4.   Is Anybody Out There?

Introduction

There is a science behind finding missing people. This challenge explores how searches are managed for the best chances of success.

Activities

All ages

- Explore the type and use of missing person statistics in searching.
- Identify hazards searchers might encounter and how to stay safe.

Equipment

Statistics summary cards. Terrain analysis card. OS map section (provided or showing your local area although if you use a local area it is best to select one with plenty of features). The example 'quiz' questions below and any others you may wish to devise – they can be expanded to accommodate your group's interest and ability.

Setup

This can be started as a whole-group exploration of the topics then the questions could be used in pairs or small groups as a quiz to end the session.

Further information

Although individual Search Managers and the Police Search Advisors have extensive experience and knowledge of how certain categories of missing persons may act there are also studies and publications that will be referred to.

Over many years information has been collected and shared by search teams and categories of missing persons have been devised. At the time of the start of this award the associated resources provide a summary of missing people statistics for common vulnerable groups. Also available is a

terrain analysis summary – a vital aspect of identifying likely areas where a missing person might be found and the deployment of appropriate resources; bikes, boats, dogs, foot teams…

Questions

1. A group of walkers are reported missing. At which points on their hike are they most likely to make a mistake that will cause them to get lost?

A: At decision points such as junctions or splits in their routes.

2. If a 5-year old child is missing what will the Search Manager's priority tasks be?

A: To check the statistics for similar previous missing people. To check areas where they have been lost before. To check areas that are regarded as high risk such as water, buildings, garages and sheds.

3. A 50-year old male is missing in your local town after last being seen at the Post Office. What will be the actions taken in the local area?

A: Talk to neighbours, search the 300m radius area (25%). The Police will also contact the media, go door-to-door, and produce flyers.

4. When analysing the terrain of a search area what may be hazardous to the search team and why?

A:

- Roads, railways – physical harm
- Rivers, reservoirs - drowning, illness following immersion
- Woods – injuries from tripping or walking into trees (yes it can happen!)
- There are many more and we would be interested in knowing what may be suggested.

5. A 6-year old girl is missing. Where is she most likely to be found?

A: At a friend's home.

6. A lady suffering from dementia has been missing for 4 hours. Luckily the family has a photograph of her. What does the search Manager need to know about the photo and what other questions are they likely to ask?

A: How recent the photo is. The "Investigative Question" – prompt group for other answers.

7. Why might aerial maps be useful to a search team?

A: To identify paths, buildings and features not seen on the map. To the see density of woodland.

8. A 5-year old boy went out to play and hasn't come home for lunch and his parents have reported him missing. In 75% of cases which places is he likely to be found?

A: Structures, roads, tracks and paths, woods.

9. What causes most walkers to be overdue and what might they do if in trouble?

A:

- Unfit, blisters, miscalculating the amount of time needed to do the walk, and still being out when it gets dark.
- They may well discard their equipment especially if it is heavy and they are not used to carrying it.

10. Search Managers analyse maps and try to obtain local knowledge of the terrain of an area before deploying teams. Why do they do this?

A;

- Enables them to identify areas that might attract the missing person.
- Identify hazardous areas.
- Identify high priority areas to be searched.
- Identify locations/structures that might attract the missing person.