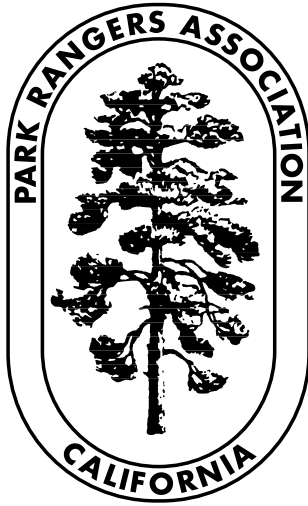


The Signpost

November-December, 2006



Preparedness

by Pam Helmke

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina many government agencies are working hard to improve their ability to respond to a terrorist attack or large natural disaster. Like many California agencies my department has mandated that all employees be familiar with the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Every Ranger in my department has had to attend a class or complete the on-line courses for ICS-100 and IS-700. As public safety officers most rangers are very comfortable with the incident command system and NIMS. After zipping through my on-line exams I started wondering how prepared my agency was for a large disaster.

I have always known that the Parks and Recreation Department was responsible for the care and shelter function during a major disaster. As I reviewed my City's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) I began to realize just how un-prepared my park, my department and I was personally for a large scale disaster, like a major earthquake.

Our EOP, like most of the plans I have seen, relies on Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) to provide a large part of the care and shelter services. In our EOP the American Red Cross is the primary NGO Parks and Recreation would work with. How long will it take the Red Cross to mobilize and be functional at my shelter site?

As a former paramedic and now a ranger I have always known that field staff would be on their own for 48-72 hours. We've all been taught to have food, water, medicine and other supplies to support ourselves and our families for at least 3 days. The experts felt that the emergency management professionals would be able to mobilize, move equipment and start serving the victims within that time period. Katrina proved that the 3 day rule wasn't enough. We are now being told to prepare to be self sufficient for 10-14 days at the minimum.

As I looked around my park I realized that I do not have access to a 14 day supply for food and water for my staff. I don't keep a 2 week supply of my essential medications in a travel kit. (Trying to get an advanced supply of prescription medications through most HMO's isn't a lot of fun either.) There are no pre-positioned supplies to set up shelter and sanitation for members of the public that would be seeking shelter in my assigned park.

Over the last several weeks I've started looking at simple ways to correct as many problems as I can, starting with my personal preparedness. I'm putting together a small pack with the essentials, including those medications and hygiene items I will need to stay healthy enough to help others. I've started a dialogue with our managers about pre-positioning key supplies and looking into plans for providing water and sanitation to the people who may seek aid in my park. I am also making it a point to be more familiar with my City's and my department's EOP's. As a long term goal I will be taking some classes in mass care and shelter from the American Red Cross.

Small but simple steps can make all the difference. Wind-up chargers for cell phones, a bucket filled with dehydrated food to last my staff for several weeks (only \$100.00 at a local big box store) are on my list of recommended purchases to my supervisor. Having an electrician wire the park well so a portable generator can be attached to pump fresh water when the City mains are shattered is also on my list of recommendations.

If your agency expects you to respond do you have a plan? Are you prepared to be on your own for 10 days?

From the President's Patrol Truck

Recently I was approached by an organization asking if PRAC would support their cause. The organization is call SPIN.

Stop Propeller Strikes.

Provide Support to Survivors.

Inform and Educate Public Policy Legislators and Regulatory Agencies.

Network with Victims and Their Families to Enhance Boating Safety

SPIN is a non profit organization that is seeking legislative support to make boating education mandatory for all boaters. Each year more then 43% of people are injured and 51% killed due to propeller strikes.

Below is some statistics from SPIN's website www.spin-site.org

Propeller Related Injuries (812)

- 43% of the injuries occur in lakes.
- The major accident locations by state are: Florida 14% and California 10%. States with short boating seasons and/or strong education programs have demonstratively less accidents. Rhode Island, a mandatory license and education state, reported no prop accident.
- The top three Accident Types resulting in prop strikes are: struck by motor/propeller (43%), falls overboard (31%), skier mishap (10%).
- The top five causes of the accident are: operator inattention (24%), passenger or skier behavior (11%), operator inexperience (10%), careless/reckless operation (10%) and alcohol use (7%).
- Age of victim: 36% are 20 and under. That is 292 of the 812 total injuries.
- Type of Boat: 74% of all the accidents occurred in a propeller drive open motor-boat. 65% of these boats were 20' and under.
- Type of injury: laceration (76%), broken bones (7%), head injury (6%), amputation (3%). First aid was required in 95% of the cases. No figures are available for hospitalization. SPIN has requested this information for 10 years so that a proper cost benefit analysis can justify regulation.

Propeller Related Fatalities (162)

- 51% of the fatalities occur in lakes.
- Florida (17%), Louisiana (7%), California (6%), Wisconsin (6%).
- Top four types of accident are: falls overboard (44%), struck by motor/propeller (13%), collision with vessel (13%), Skier mishap (7%).
- Top five causes of accident: alcohol (19%), operator inattention (14%), careless/reckless operation (10%), and excessive speed (10%).

Message continues on page 2

From the President's Patrol Truck

(Continued from page 2)

- Age of victim. 24% are 20 and under. That is 39 of 164.
- Type of Boat. 75% of all accidents occurred in a propeller driven open motorboat. 68% of these boats were 20' and under.
- Type of injury: not stated.

Conclusions:

Propeller related accidents and deaths represent for this 4 year time period 4% of all accidents (21,618) and fatalities (3,681). This figure is higher than previously acknowledged by prior statistics.

It is SPIN'S position that the U.S. Coast Guard could prevent most (80% by their estimate) fatalities by the mandatory wearing of Personal Flotation Devices. That still leaves 20% of which 4% of the total is 20%, a significant figure, for which no effective education nor regulation exists to prevent propeller injuries and fatalities.

I will be taking SPIN's request for PRAC's support to the board for discussion.

It is election time again for Regions 1, 3, and 5. If you are interested in running for a Board position or if you would like to nominate someone for a Board position please contact John Havicon at on_belay@comcast.net. To be eligible you must be a PRAC member and live or work in the region you are running for. All that we ask is that you attend a board meeting once a quarter, arrange two PRAC certified training's and write an article for the newsletter.

Other business, I am sad to say that no one applied for the PRAC and Thomas Smith scholarships. The deadline for the application was September 30 and as of October 9th we still have not received any applications. The minimum qualifications to apply are that you must be a regular or student PRAC member and carry 6.1 units in recreation, park management or a park related field.

Last but not least I would like to make you aware of Proposition 84. Proposition 84 is a \$5.4 billion bond on the November ballot for clean water and coastal protection. It addresses some very serious problems:

- More the 60% of rivers and streams tested in California fail to meet the federal clean water act standards. *
- Last year there were 5000 beach closures and health warnings because of contamination of our coastal waters.

Prop 84 provides funds to prevent pollution of our drinking water, improve water quality and supply, and protect our rivers and our coastal areas. PRAC is not taking a position at this time.

Until next time...

Lee

Park Ranger is Attacked; Shoots Suspect

by John Havicon

On August 21, 2006, a Sacramento County Park Ranger shot a possible car burglar after she was attacked and injured by the suspect. The incident occurred at the Sailor Bar access to the American River, a popular fishing spot.

Park Ranger Kathleen Utley was dispatched to check a suspicious vehicle and persons that matched the description of suspects breaking into vehicles at that park. Ranger Utley arrived on scene and located the vehicle along the park road, with a flat tire. The suspect and his girlfriend were attempting to remove the tire when Ranger Utley contacted them. When Ranger Utley asked for identification, the suspect told her, he did not have any and provided a false name. Ranger Utley could see a wallet in the suspect's pocket.

Ranger Utley began a cursory search on the suspect. While searching the suspect, he broke free from Ranger Utley's grip, swung around and punched her in the face three times. Ranger Utley fell to the ground and the suspect jumped on top of her. Ranger Utley pulled her gun from her holster and the suspect retreated. The suspect ran to the vehicle and retrieved a large screwdriver and jump into his car. Ranger Utley approached him at gunpoint and ordered him out of the car. The suspect reached for the gun and grabbed its barrel. As he was twisting it from her grip, Ranger Utley pulled the trigger, firing several rounds at the suspect.

The suspect was hit in the torso, with a bullet but continued his fight. The suspect managed to start the vehicle and tried to run Ranger Utley down. The suspect fled out of the park, at high speed and with a flat tire. When the suspect reached a four-way stop, just outside of the park, he failed to stop and collided with another vehicle. A good samaritan stopped to assist at the accident. The suspect abandoned his car and ran to the good samaritan's vehicle and stole it. The suspect drove away at high speed but ended up rolling the vehicle about ¼ -mile away and trapping himself inside. The suspect was finally captured by sheriff's deputies and transported to the hospital for his injuries.

The suspect had minor injuries from the vehicle accident. The single bullet that struck his torso entered from the side and struck his spinal column. The bullet traveled up the spinal column and lodge in his neck. The suspect amazingly received only minor injuries from the wound with no damage to the spinal chord or any internal organs. The suspect is being charged with several crimes including assault on a Peace Officer with great bodily injury and attempting to take a firearm from a Peace Officer.

Ranger Utley had some serious bruising to her face and several abrasions of her arms and legs. Fortunately, no bones were broken and a full recovery is expected. Ranger Utley is a 15-year veteran of the Sacramento County Park Rangers.

Region 2 Picnic

by Pam Helmke

Thursday, October 5th brought clouds and a few showers to San Jose's Alum Rock Park but that didn't stop the Region 2 BBQ.

With an excellent turn out from West Valley College's Park Management Program about 15 folks gathered to eat, chat and even take a hike through California's oldest municipal park. Tom Hofsomer, a long time PRAC member, was the hardiest among us, making the drive down from Sacramento.

Chris Cruz and Kim Aufhauser from West Valley also attended and a lot of new ideas for conference sessions and Region 2 training opportunities were discussed. Kim and Chris are looking into ways to make GIS and GPS classes affordable in both time and dollars for our members.

By sunset PRAC had 6 new student members, some tall tales and fun stories were exchanged and I hope every one left well fed.

PICNIC



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