

# **Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council**

## **Board Meeting Minutes**

***August 22, 1994***

Called to order at 9:40 AM by President Peter McCabe.

Attendance: Peter McCabe, President (MSAR/ASRC); Martha Ann Ackroyd-Geary, Vice President (Somerset); Keith Conover, Secretary (AMRG/ASRC); Ron Wisbith, Director (Rescue 40); Tom Hirschak, Director (Keystone SAR); Roy Keiser, Central Regional Representative (STRIKE); Nelson Haas, Northern Regional Representative (Mountaineer SAR); Steve Houck, Communications Committee Chair (WEST/SMRG); Norm Smith, PEMA; Don Shaw, PEMA; Carol Prosseda, Gayle James, and Vikki Coup, STRIKE K-9 SAR; Ken Boyles, State Parks; Laura Fornwalt, Keystone SAR. Quorum established after arrival of Wisbith and Hirschak.

### **Introduction**

Peter McCabe, PSARC President: we have developed standards for most individual training levels. Now we need to go beyond this.

Today we are not asking for endorsement of PSARC by PEMA, but PEMA endorsement of PSARC's goals. Some states only develop a strong state SAR program only after someone dies in a spectacular fashion in the outdoors (e.g., Virginia with a state senator's child lost). We need to develop a good SAR program for Pennsylvania before something bad happens here.

### **Business**

#### **Western Regional Representative**

John Libonati (CAESAR) is still not sure if he wants to serve; Mike Yee (AMRG) is available and willing to serve; Peter will finalize this position soon.

#### **Motion to Declare President and Secretary Positions Vacant**

Irv Lichtenstein's letter motion, to the effect that AMRG and Somerset SAR are not in good standing, therefore their delegates cannot hold office, was apparently mailed to all PSARC member teams. This was apparently based on a misunderstanding of a note in a recent SAR Net newsletter. Both AMRG and Somerset SAR were noted in the SAR Net as being late in turning in their updated SAR Resource Forms. This was misunderstood as being late in paying dues, which would prevent the teams from being in good standing. Both teams can produce canceled checks for dues that were endorsed by the PSARC Treasurer, and thus both are still in good standing. Both Keith Conover (AMRG) and Martha Ann Ackroyd-Geary (Somerset SAR) have communicated with Mr. Lichtenstein by telephone. The proposal will be on the agenda at the upcoming membership meeting, though it may be withdrawn based on the updated information. The Board of Directors will take no action on this item.

## **Standards Status**

### **Medical Standards**

In very preliminary form. Keith Conover, AMRG: proposed changes to Act 45 (see Attachment #1) may make our standards moot. Suggestion that we postpone further work on Medical standards pending action by legislature over next six months to a year accepted by consensus.

### **Equine Standards**

Worked up by Tina Clark (GPSR; 215-675-9839 [H]) with extensive consultation. Noted that we now have four mounted teams active in the state (GPSR, Huntingdon County, TROT-SAR, and the new mounted team in SW Pennsylvania (Equi-SAR; not yet PSARC members). The Standards Committee (Tom Hirschak, Keystone SAR, Chair; 814-946-0168 [H]) will send out for comment by teams in the near future.

### **Rescue Specialist**

Peter McCabe, President: We need to discuss this at a General Meeting, as it is a complex topic. Murmurs of general agreement.

### **Communications**

The official communications Standard Operating Procedures distributed (Attachment #2).

## **PEMA Role in SAR**

### **Introduction**

Norm Smith, PEMA: his boss asked him about six months ago to write a draft regulation with SAR standards. Now that he has PSARC standards, can use them at least as a straw man. PEMA hasn't gotten to the stage of specifying regulations as it is not at present a regulatory agency, and PEMA is not involved in search as there is no legislative mandate. PEMA's lawyers say PEMA really doesn't have the authority to get involved in search operations. (But Virginia doesn't, either; see remarks above about how having a Virginia Senator's child lost in the mountains led Virginia to an active SAR program despite lack of a legislative mandate.) PEMA lacks the administrative pressure that could allow it to follow the lead of Virginia. Some present suggested (sarcastically?) that we should take a some Senators' children and the Governor's children out hiking and lose them.

PEMA currently doesn't recommend any particular team, because no standards are available for teams at present. Legislators have put in some legislative initiatives, but nothing seems likely to be shoeing up as law soon. Maybe it does take some tragic accident to have someone at a higher level to tell PEMA to get involved in SAR.

### **Annex V and the PEMA Role in SAR**

Annex V (V as in Victor, not Roman numeral 5; Attachment #3) to the State Disaster plan is on search and rescue. Its implications were discussed. The discussion was wide-ranging and focused on the existing authority and responsibility for lost person search and rescue in Pennsylvania.

Q: How is fire suppression handled? A: It is a municipal responsibility.

Norm Smith: The County EMA Coordinator is responsible for overall management but not for going in the woods, or running tactical operations; the County EMA Coordinator doesn't have authority to take over from the municipality, unless there is a signed agreement to allow the County to assume municipal responsibility. PEMA can issue directives to have the County and local municipalities work together, however, this requires a special declaration by the Governor and is therefore not useful for SAR preplanning.

There are certain cases of distinct responsibility for search. DER clearly has responsibility and authority for search on state lands. Searches related to fire suppression are clearly the responsibility and authority of the local municipality.

It was noted that in the initial phases, searches are handled by both fire and law enforcement personnel. Pennsylvania needs search first responder training for both fire and law enforcement personnel.

Speaking of law enforcement, where did this "you have to wait 24 hours before searching for missing persons" come from? It seems to be a common oral tradition among law enforcement agencies. It is getting stronger, and does terrible things for the SAR response (and often in abductions, too).

Q: Why is Urban SAR doing so well in PA, but not wilderness? A (Norm Smith, PEMA): Well, first, it's not doing so well; there are still lots of problems, and the team is not operational yet. Also, there was a Federal grant with money attached.

Regarding CAP: because of Federal mandates, the state can ask them to search for both downed aircraft and lost persons, though it can't ask PSARC for this. PEMA is now asking CAP to train itself properly to do lost person SAR, and CAP personnel are now taking courses such as IC for SAR. CAP accepted PSARC standard as their standards last year. Peter: can PEMA cite PSARC standards? Norm: in development of draft directive/regulations, PEMA has included PSARC standards, but these have not gone to the regulatory commission yet.

Q: Could PEMA send an informational mailing to all 2439 municipalities in Pennsylvania recommending that local municipalities ask SAR teams whether they meet PSARC standards? A: Yes.

Q: What about State Police? A: They are not particularly interested in managing search.

Again: PEMA can coordinate but can't directly manage or do search.

## **PSARC Bones of Contention**

There was a brief discussion about recent intra-PSARC infighting (Barton, Lichtenstein) and the bad taste this leaves in the mouth of SAR teams and other agencies.

## **Standards, Again**

Discussion about standards: we haven't truly implemented them yet. What does having standards mean? Does it mean you can exclude non-certified people from a search? No, because there is no mandate or legal authority for PSARC to do that, and for that matter, even if there were such a mandate, we don't have enough trained resources to refuse such help.

Keith Conover, AMRG: There are several important points about standards: They are confidence builders, for individuals, for teams, for responsible agencies, and for regulatory agencies (or even nonregulatory agencies like PEMA). They upgrade training by teams to meet the standards. They publicize SAR uniformity across the state.

Ron Wisbith, R-40: how about spotting clues out and testing a team by having them find a certain number of them as a test? He gave an example of why standards for teams can help: a recent search in

Allegheny County by a non- PSARC team didn't find the person even when 100 yards from his home. (See Attachment #4.)

## Recent Missions

Martha, Somerset SAR: for the recent Williamsport area downed aircraft search, she was asked by Mike Kindness of CAP to call out all PSARC resources. This isn't really a PSARC role at present; we are only supposed to provide the contact information for individual teams. In this case she did do a PSARC callout for the CAP, acting not as a PSARC official but as an assistant to the CAP.

Problem of teams not coordinating together at missions was discussed.

Complaints from two teams; at recent searches, some teams were kept from going into field until Mifflin Co. SAR arrived "as per PEMA instructions." Norm Smith: "we don't activate anyone, we don't call anyone, we just provide numbers. I'll check into this." Recent search in the Shippensburg where the SAVES team out of Shippensburg was not called but the Mifflin County team was dispatched. Not clear why this happened, may have been local Responsible Agency choice.

Roy: what if you arrive and there is a non-PSARC Incident Command set up? Keith: you contribute a Liaison Officer to the ICS as per standard ICS. Q: What if there are several PSARC teams there, but the local Responsible Agency isn't following ICS? A: According to PSARC policy, you have to set up a separate PSARC ICS Unified Command and have the local Responsible Agency direct this rather than directing individual PSARC teams.

[PSARC Unified Command Policy, approved 6/92:

- Whenever two or more Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council member teams are participating in an operation, they shall use the Incident Command System.
- Each operation shall have a single Incident Commander. For a Unified Command Structure, the Incident Commander acts as the parliamentary Chair of the assembled Agency Representatives.
- The Incident Commander should be chosen based on competence and ability to command the particular search and rescue operation. The Incident Commander need not be a member or officer of an agency holding jurisdiction; however, the Incident Commander shall be responsible to the governmental agency or agencies holding jurisdiction (Responsible Agencies) through their Agency Representatives.
- If only a single Responsible Agency claims jurisdiction for a search and rescue operation, that Responsible Agency's senior representative present should appoint an Incident Commander.
- If multiple agencies claim jurisdiction for a search and rescue operation, representatives (one from each agency claiming jurisdiction) shall meet and vote to select an Incident Commander. Each agency shall have one vote. Voting shall follow the rules of a mass meeting as specified in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, current edition.]

## Standards, Once More

Peter McCabe, President: what is going on to incorporate PSARC standards into State Fire Academy courses? Ken: FTM and FTL standards are all (except for a few inconsequential points) covered in current Fire Academy curriculum outlines, and Ken has prepared a cross-reference. Now we need tests. Martha, Somerset SAR: she has developed and validated a test for the standard Search Responder class, and now will develop and validate tests for the various PSARC standard training levels. One can add PSARC testing to Fire Academy courses without difficulty. Agreed that the tests need to be validated by multiple uses and revisions. Consensus was that Martha would come up with tests for all levels by Spring 1995. These PSARC tests could be administered by Fire

Academy instructors after Fire Academy SAR classes, or by instructors or training officers with the individual PSARC member teams. Security is a problem; no consensus on whether to use central test grading and control, with all of its problems, or let the test be used ad libitum by the Fire Academy or individual PSARC member teams.

Peter asks all Board members to write down suggestions for steps, requirements, and qualifications for Incident Staff and Incident Commander and send to him, assuming that we would want to follow the ASRC's way of only granting a limited number of IC qualifications, including political savvy and other items in the Council's awarding such certification; there was not a consensus that this was the appropriate way to manage IC certification, and the discussion was tabled for now.

Recess at 1245 hours. At about 1300 hours, additional PEMA personnel joined the meeting: Don Shaw, John Bahnweg. Several senior officers of the Pennsylvania Win, Civil Air Patrol also attended: Mike Kindness, Allen Applebaum, Joseph O. Prewitt, JP Habets, and Joseph A. (Skip) Guimond, Jr.

Joseph LaFleur, Director of PEMA, spoke briefly on PEMA's role in SAR. Hopes that in the future the state may be able to become more involved in SAR.

Norm Smith (PEMA) addressed the assembled group. PSARC asked for this meeting; not to "hotwash" any disasters; the best time is to review these right afterwards. Instead, we are here to coordinate CAP and PSARC, to coordinate air and ground portions of search and rescue in Pennsylvania. PEMA does not get involved in SAR in the field. We are to talk about ICS and Unified Command and communications between the field and PEMA, what the role of the county is. CAP has recently signed MOU with the Pennsylvania State Police regarding a radio navigation net.

Skip Guimond, CAP Wing Commander: Secretary of Transportation quickly pushed this through. Four CAP aircraft and several State Police will have uplink/downlink radio links through this new system. Will allow real-time tracking of exact aircraft position of CAP aircraft. Will have four ground-based stations in Pennsylvania. May be able to get a portable unit to send to a mission base. Operates on one of the VHF packet frequencies (148.995). Provides close-up detail of local weather and will help prevent aircraft from being trapped.

Peter: reviewed his letter to PEMA Director LaFleur (included as attachment to minutes of 3/94 PSARC meeting). Noted that the first goal (operational management of lost person search and rescue by PEMA) is difficult at present due to lack of a clear legislative mandate. The second goal, of managing SAR so appropriately competent personnel are available for downed aircraft and lost person search and rescue, is what we are actively pursuing with this meeting.

Skip Guimond, CAP: noted that CAP has liability protection; as an instrumentality of the U.S. government, the government must defend the CAP and the CAP personnel involved.

A recent Air Force evaluation of Pennsylvania Wing recommended that they bring more outside agencies into their training activities. Joe Thrash had mentioned the possibility of PSARC personnel going to Hawk Mountain for training opportunities, and this is in fact now being worked on.

Norm Smith: PEMA's Training Section can offer coordination for such joint training: publication in PEMA Newsletter. But, it needs considerable lead time: at the very least three months.

Skip Guimond: designate some PSARC people to attend CAP monthly staff meetings: Second Thursday of every month at North Philadelphia airport. Wing SAR training schedule usually fixed by January.

Norm Smith led a discussion of the normal sequence of events in an overdue aircraft search. Assume two ELT passes with good signal. Local CAP Group will be told to dispatch ground teams and aircraft and set up operations base. When is county, state or PSARC informed? Theoretically state is always called first, then calls CAP, but in practice often CAP is called first and PEMA only hears of it later. Mission Coordinator gets briefing from AFRCC at Langley, and at that point makes decision whether to send air resources, ground resources, or both. Mike Kindness: most ELTs at beginning of missions are not related to the target aircraft. Usually contacts PEMA, not the individual contact, because (among other reasons) may involve many different counties; standard procedure is to run all contact with state/county through PEMA

watch officer. What does CAP do to get additional resources? CAP is supposed to go back to AFRCC at Langley for additional resources. Or, MCs have their own information on available resources. Or, can call back to the PEMA duty officer. Mike Kindness: on a mission, a CAP MC can't call seventy different numbers to get resources; wants to call PSARC secretary to call out PSARC resources in general. Can PEMA watch officer do this? No. PEMA can provide information and guidance but won't call and dispatch the resources. Norm Smith, PEMA: who should be calling ground teams, including those that don't want to join PSARC? CAP requirement: all CAP air resources must call to Base (the MC) before responding to Base.

Because phones are limited at Base, at least initially, what CAP wants is to make a single call to get whatever SAR resources they need. Need some inter- mediary who can screen the call and call out appropriate resources.

Keith Conover: if a CAP MC called PEMA, could he ask for availability of 100 FTMs and 20 FTLs, could PEMA then call for availability, and get back to the MC with availability? No, don't have resources for this.

Can PEMA keep a roster of PSARC MCs and then call the PSARC MC whenever it gets a call for PSARC assistance from CAP or other requesters? Yes, if they're volunteers. Consensus of PSARC Board in favor of implementing the previously proposed PSARC MC system, but using only volunteers rather than state employ- ees.

At the end, the five voting members briefly considered the following issues:

1. Bruce Barton has been nominated for the Board of Directors, but all certified mail sent to him by the Secretary has been returned unclaimed (see attached), including mail sent to him care of the official address of North- East SAR in the Secretary's log, and the personal address on the letterhead of his biographical sketch for nomination to the Board of Directors. Conover raised the question of qualifications for candidacy for office in PSARC. He was unable to find specific guidance on this issue in either the PSARC Arti- cles of Incorporation or Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, but suspected that failure to answer official correspondence should be a bar to becoming an officer of PSARC. Until the membership could discuss this at the next business meeting, he asked for the guidance of the Board of Directors. Therefore, Moved by Conover and Seconded by Hirchak: Resolved, that since Mr. Barton does not answer official mail sent to him by the Secretary of the Council, he cannot be considered a legitimate candidate for office in the Council. Discussion: the Executive Officer noted that she had been unable to reach Mr. Barton by telephone despite multiple attempts. All agreed that repeated failure to answer official mail from the Secretary at registered addresses should be grounds to bar a person from becoming a candidate for PSARC office. Chair was nonvoting, vote was four in favor, none against, no abstentions.

2. Irv Lichtenstein had proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation by letter to the Secretary back in April. Mr. Lichtenstein's letter indicated he thought that any Delegate could propose amendments by letter to the Secre- tary and that this required the Secretary to ballot these amendments by mail. However, after reviewing the amendment provisions of the Articles, it was the considered opinion of the President and Secretary that the Articles specify that amendments must be sent for mail ballot only by vote of the Board of Directors or assembled Delegates at a general membership meeting. Therefore, these proposed amendments were referred to the Bylaws Committee (Jim Hill, Mifflin SAR, Chair, 1-717-248-5595) for recommendations. Mr. Lichtenstein did not propose these amendments from the floor at the last general meeting, but the Secretary was directed to contact Mr. Hill and ask him to bring these proposals up for a vote at the next general meeting, along with the com- mittee's recommendations.

Adjourned at about 1545 hours.

Respectfully submitted, Keith Conover, M.D., Secretary.