

After Action Report

DATE: 15 August, 2007

SUBJECT: After Action Report – Sulphur Peak

FROM: Robert Hollister, RACES Coordinator
TO: David Noland, CCSO SAR Coordinator
CC: Mike Evans, CC Emergency Services
RACES Team

1. PURPOSE:

This report briefly describes the support provided by the RACES Communications team to the Cochise County Search and Rescue Team on 15 August. It does not address any SAR specific operational issues.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The RACES team received notification by page of a Search/Recovery mission in the Sulphur Peak area of the Chiricahua Mountains. This search was a continuation of a previous effort for the young Guatemalan lady who was reported dead earlier this year. Earlier efforts to locate her had been unsuccessful due to lack of precise or correct information received as "Last Known Points". There have been several alleged locations. Unfortunately this appeared to be the case on today's search as well. Eight searchers were deployed by AZ DPS helicopter to a landing zone near the summit of Sulphur Peak at approximately 6:30. The SAR team members scoured the area looking for traces but were unable to locate any viable clues. Due to the altitude and the dense underbrush this was a very physically demanding effort as they continued to look for clues. They worked their way down the mountain and along the South Fork of Cave Creek reaching the bottom near 17:30 hours. The mission was terminated at that time and the RACES team was released. As an added bonus, a crew from the Univision Spanish language TV network was on scene interviewing some SAR members and videotaping some of the action. They did not join the team on the mountain.

3. LESSONS LEARNED/ISSUES

Equipment – The replacement Big Stick was deployed and appeared to work well. The mast was deployed full height. We still need to test it against other antennas to determine the level of improvement. We could not really test the cell phone booster as cell coverage in that area is also so limited.

Location/Tactics – As soon as we got the computer up we did a quick terrain model to determine RF line of sight characteristics. It was obvious that we had some really severe terrain issues here. In consultation with the SAR overhead team the alternate CP (ambulance) was deployed to the South Fork picnic area to act as a relay. That was very effective. It was interesting that despite the mountains, we were still able to hear

the ground team reasonably well in some of their locations, at least as well as the relay point. Of course there were several others where we could not but the relay team heard them very well. Getting the MCU into the South Fork location would have been problematic and probably scraped many of the antennas off the roof of the MCU due to the low tree limbs.

Coffee Pot – As soon as things settled down we started to make coffee. Yuck!! Cleanup on the previous mission was not complete and another batch of an unknown fungus was growing in the coffee ground remains that were left in the brewing basket. This is the second time recently that we have experienced an advanced case of green/brown fungus. If you make it, clean it up please. Thanks to Mike for cleaning up the mess and scouring out the basket (and providing the cookies).

4. COMMENTS

We used the mission to provide training to some relatively new operators on MCU operations. We practiced using the Terrain Navigator Map software, HF Email via Winlink (great 40 meter coverage), Satellite Email and weather data, driver training, as well as going over several of the MCU basic setup and tear down procedures.

I also want to thank Dennis McAvoy (KE7KRE) of Portal Rescue for coordinating the opening of their facility for use of the restrooms and to Rick Beno (KE6OIS) of Portal Rescue for his assistance during the day. With a little luck we will recruit Rick as a future RACES team member.

5. ACTION ITEMS

No specific actions resulting from this mission.

Appendix – Participants

- CCSO SAR Unit
- AZ DPS Ranger
- RACES Team
 - Eugene Simpson – MCU Operator/Co-Driver
 - Mike McNeill - MCU Operator/Co-Driver
 - Bob Hollister - MCU Operator/Chase
 - Tim Gord - MCU Operator/Chase
- Portal Rescue
 - Rick Beno

Bob
Robert L Hollister