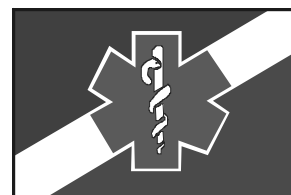


THE RESCUER



Oct - Dec, 2001

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RESCUETAINMENT

What Ya Gonna Do When They Come for You?

by Nancy J. Rigg (Originally published in 911 Magazine, 2000 issue)

A thirteen-year old girl is swept down a flood control channel in Los Angeles as swiftwater rescuers struggle to pluck her out of the torrent. A woman and her son are in a violent automobile accident and rescuers make a heroic effort to save them. The parents of a young man receive a surprise telephone call from police officers informing them that their son may be the victim of a homicide. A well-known Hollywood actor discovers his beautiful wife lying at the bottom of their swimming pool. Distressed and agitated, he calls 9-1-1.

Other than the obvious emergency response connection, what do these incidents have in common? Each intensely private, devastating, and frightening moment was “caught on tape”. Some incidents ended up on the news. Others were edited into rescue-oriented documentaries. And some tumbled into the murky world of “rescuement”, where the drive to get “exciting”, “real life”, “dramatic” sound and video footage on the air overshadows all other concerns, including an individual’s “right to privacy” and dignity.

The constitution securely protects the mainstream news media. Most public safety agencies have learned to work with reporters during disasters and other

major events, where news organizations serve as a vital information link, broadcasting storm warnings, airing instantaneous reports from disaster ravaged neighborhoods, and alerting the public about potentially life-threatening hazards. News helicopters often provide personnel in command centers with an instantaneous overview of what’s happening in the field. And when handled responsibly, follow-up news reports, including interviews with fire-rescue and law enforcement personnel and survivors who have been rescued, or the families who have lost loved ones, can be educational, informative, and serve a genuine public information purpose.

With the burgeoning marketplace on network and cable television for “reality programs”, as well as the infant media market on the Internet, the line between legitimate news and documentary programming and mutant “rescuement” has been steadily eroding. Demand for the most vivid, knuckle-biting, and sometimes shocking footage has skyrocketed, with hefty profits luring amateur and professional videographers around the world to chase tornadoes, or aim their cameras at avalanches, bank robberies, school shootings, or any similarly “thrilling” event.

Beyond the sometimes questionable moral, ethical, and artistic issues surrounding this trend, there is a deeper and more serious legal threat that public safety agencies need to be aware of. Individuals whose personal tragedies have become the unwitting subjects of “reality television” shows are beginning to assert their legal rights and demand greater accountability.

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Outwinch, Outbelay, Outlash - Rescue Survivor by Blaine Dionne

For 10 years, firefighters have showcased their talents at the OnTarget Firefighter Combat Challenge competition. But while the Challenge has done wonders to expose the best of the fire service, even attracting ESPN broadcasts, it doesn't feature the extraordinary skills of search-and-rescue (SAR) personnel. On May 5, 2002, the SAR community will get its own competition--the Search and Rescue America (SARA) Blitz 2002. If all goes according to plan, Blitz 2002 could potentially put the Combat Challenge to shame.

Not only do Blitz 2002's creators want to showcase America's best and brightest rescuers, they also hope to wiggle their way into another kind of showcase--primetime television. The event is being groomed to be the next generation of reality television show, with one of TV's most recent heavy hitters in their corner.

Producer John Fiest, who worked with Mark Brunet Productions on the first two "Survivor" series and

the "Eco Challenge Adventure Race," is on board to coordinate the filming and mass-media distribution of Blitz once it's an established competition.

The invitation-only competition will be held in Northern California's scenic Tuolumne County. Organizers are attempting to assemble the United States' eight finest SAR teams to ensure safe and unsurpassed competition. The Elite Eight are as follows: the San Diego County (CA) Lifeguards Cliff Rescue Team, the Los Angeles City Fire Department USAR Team, the Riverside County (CA) Sheriff's SAR team, the Ventura County (Ca) Sheriff's SAR team, Travis County (TX) EMS SAR team, the Las Vegas (NV) Police Department SAR Team, the San Miguel County (CO) Sheriff's USAR Team in Telluride and the Contra Costa County (CA) Fire Department SAR team.

Day one of the four-day competition begins with orientation and skills testing, and competitors will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the equipment and rules. Day two begins the actual competition phase, with all teams running one of the two short courses: the technical rescue or broken ground traverse. The dual course format allows teams to compete against each other at the same time, or head-to-head competition, adding a competitive element that has made the OnTarget Competition so successful. Canyoneering, rappelling, ascending, raising and lowering victims and heavy rescue will be performed. Each short course will be designed to last two to three hours.

On day three, teams will switch courses. Only the top four teams, according to their best time on previous courses, will advance to day four and the long course.

The main difference between the two phases of competition is the need for strategy during the long course. The teams must carry all their necessary equipment--along with a 200-lb. Rescue Randy victim. Each team's ability to improvise in unfamiliar and remote environments will determine their success.



Matthew Boren

The Rescue 3 family sadly announces the passing of one of our rising young persons in the swiftwater

field. Instructor Candidate Matthew Boren of Portland, Oregon, was killed in a vehicle collision on November 12, 2001 when an oncoming car crossed into his lane. Ed Cogar, Matt's Instructor Preceptor, said, "It is a great loss to us here in Oregon. Matt would have made an excellent instructor and many of my students knew him." A memorial service was held Friday, November 16, 2001. He will be greatly missed.

The team with the lowest total time over the course of four days will proclaim themselves the best of the best and are automatically invited to return the next year to defend their crown. Specific prizes aren't finalized, but project president Barry Edwards says the real reward will be the amount of information shared between teams.

"The most important aspect of this competition is to show everybody different techniques," Edwards says. "There's more than one way to perform a rescue, and we hope to show teams that. Just through everyone's equipment requests, I can see the different approaches teams are taking, so it should be pretty fun."

Reprinted with permission from FireRescue Magazine Oct. 2001

Pictures of Rescue Training Groups Needed for 2002 Rescue Source Catalog

If you are interested in having your group's picture on the back of the 2002 Rescue Source Catalog, send it now to Kelly at Rescue Source, P.O. Box 519, Elk Grove, Ca 95759. Please include your name, the name of the group, and the location of the training as well as a sentence giving us permission to use the photo in print.

Service Life of a Rescue Harness

By CMC Rescue, Inc. (Copyright CMC Rescue, Inc. Used with permission.)

The service life of a rescue harness is closely related to that of a rescue rope—both are used in the same environments, both are made from nylon or polyester, and both receive similar levels of inspection and care. Since harnesses are worn on the body, they are generally better protected than the ropes. On the other hand, harnesses rely on the stitching to hold them together, and due to the small diameter, the thread can be more susceptible to abrasion, aging, and chemical damage than webbing or rope.

The fall protection industry recommends 2 to 3 years as a service life for a harness or belt in use. They recommend 7 years as the shelflife. The military was using 7 years as service life for nylon products. The Climbing Sports Group of the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America says that a climbing harness should last about two years under normal weekend use. At this time, the rescue industry does not have a recommended service life for harnesses.

Through the ASTM consensus standards process, the rescue industry set 10 years as the maximum service life for a life safety rope (see ASTM Standard F1740-96 Guide for Inspection of Nylon, Polyester, or Nylon/Polyester Blend, or both Kernmantle Rope).

The guide stresses that the most significant contributing factor to the service life of a rope is the history of use. A rope that is shock loaded or otherwise damaged should be retired immediately. Hard use would call for a shorter service life than would be acceptable for a rope that sees very little use, and any obvious damage during use would indicate immediate retirement.



If we apply the same analysis to the rescue harness, then the actual use and the conclusions drawn from inspection would be the significant criteria for retirement. We do know that with any use, a rope will age, and thus a harness is likely to do the same, so a 10-year maximum service life may well be the reasonable limit for harnesses as well, assuming inspection has not provided any earlier reason for retirement.

As with the ropes, if the harness has been subjected to shock loads, fall loads, or abuse other than normal use, the harness should be removed from service. In conclusion, if there is any doubt about the serviceability of the harness for any of the above reasons, it should be removed from service.

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Media “Ride-Alongs”

When Ruth Shulman and her son, Wayne, were involved in a serious auto accident, they were grateful for the quick emergency response that saved their lives. What they never bargained for, however, was that Mercy Air, the air ambulance company that was on scene, had permitted a video cameraman who was employed by a television production company to do a “ride-along” that day. The cameraman captured the extrication of the Shulmans from the car, including efforts by a flight nurse and paramedic to provide medical care in the helicopter during transport to the hospital. The flight nurse wore a cordless microphone that picked up not only her own comments, but also the distressed voice of Ruth Shulman.

Antony Stuart is a Los Angeles attorney who is representing the Shulmans in a lawsuit filed against both the television production company and Mercy Air. “The Shulman tape was edited into a broadcast television show, with sound effects added and narration that presented some untrue facts to heighten the drama of the rescue,” Stuart explained. “An hour-long rescue was compressed into a nine-minute segment. Everything was very dramatic, with gasoline dripping onto the patient and paramedic, so there could be an explosion at any moment, and the situation was very volatile, but despite all this danger the nurse and paramedic continued to work.” Beyond several factual problems, including the threat of a gasoline explosion, Ruth Shulman and her son had no idea that their personal tragedy had been videotaped and, without their consent or cooperation, was scheduled to be the subject of a “reality” television program.

Three months after the accident, while Ruth Shulman was still in the hospital, her son called and told her to turn on the television. “Ruth turned on the TV,” Stuart recounted, “and was forced to relive the most harrowing moments of personal tragedy in her whole life, because she was rendered paraplegic by the accident.”

The lower courts initially dismissed the case, but upon appeal, the California State Supreme Court

determined that specific “causes of action” could proceed to trial. “The Shulman case attempted to draw a line,” Stuart said. Mercy Air was eventually dismissed from the case, but the message was clear. “Ride-alongs put individual rescuers and public safety agencies in a precarious position,” Stuart cautioned, “especially if personnel in the field are asked to wear microphones.”

Most reputable television production companies would do everything possible to avoid the kind of legal nightmare that grew out of the Shulman rescue. The Learning and Discovery Channels feature a variety of medical and rescue documentary programs, some of which draw from news and home video sources, and others, like “Paramedics” and “Trauma: Life in the ER”, which are created with “ride-along” cameras. Bronagh Mullan, Manager of Program Publicity for the Learning Channel, noted that extra precautions are taken to secure permission from anyone who is featured on their shows. “We have a number of different safeguards in place so that the patient’s rights are respected,” Mullan explained. “We work with a medical ethicist to decide what’s appropriate and what is not. We also work very closely with the hospitals and paramedic units. If they don’t think something is appropriate, they’ll tell us to shut the camera down.”

Clearance procedures are very exacting, Mullan added. “We have a double consent process where we receive permission from the patient or a family member when we first film them. And then we go back after we put the show together and ask again for their consent to ensure that they’re clear about exactly what we’re doing and what the show is about.” The double consent process has worked well, Mullan said. “There have been instances where we’ve gone back the second time for clearance and a family member or patient has said that they’re not comfortable with this, so we’ve pulled the segment. It’s their life and it’s their right.”

Performing for the Camera

One of the potential problems with having a camera operator trail around after public safety personnel in

the field is the “pressure to perform for the cameras,” Stuart said. Stuart is representing the parents of a young man whose body was discovered in his apartment by police. Video shot on scene was then featured in a “reality” television program. One officer who was wearing a cordless microphone called the parents of the young man to inform them that their son was dead.

“This was the worst moment of their lives,” Stuart said, “and if you watch the video, you can hear the audio engineer pumping up the volume so that he can capture the sounds of the parents’ voices coming through the receiver.” Not only were the parents unaware that the phone conversation was being recorded, which is a “violation of eavesdropping statutes,” the act of informing the parents by phone about their son’s death violated basic protocol. “Police are not supposed to make the notification of death,” Stuart explained. “The coroner’s office is supposed to do this, and they don’t do it by telephone. They do it in person. In this situation, however, apparently motivated by the potential for drama with the camera rolling, the police officers made the call right from the scene of the death.”

The parents filed suit not for “financial gain”, Stuart said, but out of a desire to set some boundaries. “We offered to give up our right to monetary damage for invasion of privacy in exchange for an agreement from the city to enact a policy that would protect future victims. As a condition of doing a ride-along, media representatives would be required to obtain written consent from victims and their families before utilizing anyone’s image or voice recording in a broadcast.” Because city attorneys never responded to the offer, the parents were forced to file suit and the case is ongoing.

An Endless Brush with Death

High profile events that are captured by news cameras often jettison victims into a painful and sometimes embarrassing realm of “perpetual replay”. When 13-year old Megan Cole waded into a flood-swollen wash in Los Angeles to try to save a friend who had

been swept downstream, news cameras were on scene immediately to capture the dramatic swiftwater rescue and air it “live”. A media frenzy ensued. “Being inundated by the media was tough,” Megan’s mother, Deirdre Cole, said. “First it was the news media. Then by the third day the talk shows were calling. We were not seeking publicity. This happened. The girls were rescued. And we wanted to show our gratitude to the people in the fire department who rescued them. Period.”

News footage of Megan Cole’s rescue eventually wound up in a number of rescue documentaries. “This footage has been used over and over again, with or without Megan’s permission,” Deirdre Cole sighed. “I feel like the news stations should have to ask permission before they sell their footage to an entertainment or documentary program. That’s Megan’s face up there! Covering the news is one thing. But do they have a right to own this piece of my daughter’s life forever?”

9-1-1 Tapes: Where to Draw the Line

Using 9-1-1 audio recordings and radio traffic on the news and in documentary and reality programming poses a unique set of challenges. Guidelines for obtaining access to 9-1-1 calls vary from state to state. According to Barry Furey, Executive Director of the Knox County Emergency Communications District, “Tennessee is a fairly liberal state with regard to the release of information. If the release of a 9-1-1 tape does not impede an ongoing investigation, we are obligated to release it, because it falls under the Tennessee State Freedom of Information Act. In some cases I may have a moral concern about the release, but unfortunately that is overshadowed by my legal obligations to release the information.”

In an attempt to better protect traumatized victims calling 9-1-1, several states have refined the definition of what “information” falls under the Freedom of Information Act. Nancy Pollock, Executive Director of the Metropolitan 9-1-1 Board in St. Paul, Minnesota, noted that, “Anybody can request a copy of a 9-1-1 call, but you don’t necessarily have to provide them

with the audiotape. You may have to provide them with a written transcript. In Minnesota there is a law that states that a transcript of the call is public data, but the actual tape, including the emotion with which the message is given, is private data.”

In the State of Pennsylvania, 9-1-1 calls are exempt from “right to know” statutes, although there is an on-going legal battle to make them public. Roy Hyatt, 9-1-1 Communications Coordinator for the Dauphin County Emergency Management Agency has taken a very firm stance. “We play hardball with 9-1-1 tapes,” he said. “Our view is that 9-1-1 tapes belong in criminal court only. We do not release them for any other purpose. Most incidents involve a person’s greatest tragedy in their lifetime and they don’t belong on the radio or television.”

Hyatt cited the recent death of the wife of actor William Shatner, who hosted the popular “Rescue 9-1-1” television series, as an example of how the release of 9-1-1 tapes to the media can heap pain upon an already tragic situation. “If William Shatner’s wife had died here in our county and we had taken that call, we would not have released that tape,” Hyatt said indignantly. “Why would you want to release something like that on national television? If he had wanted to, William Shatner could have explained what happened in his own words. This is a new kind of voyeurism, the voyeurism of personal tragedy, and I do not support it at all.”

“The commercial use of 9-1-1 tapes does not fall under the ‘right to know’ statutes,” added Tim Bladwin, Deputy Director of Lancaster County (PA) Communications, “so television production companies cannot demand them. Before we would release any 9-1-1 tape or radio traffic communication, we would ask permission from the departments involved and the people involved. Whether it’s a police officer, firefighter, or dispatcher on the radio, or a citizen who has placed a 9-1-1 call, people should be given the courtesy to say yes, you can release my part of the call to this television show. It’s the right thing to do.”

Beyond the complex legal and moral issues, protecting the integrity of the 9-1-1 system is a major concern. “There is a fear that if people are subject to having their most private, grief-stricken, emotionally vulnerable moments made public by the media, they may be less inclined to dial 9-1-1 when they really need it,” explained Jennifer Hagstrom, a former law enforcement dispatcher who now works with the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). “People need to have faith in the service and trust that they are not going to become victimized a second time through the media,”

The Bottom Line

Many programs that air on the Discovery and Learning Channels and other media outlets are well received both by survivors, who are featured in them, and public safety agency personnel, who frequently draw on them for their training and public relations value. “There are some shows out there that are very inflammatory and take advantage of people in vulnerable situations,” explained Bronagh Mullan, “but that’s not what the Learning Channel is about. We want our programs to be educational, not some kind of expose that goes beyond the realm of human decency.”

When dealing with the media, Antony Stuart advised that agencies should set specific boundaries for the protection of the public and to ensure the integrity of the system. “The media is not entitled to every telephone call or moment on scene that can be captured by video cameras,” Stuart said. “If the media wants to challenge this, as an attorney, I would argue strongly in favor of the municipality that this is private information and should be protected.”

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Web Based Training Sites

by Bill Shields

Over the past few years emergency service training and education has been constantly evolving. In these very demanding technical times in which we live, it is important to stay ahead of the power curve. With the police, fire, and rescue, the training to do this is usually accomplished by classroom and hands-on instruction methods. But more and more one of the best tools to accomplish this is the computer. Lets face it, computers are everywhere and they do make our lives easier.

In the last newsletter it was brought to my attention that the World Wide Web has begun to become a platform for emergency service training programs. I checked out the web site that was provided and took a class on blood-born pathogens. I found the ease of

use and learning environment of this web site was excellent and very informative. It was also very convenient because I was able to take the class at my pace and in the comfort of my own home. The best part was that after only an hour I had a certificate for a class that meets the NFPA standards for that subject!

Some of the training topics that are available are: hazardous materials, biohazards and special precautions, nuclear, biological and chemical responses, and emergency response involving terrorism. These courses are extremely affordable and for anyone seeking knowledge in the above areas it is an excellent way to learn without leaving your home or agency office. That site again is <www.targetsafety.com/nfpabbp>.



“9-11-2001”

As time goes by and healing begins to take place, many Americans are still left feeling empty and shattered. The events of September 11, 2001 will be in our memories and prayers for years and generations to come. Many fire, police, and emergency medical personnel made the ultimate sacrifice on 9-11-2001, and many of those left behind will never forget the selflessness and devotion to duty that those brave men and women showed.

The war that the United States faces is not a war that has boundary lines drawn in the sand. The terrorists have made it very clear that civilians, emergency service, and military personnel are all being targeted. This means newer, stricter guidelines surrounding security measures, new emergency response standard operating procedures and a higher state of alert for everyone. We are now faced with the challenge of trying to understand terrorism, as well as being able to recognize specific situations.

Unfortunately, history often repeats itself. Let us all pray that similar incidents never occur again.

FDNY 9-11-01 Memorial Decals



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- 3 1/2 inches square
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Cost is \$5.50 which includes postage. (Only California residents add \$.35 tax)

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Surfin' the Web



Free publications are available on how to deal with trauma from *The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress (AAETS)*. Documents cover topics such as “How Can Emergency Responders Help Grieving Individuals?”, “What Specific Strategies Can Emergency Responders Utilize to Connect with Particularly Challenging Individuals?”, “How Can Emergency Responders Manage Their Own Response to a Traumatic Exposure?” and more. To obtain these documents go to www.aaets.org

Calendar

- February 12-14, 2002. *Fire Rescue West*, San Jose, CA. Over the past 25 years Fire Rescue West has set the standard for quality in fire service training and education. To register or for more information call 800-827-8009 or www.firehouse.com
- April 14, 2002. *National Disaster Medical System Conference*, Atlanta, GA. The purpose is to promote interaction between local, state and federal public health practitioners and policy makers. Key topics such as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), clinical medicine, mental health, response teams, and international coordination. Participants will have access to the latest in emergency response and coordination capabilities. For more information visit their website at www.oep-ndms.dhhs.gov, call 800-872-6367, or e-mail at ndms@usa.net
- July 19-21, 2002. *Firehouse Expo*, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD. This conference is dedicated to Fire, Rescue and EMS personnel. For more information on this show, visit the website at www.firehouseexpo.com