ON SCENE

The Quarterly SAR Newsletter

FALL 2012

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U.S. Coast Guard
Office of Search & Rescue
(CG–SAR)

Insights

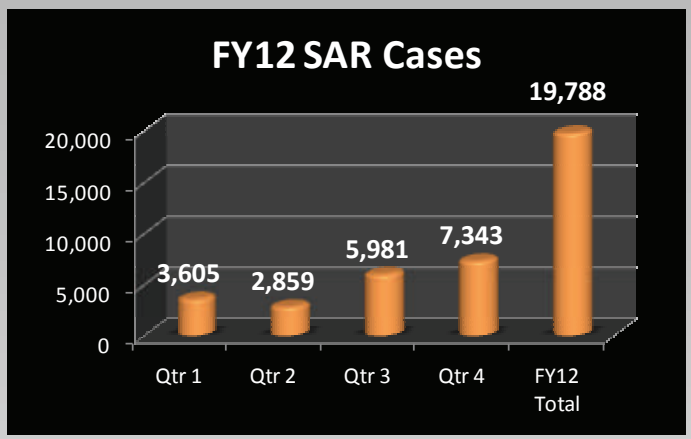
By LT Tom Gorgol

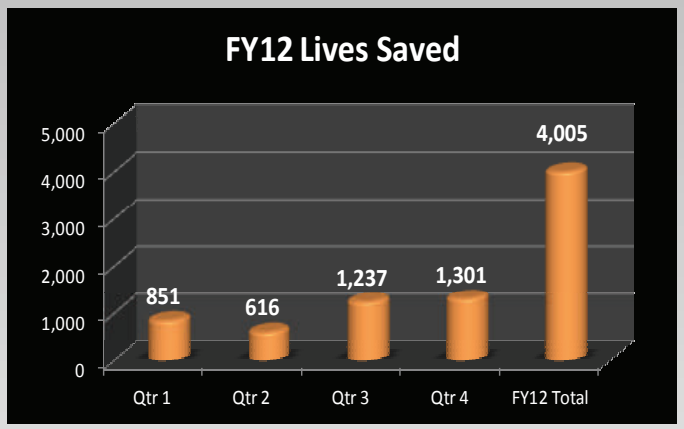
Office of Search & Rescue

I wanted to share with you this information which comes to us from the New Zealand SAR Council. It was recently published in the New Zealand SAR newsletter "LINK" and the New Zealand SAR Council was very pleased to have me share this information to a wider audience. We are truly grateful to have them as an International partner. The below highlights the fact that, globally, SAR planners face the same obstacles and challenges.

- **Know your resources: task them appropriately, within their skills base.**
- **There is a huge difference between knowledge and actual skills**
- **You gain knowledge from attending courses, reading, and listening .**
- **To become skilled, you need to practice the elements of the skill. This takes time, dedication and commitment. You definitely do not become skilled by just attending courses or from reading books.**
- **Record everything!!! *NOTHING* has happened unless it has been properly documented.**
- **Plan using all the intelligence you can gather. This may come from family, friends, witness, statistics, location analysis, subject matter experts, etc.**
- **Put your plan in the hands of a resource that has the skills to obtain the plan's objective.**
- **Use the basic search planning blocks you have available.**
- **Remember; lost people develop a plan (normally a suspect one) and stick to it.**

Statistics





Sector SAR Conference: Strengthening Our Partnerships

By LT Kevin Karow and Brad Stickles, Sector Baltimore

For the past five years Sector Baltimore has held an annual Search and Rescue Conference with our Federal, State, Local, and commercial assistance partners. Although our SAR Conference was born through an effort to expand upon the CG Addendum requirement to conduct regional public meetings with commercial assistance providers, the results of the conferences have far exceeded initial goals. Beyond the CG Addendum, the SAR Conference embodies 14 USC 141 that discusses Coast Guard cooperation with other agencies and is directly in line with the Commandant's Guiding Principle of "Strengthening Our Partnerships".

The annual SAR Conference has allowed a variety of topics to be presented and discussed in an open forum while maintaining an overall message: Teamwork. Presentations

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have ranged from search patterns to the CG Maritime SAR Assistance Policy to communications interoperability, to name a few. In 2011, the SAR Conference specifically focused on improving our relationship with the local 911 centers. Over twenty 911 centers were personally contacted and asked to send a representative to the conference. This allowed us to speak to 911 operators to ensure they were collecting the necessary information (Initial SAR Checksheet) from boaters in distress calling via cell phone. Our 2012 conference focused on visual distress signals in an effort to educate our partner agencies on the Coast Guard's flare response policy. Additionally, we had a practical demonstration and Coast Guard Station Curtis Bay launched several types of flares from the water allowing the attendees to see what different types of flares look like. We then showed them what information we collect (Flare Checksheet) so we can build the "flare cone" in SAROPS and respond appropriately.

The results and feedback of the conferences has been overwhelming positive. Most notable has been the strengthening of our relationship with the Maryland State Police Aviation Command that maintains a fleet of twelve DAUPHIN II helicopters (similar to the CG's HH-65) with extensive search and rescue capabilities. Furthermore, they are able to provide detailed search data from their aircraft tracking software called Spidertracks. This information can be sent to the Sector Command Center at which point the SAR planner can transfer the tracklines to SAROPS for an accurate picture of the combined search efforts. Additionally, our relationship with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources has significantly blossomed to a point that they now share their common operating picture software (CommandBridge) with the SCC. Similar to WatchKeeper in functionality (blue force tracking, trip-wires, real-time weather data), but Command Bridge incorporates real-time radar tracks which have been used to help prosecute several SAR cases.

Figure 1: SpiderTracks

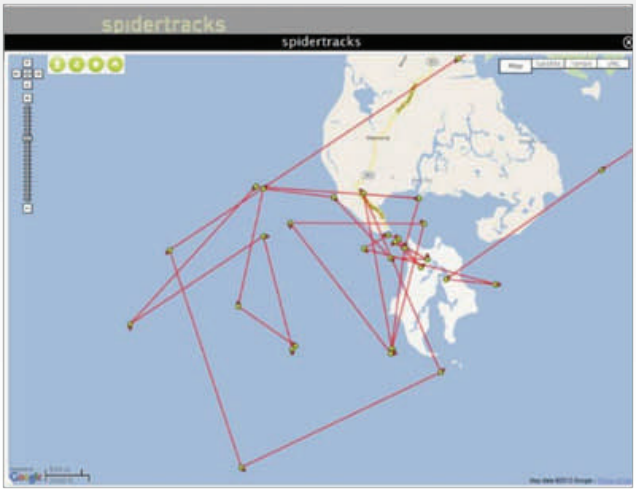
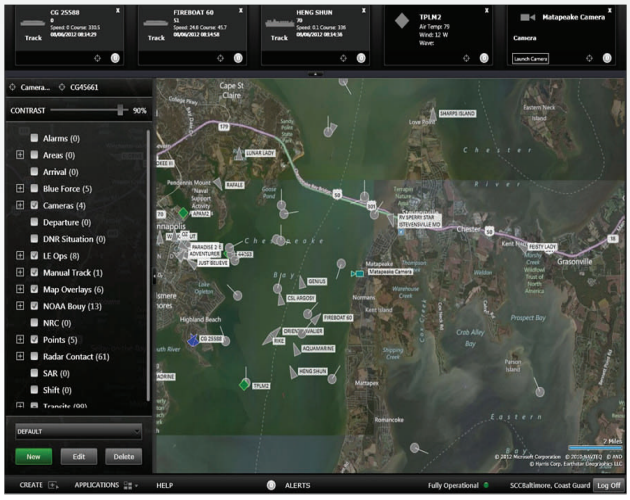


Figure 2: CommandBridge



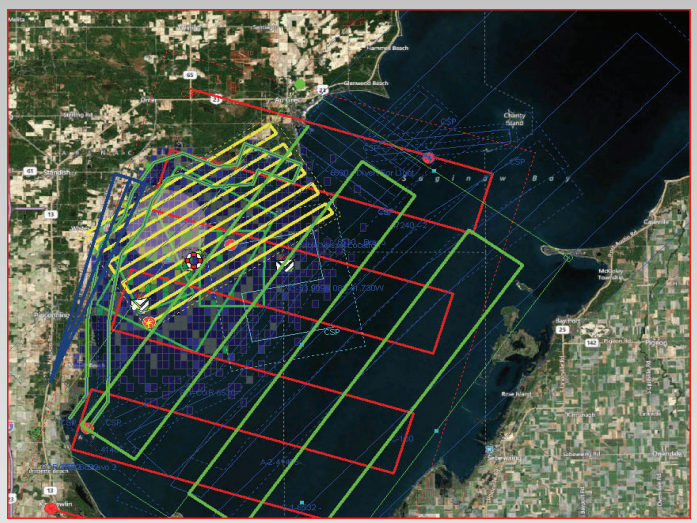
SAR Case Summary—Overdue Vessel

By LT David A. Smith
District Nine Command Center

On July 9th, 2012 two adults and two children took an 18' Crestliner from Au Gres, MI to Saginaw Bay to go fishing. The vessel's owner contacted the Coast Guard when they hadn't returned for the evening. Weather conditions were calm when the four individuals went out. The air was a warm 70 degrees Fahrenheit and water temperature was 73 degrees Fahrenheit. Winds were 5-10 knots from the north-east and seas were less than two feet. The party contacted their friend at 5PM on a cell phone before they were reported missing. Air Station Detroit, Station/Aids to Navigation Team Saginaw River, and Station Tawas were instructed to launch while Sector Detroit attempted to locate the vessel. District Nine Command Center contacted the cell phone company and acquired a Line Of Bearing (LOB) of the party's last phone call in order to concentrate search efforts. Although weather conditions were calm, forecasts were deteriorating.

At approximately 5:30 p.m., all four individuals plunged into the water when three large waves capsized the boat. They were caught by surprise and were unable to transmit any type of distress broadcasts on their VHF radio. Nightfall approached while all four desperately held on to the craft. Sometime during the evening one of the adults decided it would be better to swim to shore rather than stay with the vessel. He would be the last one to be found.

Sea conditions were now exceeding six feet, causing boat assets to require waivers to continue searching. CGC HOLLYHOCK and local assets were now dispatched to assist search efforts. Twelve hours passed since the vessel had capsized and Coast Guard units were still unable to locate the vessel. Additional search assets would be needed to continue searching throughout the day.



District Nine units have a special relationship with the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) Trenton.

Throughout the year Canadian and US Coast Guard assets operate together to rescue individuals in distress across the Great Lakes. JRCC Trenton was contacted and coordinated a Canadian C-130 aircraft to continue searching as daylight approached.

Just before sunrise Air Station Detroit's MH-65 helicopter found the capsized vessel with three people clinging on. The helicopter lowered their rescue swimmer and hoisted all three people safely aboard. They had been in the water for 14 hours. Although search efforts could now be concentrated

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around the vessel, it would be more difficult to find a person in the water than it was to locate the vessel. Station Tawas 47 foot Motor Life Boat searched the area around the boat and rescued the fourth member 3.5 miles away. All members were exhausted but in good condition. Every person rescued had their lifejackets on. The positive outcome of the case emphasizes various elements necessary for an effective search:

- **Search effectiveness** dramatically improved at first light. Although assets repeatedly covered the search object throughout the night, it wasn't until first light that the vessel was located.
- **Interoperability** with local and Canadian assets was extremely important. Although the search object was located at first light, search efforts would have continued throughout the day utilizing Canadian and local assets.
- **Teamwork, effective communication, and organizational risk management** between the Sector, District, and search units were paramount in safely coordinating three helicopters, five boat assets, CGC HOLLYHOCK, a Canadian C-130, and two local marine units.
- Although weather conditions were calm, every person had their lifejackets on. This action quite possibly saved the lives of each person onboard.

The motto of the Ninth District is "Guardians of the Great Lakes" and we take our duty seriously. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, we're responsible for all Coast Guard operations throughout the five Great Lakes, the Saint Lawrence Seaway and parts of the surrounding states including 6,700 miles of shoreline and 1,500 miles of the international border with Canada.

The more than 5,500 active duty, reserve, civilian and auxiliary men and women who make up the Ninth District deliver multi-mission services in search and rescue, maritime safety and security, environmental protection, maritime law enforcement, aids to navigation and icebreaking.

Amver Success Stories

Greek Boxship Saves Canadian Sailor

By Ben Strong

AMVER Program Manager

A 72 year old Canadian sailor, on a voyage from Maui to Vancouver, was plucked from the sailboat Turicum by a Greek boxship on Tuesday August 7, 2012, 1040 miles north northeast of Hawaii after experiencing a condition that required medical attention.

The 72 year old Vancouver resident was returning on the 44 foot sailing vessel when a medical condition worsened and he became dehydrated. The crew of the Turicum notified U.S. Coast Guard rescue authorities in Honolulu who began querying the Amver system for commercial ships that could assist.

Amver, sponsored by the United States Coast Guard, is a unique, computer-based, and voluntary global ship reporting system used worldwide by search and rescue authorities to arrange for assistance to persons in distress at sea.

The M/V Hanjin Vancouver initially agreed to divert and assist the sailor but the Greek flagged Navarino was closer and agreed to divert towards the sailboat and help the ill yachtsman.

"We're 320 miles from the Turicum's last reported position," stated the Captain of the Navarino, "we expect to meet in 12 hours. Please pass to the vessel to maintain 150 meridian." The Captain rendezvoused with the Turicum ahead of schedule and maneuvered the 1,000 foot containership within 4 meters of the sailboat, providing a lee from the wind. The crew of the Navarino then used a tether to transfer the sailor throughthe pilot entrance. The sailor was uninjured in the transfer.

U.S. Coast Guard flight surgeon instructed the crew of the Navarino to assess the sailor. The crew reported the gentleman was still experiencing some health issues, but had normal vital signs and was resting comfortably. The Navarino will bring the sailor to its next port, Los Angeles, Calf. on August 10, 2012.

Amver, sponsored by the United States Coast Guard, is a unique, computer-based, and voluntary global ship reporting system used worldwide by search and rescue authorities to arrange for assistance to persons in distress at sea. With Amver, rescue coordinators can identify participating ships in the area of distress and divert the best-suited ship or ships to respond. Vessels send periodic position reports to the Amver center until arriving at their port of call. This data is able to project the position of each ship at any point during its voyage. In an emergency, any rescue coordination center can request this data to determine the relative position of Amver ships near the distress location.

On any day there are over 5,000 ships available to carry out search and rescue services. Visit http://www.amver.com to learn more about this unique worldwide search and rescue system.

Office of Search and Rescue (CG-SAR)

The Office of Search and Rescue consist of two divisions, the Policy Division (CG-SAR-1) and the Coordination Division (CG-SAR-2). CG-SAR-1 oversees search planning applications such as Search and Rescue Optimal Planning System, conducts SAR research and development, reviews SAR resource and policy data analysis, and maintains the Coast Guard Addendum to the National SAR Supplement. CG-SAR-2 oversees international and interagency SAR coordination, reviews and negotiates SAR agreements, serves as Secretariat for the National SAR Committee, and serves on the U.S. delegation to the International Maritime Organization communications and SAR subcommittee, and International Civil Aviation Organization joint working group on SAR. In addition, this division oversees the Amver, Mass Rescue Program, SAR Contingency Exercises, International Engagement and Maritime Industry Matters, and is the Coast Guard Program Manager for Cospas-Sarsat issues.

Links:

Amver—http://www.amver.com/

CG SAR Addendum: http://www.uscg.mil/directives/cim/16000-16999/CIM_16130_2E.pdf

RESCUE 21—http://www.uscg.mil/acquisition/rescue21/

COSPAS– SARSAT— http://www.cospas-sarsat.org/

International Maritime Organization— http://www.imo.org/Pages/home.aspx

If you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for future newsletter articles, please contact LT Tom Gorgol at: Thomas.F.Gorgol@uscg.mil or call 202-372-2082.

U .S. Coast Guard Headquarters

COMMANDANT (CG-SAR)
US COAST GUARD
2100 2ND ST SW STOP 7363
Washington DC 20593-0001

Room 3106

Telephone # (202) 372-2075

Fax # (202) 372-2912

http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg534/default.asp