

Three-County Search and Rescue Training Event Deemed "Huge Success"

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Organizers responsible for planning and conducting a three-day, Search and Rescue training and mock search scenario are thrilled with the results. Sheriff's Offices from Clatsop and Washington counties joined with the Search and Rescue team from host Columbia County to increase the Search and Rescue/Emergency Planning capabilities in the northwest corner of the state of Oregon.

"This was a great opportunity for the volunteers and staffs that make up the search and rescue contingents in three counties to work together and learn from each other," said Columbia

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County Sheriff Jeff Dickerson. "Organizers came away from the event calling it a 'huge success.'"

A total of 70 volunteers and staff representing the three county sheriffs offices converged on a desolate hill-top in a remote area between Scappoose and Vernonia to train on Search and Rescue techniques and planning and to develop better coordination among the resources in the region.

The training included a mock search event testing the skills and logistical support of the three teams assembled for the training. The scenario involved a search for two people lost in the woods. It tested tracking skills with GPS, map and compass reading, along with evidence gathering and recovery of a victim with the use of a litter to carry the victim out. It afforded opportunities for the teams to learn more about each other and the resources available to each other when assistance is needed beyond the capabilities of any one team.

The teams spent the three days in the remote area with a mobile command center actively engaged in the training event. Teams conducted quadrant searches using state-of-the-art mapping software, radio communications and old-fashioned map and compass. Searches were carried out over the three-day period from Friday, June 8 through Sunday, June 10.

"This type of training and cooperation is critical to the ongoing improvement of our Search and Rescue capabilities," Sheriff Dickerson said. "I am especially grateful for the help and support we received from the Washington County Sheriff's Office during this intensive training and for the commitment of Washington County Sheriff Pat Garrett and Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin to make this training as valuable and effective as it was. I expect this experience will only increase the preparedness and cooperation of Search and Rescue and emergency planning in our region."