



Potomac Valley Search and Rescue



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May 2, 2008

Service Site

For my ELT project, I joined and trained with the Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group (PVRG), a volunteer ground search and rescue team based at the University of Maryland, College Park.

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Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group

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Issue Confronting Site

PVRG is one of the ten member groups of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC), an organization that provides the majority of search and rescue missions in the mid-Atlantic region of the US.

The mission of PVRG is to participate in ground search operations when a person has been reported missing. Subjects of a search can range from missing hikers to elderly Alzheimer's patients.

•During a search for a missing person, duties of PVRG members include:

- Forming field search groups with other rescue teams, in some cases assist law enforcement and fire departments
- Oversee and lead local volunteer teams
- Work alongside professional trackers, dog and horse teams
- Search a specified area for clues
- Interview local residents for information
- Provide first aid to team members and search subjects
- If missing person is found injured, assist in transporting them to receive medical care

•Searches can occur in any area, ranging from national parks to suburban areas, at any time and in any weather conditions. Although the group is Maryland-based, many searches occur in West Virginia, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

•More rarely, PVRG may be called in to help with disaster areas



Practicing belaying during SAREX 2007

Activities

In order to participate in searches, I first had to become Call-Out Qualified (COQ), which I did by attending weekly training sessions and overnight weekend-long trainings.

Training topics:

- Putting together a 24 Hour Pack
- Tracking
- Clue awareness during a search
- Patient packaging (how to secure an injured person and help transport them safely out of an area back to base)
- Fire starting exercises
- Land navigation via compass and maps
- Night land navigation
- Radio communications
- Wilderness survival
- Basic first aid
- Technical and semi-technical rescue
- Attending SAREX 2007 and working alongside fellow ASRC groups

After basic COQ training was complete, I continued to attend weekly meetings, as well as awaiting call-outs for active searches.



Practicing patient packaging and transport

Impact

I learned a great deal during my time in PVRG. I was able to receive training in a variety of skills, such as basic wilderness survival and basic first aid, that I will retain for a long time. PVRG participated in several searches this year, including the November 2007 West Virginia search for Jacob Allen, an autistic teenager who got lost during a family trip and remained missing for four days. Although a missing person search does not always have such a successful ending, the effort of so many people volunteering time and energy to help find someone is truly remarkable.

I am deeply motivated by the thought of being able to help people, and PVRG has been an ideal and exiting way to do so.

Future Work

As a COQ, I will be able to continue attending searches whenever a callout is in effect. I have the opportunity to continue training with PVRG and obtain higher-level certifications such as Field Team Member (FTM) and even Field Team Leader (FTL). I look forward to continuing my training with the Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group and assisting with searches to help locate missing people.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Samuel Lee (site supervisor), Bruce Eberle and Alan Holmes (PVRG president).

Thanks as well to Dr. Thomas Holtz, Dr. John Merk and the ELT program

Photos courtesy of
<http://pvrg.asrc.net>
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