



Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group

www.amrg.info

June - August 2010

Upcoming Trainings

*There has been a change to the training schedule due to conflicts. The August 7th field training will be moved to August 14th.

August 3rd- Class training on knots and ropes at Mercy room 2191 after the monthly meeting. Training will start at 19:30

August 14th- We will be working on land navigation skills while preparing the course for the training exercise in September. All members are invited to attend.

August 18th- There will be a weekday training on clue awareness, search, and navigation at 18:30. The training location will be announced.

September 7th- Class Training will be on SAR Theory. This training will be at 19:30 in room 2191 at Mercy Hospital.

September 11th- The sweep width exercise/ clue awareness training will be held at Game Lands 203.

Note -- There are canine trainings each week. Come out and help the team by hiding for a canine task or get extra practice with your navigation skills. Please contact Heather Houlahan for details on future canine trainings.

These trainings are open to any who are interested, unless noted, and are offered free of charge. Pre-registration is required, however, as space may be limited. Please contact AMRG Training Officer [Ken Chiacchia](#) register, or to get directions.

The AMRG calendar can be accessed at www.amrg.info/training-calendar.html. Please check for updates.

Upcoming Events

Sweep Width Experiment September 11th at State Game lands 203, Allegheny County.

This effective Sweep Width Experiment (SWE) is part of a national effort being coordinated by the [National SAR Committee](#). The goal is to gather data about how searchers detect clues/evidence and improve the ways searchers are deployed and how search managers calculate the probability a search team in the field will find what they are looking for, ultimately creating more effective and efficient search techniques. This will be the third SWE that AMRG has conducted, each during a different time of the year to test results with varying foliage coverage. This creates a great set of data that contributes to the national effort, but is also particularly valuable to our specific local region. The results from the two previous experiments are being published in the September issue of Wilderness & Environmental Medicine.

We are particularly pleased to announce that the Director of the Inland National SAR School, Lt. Col William Clarke (USAF), will be joining us to observe the experiment in September. It is great to see a figure of national prominence coming here to recognize and participate in the work that we are doing locally improve the science behind search management.

No SAR experience is necessary to participate and both trained and non-trained searchers are needed for this study. This will be done as an exercise where you will walk in wooded areas looking for clues along the course and involved about 2 hours of participation. Please register AMRG Training Officer [Ken Chiacchia](#) so you can be given an appointment time to start the course. Plan for a fun time and bring a non-SAR friend who like the woods. They might find it interesting.

Wilderness First Aid Class November 20th and 21st

AMRG will be hosting a Wilderness First Aid Class on November 20th and 21st at the Middle Lancaster Community Center, Harmony, Pa. (in Butler County). This is a perfect class for either outdoorspeople who want to be prepared for what the woods can dish out or volunteer SAR responders looking for basic first-aid certification. The proceeds benefit AMRG, an all-volunteer organization that helps lost and injured people in the woods at no cost to them or the government agencies we support. Cost is \$99 and you can register now at: www.amrg.info/wilderness-first-aid.html

Wilderness EMT Class September and October

For EMTs and WEMTs needing recertification, there will be a WEMT class starting the weekend of September 17- 19th. The class will finish on the weekend of October 8- 10th. The class is conducted by the CDS Outdoor School and will be held at Camp Soles near Summerset, Pa.

Call Outs May – July

Zelienople, Butler County, May 3th

AMRG received a request from the Zelienople Police Department to assist locate a 14 YO male despondent last seen in headed into a wooded area. The subject had been located by the New Sewickley PD in good condition shortly after we were notified and before AMRG personnel arrived on scene.

The Zelienople PD called us very early in this search and they were very pleased with the quickness of our response. This is good sign that our outreach efforts in Butler County and a happy ending for the search, as well.

City of Pittsburgh, May 5th

AMRG was activated by Allegheny County Emergency Management for a search for a 5 year old female in the East Hills area of Pittsburgh. The child had been last seen at approximately 17:30 in a playground next to an apartment building that the child and her mother were visiting. Police were called to assist at approximately 19:30 and initial notification to AMRG was at 20:53. The search was centered around a playground, in a fairly large group of apartments complexes, which were on top of a hill a surrounded by some surprisingly thick and large wood areas and a large construction site. Working with the Pittsburgh Emergency Management, we established a temporary command post while we waited for the Allegheny County command 200 truck to arrive.

We did one quick reflex task - sending a canine team to follow-up on a child's foot prints leading into a 24" storm drain, which had been located by police officers. We were preparing a second hasty canine task for the woods immediately behind the playground when the girl was located at approximately 21:45. She was in the hallway of a different apartment building about 150 yards away on the same street - a resident noticed her unattended in a hallway and called 911. It was not immediately clear where she was for 4 hours she was missing, but was not in that hallway for that entire time and most likely didn't enter that building until after dark. The subject appeared in good condition with no obvious injuries. She was transported to the hospital as a precaution.

Overall, there as an excellent, quick response. We got called in very early and we got very good exposure with the City Police and EMA.

Savage River State Forest, Maryland, June 6th

AMRG participated in the search was for a 72 year old male hiker/ginseng hunter in the Savage River State Forest, Maryland. The subject had been missing since the previous afternoon when he continued hiking/gathering after the rest of his party stopped for the day and returned to their vehicle. He was supposed to return several hours later. When he failed to do so, his friends contacted the state police and the search began the evening of June 5, with the major search effort starting the next morning. On Sunday there were approximately 60 searchers from PA, MD, DE, WV, and VA, including members from 4 ASRC teams, including AMRG.

The subject was up and mobile throughout the search, adding to the challenge of locating him. Maryland State Police provided the search management function for this incident, of all ASRC were committed to the field. A combined field team of AMRG and Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (another ASRC team) members were assigned to an area that ended up containing the improvised shelter that the subject had spent the previous night in, as well as sign that the subject had traveled through the area. The subject was located about 1 mile downstream of this location by a canine team. The subject was about 1.7 kilometers from the point last seen. The subject was not injured, but was suffering from mild dehydration and it was decided to do a carry out. The Maryland Park Police had have the same Junkin litter and Russ Anderson litter wheel combination that AMRG has and the carryout was pretty straight forward over relatively level ground. Without the litter wheel this would have been a pretty long and brutal carry out with the number of people we had on scene. The subject was transported to the hospital and ticketed for illegal ginseng harvesting.

Carnegie, PA, July 17th

AMRG was activated by Allegheny County 911 to assist with a search for an 8 year old and an 11 year old missing from Carnegie. As members were beginning to respond, the local authorities stood us done based on in information indicating the subjects were no longer in the area.

North Versailles, PA, July 24th

AMRG was activated by Allegheny County 911 to assist with search for possible missing person in North Versailles. Early that day a number of businesses in the area had called the police about an apparently intoxicated man wandering around the area. This man was later found in the woods a short distance from the staging area. Before being transported to the hospital the patient indicated that he had been hiking with another man who fell down a cliff. At that point a lost person search with local resources was initiated. A trailing dog was brought in and provided with a scent article. The track followed by the dog corresponded well to the description, provided by the patient of the path taken. At this point the search was enlarged and SAR resources were requested.

Initial hasty tasks of the area produced no results. Additional investigation efforts resulted in multiple conflicting descriptions of the events provided by the patient. The patient's blood alcohol level returned at 0. Based on most recent information two small hasty tasks were crewed by White Oak and sent out. The patient's wife was reached and she indicated that the patient had stopped taking his meds a couple of weeks ago. She also stated that she was with the patient when he left the home and that he was alone. The RA made the decision to terminate the search at that point.

Additional Activations and Alerts

AMRG was requested for 3 searches outside our response area that we declined due to the distance from Pittsburgh:

- 6/15/2010 – Request from West Virginia State Police for assistance with crime scene recovery mission in Webster County WV
- 7/17/2010 – Missing 14 year old male in Shenandoah County, VA. The subject was located safely.
- 7/19/2010 – Missing 69 old male in Manassas, VA. The subject was located safely.

AMRG was alerted and put on standby, but not activated for the following incidents:

- 5/19/2010 – West Homestead Standby.
- 6/22/2010 – Missing 11 year old autistic male, Hillsboro, VA.
- 7/3/2010 – Standby for missing hiker in Dolly Sods, WV
- 7/20/2010 – Alert for missing 82 year old female in Girard, OH. Subject was located before AMRG could respond.
- 7/29/2010 – Standby for a missing 50 year old in McKeesport

June and July Training Activities

June 1st- Dr. Keith Conover conducted classroom training on communications

June 5th- Communication field training lead by Dr. Conover. Training included setting up a base and running a search simulation.

June 30th- There was a basic FTM skills training at Frick Park.

July 6th- Class training was held on patient packaging and semi tech rescue.

July 10th- The trailer was inventoried at Harmony. We also worked on low angle rescue. Ken and Heather provided the members with a great barbecue. Thanks for the great food.

July 18th- ASRC BOD meeting was held. It was attended by Don Scelza, Chris Ruch, Ken Chiacchia, and Rebecca Hostetter.

Members in the News.

Tom Prigg led an expedition to Newfoundland to climb icebergs. Details of the trip are available at:

<http://ngadventure.typepad.com/blog/2010/05/ice-climbing-icebergs-newfoundland-canada.html>

Eric Menendez successfully completed his hike of the Appalachian Trail this summer. You can find information about his trip at <http://www.menendezfamily.com>

Chris Ruch and Andrew Hower completed the [National Inland Search and Rescue Planning Course](#), a 5-day long comprehensive, “graduate-level” look at inland search theory and its application to land and air searches for missing persons and aircraft with a focus on wilderness searches.

Lucas Nene left for two years in the Peace Corps. He will serve in Fiji.

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group

Commander: Chris Ruch
Executive Director: Don Scelza
Operations Officer: Joe Ray
Training Officer: Ken Chiacchia
Canine Training Officer: Heather Houlahan
ASRC Delegates- Ken Chiacchia, Rebecca Hostetter
PSARC Delegates- Maria O'Brien and John
MRA Delegate- Chris Ruch

c/o Department of Emergency Medicine
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Pittsburgh, PA 15219-5166
Non-emergency calls: 1-888-333-4282
Emergency callouts by public agencies only: 1-800-MED-STAT
Allegheny County only- 911