

TROSSACHS SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC028266

Founded 1998

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SPEAKER'S NOTES – UK SAR WORKSHOP 2002

Trossachs Search and Rescue Team operates mainly in the Aberfoyle area in Scotland. The team is a Scottish charity with 35 volunteer members. Several members are members of the professional emergency services, with some former military personnel, a local doctor, nurse, outdoor instructor, shepherds etc making up the team – oh, and six search dogs – all Border Collies. Formed in 1998, has been involved in 60 incidents, located 17 missing persons (11 by specialist search dog & 6 by human members) and has provided first-aid to around 200 people. In addition, we have trained over 130 people how to use ELS skills through our TSART Heartstart programme.

We train and have worked closely with other NGOs in Scotland which are members of the Federation of Search and Rescue Organisations.

The purpose of our input is three-fold:

- a) promote the use of specialist search dogs in SAR ops for the benefit of the casualty
- b) alert you to the dangers of operating in a hostile rural environment;
- c) raise awareness of our own operatives and specialist search dogs.

There are several search dog organisations in the UK, each offering a valuable service. In Scotland, there are also several specialist search dog groups – ourselves, BCD, Disaster Dog Group and for mountainous areas only – two SARDA groups.

Search dogs should be utilised as early as possible in any situation, no-one minds being stood down en route if not required.

Trossachs Specialist Search Dogs use an air-scenting technique to locate casualties and once found, return to the handler, positively indicate and return to the casualty. This 'find' sequence is repeated until the handler reaches the casualty. Disaster search dogs might disagree with this method however, remaining at the casualty and barking does not work in hostile weather conditions where the dog may have

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Our Community Emergency Life Support Training Scheme is affiliated to : [*HEARTSTART UK*](#)

Trossachs Search Dogs are kindly sponsored by : [*WAGG Foods*](#)

Medical Officer : [*Dr Kyle Lifson, MBCHB, MRCP, MRCPGP*](#)

Heartstart Co-ordinator : [*Elaine Bruce, SEN*](#)

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Training Officer : [*Joanne Reid, MA*](#)

Collecting Can Organiser : [*Lady Maureen Campbell*](#)

located the casualty several hundred metres from its handler. We have demonstrated this to other search dog groups and Police dog handlers who thought it a bad idea, and they have been very impressed with our system.

Whatever search dog organisation you call out, listen to their handlers and take advice – after all, they are as keen to locate casualties as you, and will do their best to achieve that aim.

Most firefighters will be used to operating in urban environments. Even in hostile weather, buildings offer protection from the weather and street lighting is present during darkness. Transport your incident to a rural setting, with no protection from snow, ice, driving wind and absolute darkness and you will be at risk from the environment. Do you have the proper clothing, equipment, navigational skills, and fitness levels to deal with the weather, never mind the incident?

Heavy Firefighter clothing, bulky helmets, wellies, ... all ideal for trudging through snow? Lighting ? Your small torches will be almost useless and large heavy torches will soon be discarded. Need to apply rope rescue techniques on steep or vertical terrain – no trees for belaying – do you have multiple spikes etc?

NGOs who work in such conditions regularly will be a valuable resource, if not only to provide that valuable SAR service, but possibly to assist you in navigating your way to the locus, providing spare clothing / specialised equipment and providing support to your personnel, ensuring their safety. We may not have the cutting gear but we can get you there safely, look after you on scene and enable you to return to safety.

Trossachs Search and Rescue Team not only provides a specialist search dog resource but provides a resource of men and women trained and equipped to provide a search capability. Once the casualty is located we can provide first-aid – from members with basic skills to two members at paramedic level, and a highly skilled BASICS doctor, not forgetting our nurse and ambulance technician! We have a rope access capability for technical rescue situations – or to provide a safety feature for our personnel and once we are ready to evacuate the casualty can do so on modern specialist stretchers, using our vacuum spinal or limb splints if required.

So, how else can we help?

- a) Road accidents where there is a possibility that a vehicle occupant has wandered off (especially when injured or in poor weather);
- b) Fire at a rural or isolated house – to search area in case a resident has wandered off;
- c) Railway incident – search of embankments, especially those which are overgrown and adjacent fields for passengers who may have wandered off;
- d) Any incident where a search is deemed necessary.

Please remember – our team will operate wherever required, we are not bound by any geographical boundaries and our response will be swift and appropriate to the incident. Also, think 'search dogs'.

Stuart Ballantyne & Gordon Gregory

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