

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department

Advanced Tracking

Outline

- I. Introductions & Overview
 - A. Introductions
 - 1. Instructor
 - 2. Search and Rescue (SAR) Team members
 - 3. Students
 - B. Facility
 - 1. Restrooms
 - 2. Snacks & Water
 - C. Tracking exercises
 - 1. Weather expectations
 - 2. What to wear
 - 3. What to bring on trail exercises
 - 4. Native flora and fauna cautions
 - D. What makes this “advanced”
 - 1. Terrain
 - 2. Difficulty level of finding “sign”

- II. Review of Basic Tracking
 - A. Sun angles
 - 1. Low angles – good
 - 2. High angles – bad
 - 3. Look into sun to see impressions
 - B. Stride and step
 - 1. Stride – Heel to heel
 - 2. Step – Toe to Heel of next step
 - C. Using a tracking stick
 - 1. Marking stride and step
 - 2. Finding next step
 - D. Sketching tracks
 - 1. Information to include on sketch
 - 2. Completeness of sketch
 - E. Tracking teams
 - 1. Lead
 - 2. Flankers
 - F. Sign
 - 1. Flattening
 - 2. Shine
 - 3. Rock kick

- 4. Scuff
- 5. Transfer
- G. Track traps - definition

III. Finding sign in difficult terrain

- A. Grass / Meadows
 - 1. Flattening
 - 2. Shine
- B. Pine needles / rotted wood debris
 - 1. Flattening
 - 2. Broken pieces
- C. Rocks / gravel
 - 1. Flattening
 - 2. Kicked out of place
 - 3. Turned over stones
- D. Fallen / rotten logs
 - 1. Scuff marks
 - 2. Transfer
- E. Shade / mottled sun
 - 1. Create even lighting
 - 2. Add light or create shade
- F. Bushes / ground cover plants
 - 1. Flattening
 - 2. Broken branches
- G. Track traps
 - 1. Established trails
 - 2. Dry washes
 - 3. Any open / un-vegetated area
- H. Day one – exercise one – students will follow instructors walking in a designated area at the training facility. Students will observe the “sign” left behind on different surfaces and by different actions.
- I. Day one – exercise two – students will be broken into small groups and complete short (less than 100 yards) tracking exercises that are in the same terrain as exercise one. The difference is that the students will not have the advantage of watching the instructors create each step.
- J. Exercise review with students and instructors

IV. Tracking Under Water

- A. Current's effect
 - 1. Strength
 - 2. Flow pattern
- B. Depth of water
- C. Soil type
 - 1. Sand
 - 2. Mud / silt
- D. Visibility

1. Glare
 2. Light refraction
 3. Polarizing filters / sunglasses
- E. Day one – exercise three – under water – students will either walk to a designated area where a creek exists or has been created for this exercise, (depending on where the class is held). Students will observe steps made by an instructor and the “sign” left behind
- F. Day one – exercise 4 – under water – students will be broken into small groups and staged in an area where they will not be allowed to observe instructors create impressions under water (created by walking through the water and on rocks and other debris under water). Then students will have to track the route of the instructors (less than 50 yards) by observing under water impressions.
- G. Exercise review with students and instructors
- V. Tracking at Night
- A. Visibility
 - B. Artificial Light
 1. Flashlights
 2. Vehicle headlights
 3. Generator lights
 - C. Day one – exercise 5 – nighttime – students will be broken into small groups and complete a short (less than 50 yards) tracking exercise created at the training facility. This exercise will take place after dark and students will have to use all earlier tracking skills and overcome the issue of darkness by using light sources such as flashlights.
 - D. Exercise review with students and instructors
- VI. **Day Two (Skills Demonstration)** – students will meet at the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department Heart Bar training facility to complete a previously created tracking exercise. This exercise will be approximately ½ mile long and will be created in the early morning hours by instructors, prior to students’ arrival. Instructors will walk through the mountainous terrain, marking their path with flagging tape every 20 yards or so. Instructors will create enough pathways for teams of no more than 5 students each. Tracking exercise routes will run roughly parallel to one another so that all students and instructors can stay within visual and verbal contact throughout the exercise.
- Instructors will ensure that all students have water and snacks to consume during the exercise. If any student needs a break for any reason accommodation will be made. The tracking path will run in a general loop around the training facility so that students will be an easy walking distance away from the facility at all times.**
- VII. **Field Exercises – Student / Instructor ratio will be no greater than 5:1**
- Tracking Exercises consist of students in small groups (no more than 5 per group) taking turns being the “lead”, getting down on hands and knees with the**

tracking stick and using it, as instructed, to locate very subtle step impressions left by the subject being followed. Other students act in the roles of “flankers” who walk behind the lead tracker and to the sides to both take note of obvious “sign” ahead, and also to watch for the lead tracker’s safety. These positions are rotated every 30 minutes or so through all group members so that no one gets too tired or eye-fatigued in their specific position.

Tracking exercises are created by instructors merely walking and / or running through a designated area that students will then go through looking for the impressions and “sign” that the instructors left behind. “Sign” is things like scuff marks on fallen logs, kicked over rocks, or broken vegetation. There will be time allotted at the end of each field exercise for a review of the exercise by students and staff team leaders.

Instructors will create enough pathways for teams of no more than 5 students each. Tracking exercise routes will run roughly parallel to one another so that all students and instructors can stay within visual and verbal contact throughout the exercise.

- VIII. Review / Wrap-up
 - A. Review of final exercise and student performance by students and staff
 - B. Q & A
 - C. Course evaluations
 - D. Award certificates of completion