants should be mandatory.
- The RCMP teams must ensure that all non-uniformed members have photo-ID, and are displaying it prominently on their person.
- 26) ICS system compatible vests should be used for all high-ranking ICS staffing positions, to allow instant identification of personnel and their purpose.
- A number of colour-coded ICS vest “systems” are available. The RCMP and SARSAV should work together to ensure that at least one set of vests is maintained in each of the major command vehicles (RCMP and ARES) as well as in each area of the province (Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, etc).



- 27) When the ARES truck and RCMP command post are co-located, they should be parked in such a way that they can share electrical generator power, but not so as to create barriers to personnel entry. The RCMP vehicle should be the sole command post, and the ARES truck dedicated to communications.
- 28) The roofs of the ARES and RCMP command vehicles should have markings that can be observed from the air to designate them as a command post.
- The roof of the RCMP command vehicle should be marked with appropriate lettering/symbols as arranged with CASARA. A similar task has been assigned to ARES.

- 29) If at all possible, the Incident Commander and Search Manager should not be involved in the hands-on deployment tasks or in personnel transfer. These tasks **MUST** be delegated out.
- 30) ICS training should be mandatory for all SAR personnel. Incident Commanders and Search Managers should strive to be certified to ICS200 or higher. A very high standard must be set regarding filling out the forms.
- In addition to ensuring RCMP members are receiving ICS training, the RCMP Incident Commanders must be diligent in overseeing the ICS process at an emergency scene, and ensuring the forms and paperwork are properly completed.
 - Paperwork alone should be done in a sufficient manner to thoroughly brief the team taking over the next operational period.
 - Standardized SAR-specific ICS forms should be adopted by all SAR resources. A sample ICS form collection has been developed as part of this multi-jurisdictional exercise (posted online at the SARSAV website www.sarsav.ca).

XI. Acknowledgements

An exercise of this magnitude involves a lot of personnel and resources, and a large commitment of time and energy from dedicated individuals. An especially large debt of gratitude is owed to the members of the steering committee.

The following list is not all-encompassing but represents a number of individuals, agencies, and organizations that made this event a success:

Yvette Wright, Ken Snell, Carl Friske, Scott Wright, Jody Herperger, Cpl. Greg Groff, Alan Laughlin, Terry White, Frank Schuurmans, Clarence Demchuk, and Jocelyn Bishoff

Carlyle Fire Department (Chief Trent Lee)

Kenosee Lake Fire Department (Chief Stewart Balfour)

SERM – Moose Mountain Provincial Park (Gordon Locke and Joan Adams)

Wawota EMS (Dianne Bunz and team)

Kenosee Inn Resort Hotel

Town of Carlyle

Carlyle Flying Club (Eric Steffenson)

Sunrise Aviation

And of course a thank-you to all the participants – the paid- and volunteer-professionals – who made the day a success!



September, 2008

RE: Search and Rescue Multi Jurisdictional Exercise - Moose Mountain
September 20 2008.

It was my pleasure to attend the SAR Multi Jurisdictional Exercise on September 20, 2008. For me, it was a great opportunity to observe many agencies working together in the field to solve a realistic event.

The professional agencies, including RCMP and the Wawota Ambulance, helped to create the realistic atmosphere for the search exercise. Expertise and advice from these agencies is always a valuable component when simulating real life events. As well, this was a perfect opportunity for volunteer organizations to understand the expectations of both police and ambulance.

All the search and rescue chapters demonstrated the value of good teamwork, and the value of exercising to be prepared for any time they would be called. The dedication and knowledge of this group of volunteers is outstanding.

The ARES group also confirmed the need to exercise as a group and their abilities and knowledge was very evident.

Our province is in the early stages of using the Incident Command System and we observed good use of it in this exercise. Familiarity and additional training throughout and within the groups will ensure that the system is implemented and used to the fullest extent.

All events need to:

- a) keep the area secure,
- b) have a check in and check out system established
- c) provide identification for all personnel and visitors and,
- d) provide an area to meet and speak with the press that is away from the Command Post.

All the organizers, exercise designers and volunteers should be commended for a very well prepared and produced search exercise.

Thank you.

Yvette Wright
Public Safety Officer
Corrections, Public Safety and Policing



Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Security Classification/Designation
Classification/désignation sécuritaire

Non-sensitive

Alan G. Laughlin
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Your File Votre référence

Mr. Jody Herperger, Secretary
Search and Rescue Regina

Our File Notre référence
2200-2

October 14, 2008

Dear Sir,

Saskatchewan Multi-Jurisdictional Search and Rescue Exercise

Attached is the RCMP report prepared by Jocelyn Bishoff. Jocelyn is our Readiness and Response Coordinator and she was on site during the exercise. Her report deals only with the RCMP and its objectives.

On behalf of the RCMP I would like to extend our sincere thanks to our partner organizations. We appreciate the invitation to participate in the exercise. We enjoyed our involvement and benefitted tremendously from the experience.

Alan G. Laughlin
Operation Coordinator
"F" Division Search and Rescue Team

Approved by:

Cpl. Greg Groff
Emergency Services Coordinator
"F" Division

SARSAVE 2008 Multi-jurisdictional Exercise

RCMP Evaluator Report

Document Control		
Version	Date	Comments
0.1	2008-OCT-02	original completed by Jocelyn Bishoff
0.2	2008-OCT-02	comments added by Al Laughlin
0.3	2008-OCT-03	reviewed by Hugh McLaughlan; no changes;
1.0	2008-OCT-10	no comments added by Greg Groff; approved for submission;

This report consists of the observations and evaluation of the objectives set for the RCMP in the Multi-jurisdiction Exercise Planning Guide.

September 19, 2008

Initial call made from the Cst., Carlyle Detachment to DOCC to report the missing father and son. Call was initiated at 2120 hours. First call to DOCC, the Cst. received a busy signal. Second call, the Operator gave a different name than the SAR member on call. The name given was not even a Regina SAR member, although it was on the list of Search Managers. But, the DOCC Operator checked her references further and gave the officer the SAR cell number which was actually deployed to Creighton on an actual search. The F Div SAR Coordinator gave instructions to DOCC earlier regarding who to call after 1800 hours exercise day and that information was not in possession of the operator who took the call.

Eventually the Cst. talked to the S/Sgt who was the SAR on call member. Information on the missing subjects was gathered and appropriate actions were taken.

September 20, 2008

As in the exercise objectives for the RCMP, the initial call out was made to SAR team members. The Incident Commander was appointed. Due to the actual SAR call out in Creighton, not all of the Hasty Team members who were expected to participate in the exercise were able to.

Briefing from Detachment Cst. to the Incident Commander (IC) (Hugh McLaughlan) was thorough. Information on the missing was changed to accommodate the actual role players of the day and that information was communicated appropriately. The IC took the time to review maps and evaluate the lay of the land before setting up the initial SAR strategy.

The Command Post was placed at the site and the IC did an assessment of what resources he had available to him.

The ARES vehicle also showed up and was placed next to the CP with little space between the two back doors. This was problematic as this created a bottle neck which was difficult for personnel to get in and out of the vehicles. If this was a real incident that lasted for a few days, this would have been an issue.

A Search Manager arrived in the ARES vehicle and worked the operation out of that vehicle. The IC worked out of the RCMP vehicle. This became very confusing for SAR personnel and evaluators as it appeared like there were two command posts with very little interaction between the two.

The IC left the command post several times to help set up equipment but that could have been because there weren't as many RCMP personnel in attendance. The IC was able to brief the searchers about safety and worked with Team Leaders to set up the Search. The IC ensured that only certified people utilized the quads and worked with the maps to determine search areas and extrication routes.

The evaluator observed whether the ICS structure was set up and what components were actually utilized. A Search Manager was in place which may be the Operations Chief under ICS. I did not see the IC appoint that person, the Search Manager showed up at the exercise already appointed. The Search Manager worked out of the ARES vehicle and seemed to be in command of the whole incident. There was very key information that was not passed on to the IC.

(Eg. @ 1105 hrs, the details of a third missing person (female) was passed on to one of the exercise participants (position, not sure) who passed it on to the Search Manager. This information was not given to the IC. The IC was not aware of the third person until he was told that the third person had been located which was at about 1210 hours.

When each missing person was located and brought back to the CP, they stood around unsupervised and ignored for a significant amount of time. The evaluator was surprised that there was no sense of urgency to interview them for information on the other missing people.

Around lunch time, the Search Manager appointed a Staging/Logistics person who was initially asked to go pick up lunch. This person reported that they had no previous ICS training and was not sure what their role and responsibility of Staging and Logistics was. Because these are two completely different functions under ICS the confusion may be that the Search Manager was unclear as to which of these positions the duty of lunch falls under.

What went well

The Search operation seemed to go well. All those involved seem to know their job, appeared comfortable in using their equipment and worked well under the SAR structure and the supervision of the Team Leaders.

There appeared to be an established and good working relationship with the ambulance service and CASARA.

RCMP procedures seemed to go well considering that there were less resources than originally anticipated. Members worked well with the volunteer teams.

The search team knew the SAR operational procedures and was successful in finding the missing persons.

The SAR team handled additional problems thrown out to them very well such as the unanticipated medical emergencies.

What can be improved on?

There seemed to be some difficulty in accessing the maps from the lap top computer in the Command Post, initially.

Since ICS training was new to most, there seemed to be difficulty in implementing ICS into this exercise. A recommendation would be more practice on how SAR procedures work within the ICS structure.

Require more clarification in roles and responsibilities of the Command Staff and Sector Chiefs under ICS. The Ops Section Chief has specific duties but is not in command of the whole event as demonstrated in the exercise. Roles and responsibilities need to be understood and practiced.

Information gathering, sharing and collective decision making was rarely witnessed in this exercise. In order for the Incident Commander to be aware of everything that is going on, regular briefings by the command staff and other key SAR leaders are required. Location of the two vehicles (CP and ARES) provided little space for briefing or planning and the Search Manager rarely left the AERES vehicle to consult with the Incident Commander.

Some positions in ICS were not defined. A Liaison Officer would have been beneficial on this exercise since there were so many other (outside) agencies involved in this event.

Whenever a Command Post area is established, security of the site and perimeter control is essential. This keeps people from coming and going freely. If this was a real event, family of the missing, community folks, tourists, people without much to do, etc. would be gathering and hanging around.

Exercises often take away the sense of urgency because people aren't really missing and aren't really hurt. Often times the SAR site seemed too laid back and relaxed. For example the Search Manager received photos of this missing and just tossed them up on the shelf. I would think these photos would have been important in a real event.

The Medical Action Plan was completed. But it was given to EMS by the Search Manager. EMS seemed to struggle with how to complete it as they were not familiar with nor trained on the document.

This was an exercise that had an end time. In a real event, after several hours into it, the Incident Commander should start looking ahead to the next operations period and thinking of next shift.

Conclusion

The exercise was well planned and executed. It gave the agencies a good opportunity to work together and define protocols. An exercise of this magnitude provided a realistic training opportunity for all.

Jocelyn Bishoff
Readiness and Response Coordinator
RCMP F Division

Alan G. Laughlin
Operational Coordinator
RCMP "F" Division Search and Rescue