

Minutes from the March Meeting
3/6/08
Tolland Training Center

First, thank you to everyone for their participation this past month, it has been a bit busy.

- February's Drill was in Ashford. Great ice drill where we cut 4 holes and had divers work on getting comfortable under the ice and some hole to hole navigation.
- On Saturday Feb 23, at 7:30 AM, our team was called out to the Univ. of Connecticut – Swan Lake for a possible person through the ice. Piecing together reports after the fact, it appears that students were seen walking and skating on the lake the night before, possibly into the early morning. It appears that at some point in the early hours, someone may have fallen through given the fact there was evidence of broken ice in the center of the pond. This person must have gotten out either on their own, or with bystanders, but never notified UCONN PD or FD. Once the sun came up, UCONN PD drove by and noticed the hole in the ice. As a reasonable precaution they started Mansfield FD, which in turn notified the dive team. We arrived, and noticed the hole had frozen back over already. At this point we changed over to a search/recovery operation. Four divers were dressed. Brett was actually put in, and did several patterns in that area – nothing found, and no signs of anyone underwater. Scene cleared with thanks.
 - Lessons learned: we need to do more to educate area departments of what we can offer.
 - When working on thin ice, divers using full face masks should put their mask on at shore, and inflate their BC – Bob was dressed first, but as he walked off shore he fell through the ice. His regulator got wet, and froze so we quickly swapped divers. Luckily the water was shallow enough for him to walk out, but if it was deep, he might have been in trouble.
- On Tuesday 2/26, we were invited to train and dive with the CREST dive team in Coventry Lake. We had over 30 members present from the two organizations and again, had a great ice dive. Some things we learned:
 - CREST is set up for recovery not rescue – their gear is not kept assembled. Having gear assembled and ready to go greatly aids in cutting down our times.
 - They also put their tender in the hole with the diver. Good skill to know if you are in fact working on thin ice. If you get comfortable doing this at a drill, than if the tender falls through the ice at a call, they will be able to continue on. However – this will not be our normal method of tending.
 - The tender gets cold – he is wet.
 - There is a lot less room for the diver to get in and out of the hole

- As the diver goes in a circle, the tender doesn't have any leverage and gets pulled all around the hole – results in a poor search pattern.
 - They handle accountability differently than we do – something to consider if we do work with them again. They are more along the LGS procedure where each diver/tender team tender also has a scribe and they log the times for just that one diver. We use one accountability officer for everything.
 - Same full face masks and comm. system. They do have gills which looked like they worked well.
- On Sunday 3/2, the dive team stood by at a Polar Plunge in Crystal Lake to benefit the CT Special Olympics. This was a great publicity event for everyone involved, with over 80 participants taking a dip, and several hundred spectators. It was a great success, with no one getting hurt, and something like \$18,000 raised. Crystal Lake again sends their thanks to the team for helping out.

Equipment:

- The MK7 broke again. OTS is making repairs, and said they made some design changes to the battery connection to minimize this from happening in the future. They are also sending us some more plugs and dust caps to help us keep everything clean.
- We noticed when using the MK2 that the banana plugs are not the best of connections when pulling on the rope. We are looking into putting some other strain relief into the system so the rope attaches to the MK2's handle.
- We need to mark our ropes – suggestion was to get the heat shrink tags that also have the distance for easier tracking of the diver.
- Need to make up some more of the ice blocks, also need some straps and prussic cord.
- We are working with TN to have some more masks and possibly a second MK7 added to next year's budget.
- Truck is starting to come up in long range plans – possibly a Fire Act grant?
- Looking at various types of gills to use with our full face masks.

Next Drill – This Sunday 3/9 in Crystal Lake. Meet at Station 42 at 8AM. (Ice if we have it...)

Baseball hats – Todd Sullivan made up a Dive team hat with our patch on the front. Everyone liked it this past Sunday, so Norm has ordered 24 more. The cost will be \$15 each – see Norm if interested in getting one.

EMS Symposium in Cromwell is coming up, and they have again asked us if we would like to host a booth. John to check with County Coordinators. If we decide to do this, we will need some help putting this together.

Woodstock dive team has advised us that in some parts of their response area, we may be called as their backup team. This means that if they get to a scene and realize that it will be a prolonged search, than they may have us started as a safety/backup set of divers. – We may look to doing something similar down the road.

Swift water operations:

- We again had quite a lot of discussion on this topic. The County Coordinators and Chief's that we talked to want our team to offer this service to the county. In fact, many chief's already thought we did.
- If we do provide this service, than we will need to be properly trained and equipped. While a lot of our equipment is similar, we may need to expand, or beef up on some of our supplies.
- The dive commanders have talked, and the plan is to approach this similar to the Haz-mat program where we have awareness, operations, and technical level training. Everyone should get awareness, but only a few who are interested will become technicians.
 - For Awareness training: One 4 to 6 hour course to be held locally some Saturday, and open to all of our members. If there is a huge interest, possibly 2 sessions. The gentleman who runs the Willimantic River Race has already offered to put this course on for us, and we should be putting out an announcement on dates shortly. The goal of this course will be swift water assessments, risk considerations, and a general awareness of the power of moving water.
 - For advanced training we looked at four companies: Lifesaving Resources, Zoar Outdoor, Rescue 3 International, and Dive Rescue International. All four offer nationally accredited 2 day programs. R3 and DRI would come out to us, but the cost was more, needed several months advanced notice, and they need a guaranteed swift water location to hold the class (not something we could do this year.) Lifesaving Resources, and Zoar both require us going to them (in NH, and MA respectively) but they have control over a local damn and river for guaranteed conditions. Lifesaving was \$325/person, while Zoar offered us a discounted rate of \$160/person. Zoar also offered to customize parts of the program just for our needs, and was recommended by some of our members from Columbia. So we will probably be looking to put a group together for a class at Zoar – possibly the weekend of 5/31 and 6/1. More details to follow...
 - If we need more training down the road we will certainly consider bringing in something like R3 or DRI for a local class.

- In any event we will need to review any additional equipment we might need. The class at Zoar might be a good time to do some actual equipment comparisons.
- While physical fitness will be more of an issue than diving, members interested in taking the swift water training do not need to be dive certified.
- An invitation was also made by one of our members to attend a swift water class for canoeists. (\$25) They are having a class on April 25/27 in NY. Contact RD-19 if you need more information.
- Swift water will be integrated into the dive team's operations. We do not want to have separate drills or splinter this off from our main team and mission.

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