

Preface

The “Management of Land Search Operations” course evolved comprehensively to provide standards for use by government agencies, volunteers, and others in the search for missing and lost persons. Note the early emphasis in this Text on investigation, specifically in the law enforcement context.

Earlier publications emphasized and referenced the term “lost person” as the focal point of efficient and effective search. The term “missing person” more aptly describes the subject today that might be anywhere in the world regardless of jurisdiction or environment. In most cases the initial actions taken by law enforcement to determine whether or not to search, and/or where to search depend on very basic investigative concepts and established protocols. Though especially true in cases concerning abductions, these principles hold true in all rural and urban missing person incidents.

Bob Mattson said it best circa 1976, “You are working for the lost or missing person!” The objective of a search mission always centers on finding the missing person quickly and efficiently. Efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things right. Good management, effective leadership and good investigative skills pull all these things together smoothly and economically to help solve the classic search mystery.

Additionally, these same practices apply to evidence searches in both small and large-scale police operations and prison breaks. Some search incidents involve several jurisdictions and the coordination of hundreds in the air and on the ground. More and more law enforcement agencies use the basic material contained in search management training and apply it to everyday police and criminal operations including evasion. Search management training creates the planning efforts, and cooperation expected in a fully integrated emergency response system.

Search management today is not uncomplicated or liability free. It requires some homework, a professional attitude about the disciplines involved, and most of all the humility to ask for help over pride. Within any search function, or the search management process, teamwork and collective minds find people faster. The best search managers share

information and knowledge because they know that people’s lives depend on it. The problems are the same the world over. Only the people, their networks and their attitudes differ.

The term “textbook” implies a great deal. Webster says it is a “*book giving instructions in the principles of a subject of study or a book used as the basis or partial basis for a course of study.*” In the last five years, search management and training for land search passed through some very drastic changes regarding philosophy and application of basic principles. This change results from a merging of what previously was referred to as “Search Theory” with the traditional presentation under the banners of “land search.”

Running a search with a short checklist and a brief notepad reminder often sufficed several decades ago, but not today. Every dedicated individual working in SAR wants to do their level best, if for no other reason than the self satisfaction of making a difference when someone’s life hangs in the balance. This Textbook provides a foundation of information, research and concepts to help make that difference. When the situation looks grim after the third day of searching with no new leads and the search manager faces many questions about which he knows very little, it is hoped this Text and the co-developed Handbook will provide some key guidance and rationale.

After twenty five years of teaching “Search Management” in nine countries around the world, I am convinced more than ever that we all still have a lot to learn, and a lot more people to reach! Exciting and innovative ideas constantly surface, particularly in the past several years (*in the application of search theory*). Unfortunately we have not kept pace with either technology or the need for the delivery of comprehensive training in search management.

In today’s fast pace society, intuitive or simple solutions obviously attract attention. However, just like a difficult crime requires good down-to-earth detective work, good investigation and the application of basic “search theory” principles often make the difference on a search. If you only have intuition and easy solutions, it’s hard to make the leap into the “big leagues” of liability and distraught relatives. Unfortunately, some find this out the hard way.

Is there some of the same “old stuff” in this Textbook that we’ve all seen for a number of years? Yes, because that information will always form the foundation to good search management. Are there new concepts, research, forms and time saving hints? Most definitely! I think you will find it a vast improvement over previously developed Textbooks on this subject.

Keep in mind that this Textbook is by no means an exhaustive work on search management. This Textbook deals with basic methods to put local search planners and coordinators on firm ground with regard to “standard of care” and other liability issues. There are a myriad of references available on search theory and other approaches to the management of

this function. The reference list in the back of this publication provides a brief list, albeit not all inclusive, for further reading on the subject. It does provide a list of references that should be of interest to anyone serious about managing land search operations. Homework and study is definitely a vital component of any search manager’s responsibility.

It is hoped that this Textbook will provide some real assistance as a building block for local SAR response capability and will also serve as a catalyst for planning and learning. *“Professionals are never through with school.”* And the homework doesn’t end or get easier in this discipline either!

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