



# RESCUE BEACON

## NEWSLETTER OF MONTEREY COUNTY SHERIFF'S SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM



### RECENT EVENTS

**Aug. 21:** Knotty Hour (monthly volunteer meeting)  
**Aug. 25:** CHP Helicopter Rescue Technician (HRT) (ground school) training for second group of volunteers.  
**Sep. 1:** SAR Mission  
**Sep. 6-8:** CA SAREX  
**Sep. 13-15:** Monthly Training (overnight)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sep. 18:** Knotty Hour (monthly volunteer meeting)  
**Sep. 21/22:** Search in Burned Environments Training  
**Oct. 5:** Community Event - Hiking Safety Discussion with CA Mission Walkers  
**Oct. 12:** Monthly Training (ropes)  
**Oct. 26:** Community Event - Cal Fire Annual Zombie Run

### BOARD

**Commander:**  
Alain Claudel  
**Secretary:**  
Vanessa Wennstrom  
**Treasurer:**  
Scot Smythe  
**Volunteer & Social Media Coordinator:**  
Sierra Rad  
**Training Coordinators:**  
Wesley Hayward & Justin Kantor

**In This Issue:** Mission Report; Training Updates; Team Member Spotlight

# MISSION REPORT: AUGUST 16-SEPTEMBER 15

Carry out - September 1: Monterey County SAR team responded to a report of an injured hiker who had fallen down a cliff off the Soberanes Canyon Trail. The hiker sustained a severe laceration to his lower leg, with a possible fracture.

First responders from CAL Fire and State Parks arrived on the scene, conducted a medical assessment, and administered first aid. The SAR team arrived shortly after with a litter for extraction.

H70 was preparing for a hoist extraction but encountered mechanical issues, forcing them to cancel their mission. Despite this, the SAR team, in coordination with CAL Fire, successfully transported the patient via wheel and litter to an ambulance waiting at the trailhead.

## AUGUST 25 TRAINING - HELICOPTER RESCUE TECHNICIAN GROUND SCHOOL

A second group of volunteers attended the CHP Coastal Division Air Operations Helicopter Awareness and Operations Ground School. This 4-hour training session is a prerequisite for the air operations training and covers topics such as

helicopter awareness, operations, and communications, an introduction to a new K-9 harness, safety practices for hot loading and unloading aircraft, an external load briefing and mission planning, and an overview of Helicopter Rescue Technician (HRT) roles and responsibilities. All team members are trained in the event of a helicopter insertion into Monterey County's challenging terrain. Among them is our detection dog, Bodie, showing off some of his gear.



## ABOUT US

The Monterey County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue (SAR) Team was established in 1963, with a volunteer unit formed in 1989 to assist the Sheriff's Office. Operating as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization in partnership with the Sheriff's Advisory Council (SAC), the SAR team provides trained personnel and specialized equipment to support the recovery of sick, injured, lost, or deceased individuals across Monterey County. The team is a full member of the Mountain Rescue Association and is recognized as a Type I elite rescue unit. Comprised of both sworn deputies and dedicated volunteers, the Monterey SAR Team operates on a limited budget, relying on grants and donations to maintain its critical operations.



## SEPTEMBER 6-8 TRAINING - SAREX

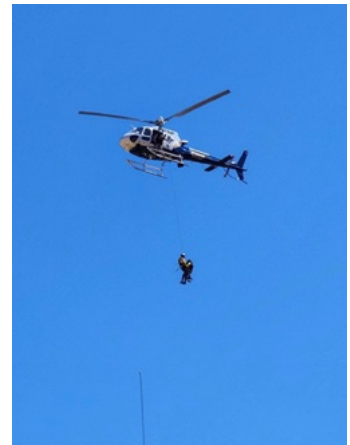
Several members of the Monterey SAR team attended the annual Search and Rescue Exercise in Scicon, Springville. SAREX is the annual Northern California Search and Rescue Exercise sponsored by California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal-OES) and one or more host agencies. This is a gathering of the entire California SAR community, providing high-quality, up-to-date SAR training. Team members attended Quad (ATV) Training, CHP air ops training, Advances in Techniques and Technology for Rope Rescue in the Wilderness, Lost Person Behavior, Search Methods and Bone Identification in Forensic Anthropology, Search Strategy and Area Coverage, and Abduction Search Management.



## SEPTEMBER 13-15 OVERNIGHT TRAINING

Our overnight search and rescue training focuses on essential skills required for high-angle rescue and wilderness operations. Participants demonstrate proficiency in rappelling and ascending static lines using rescue-rated and personal equipment, while honing effective radio communication and nomenclature. The course emphasizes identifying and utilizing anchors in austere environments, building single and multipoint anchors, and constructing rescue-rated systems for scenario-based rescues. Land navigation skills is sharpened using SARTOPO mapping to track search areas, while systematic grid searches ensure thorough coverage and proper logging of findings. This 16-20 hour training culminates in practical exercises including night navigation, cliff rescue scenarios, and highline operations.

We also got another opportunity to work with the CHP/H-70 who conducted a hoist training including multiple rescue scenarios during our training. We appreciate the California Highway Patrols Coastal Divisions Air Operations unit for providing another excellent training for our team.



# SUPPORT US

*Give a little, help a lot  
So That Others May Live*

The Monterey County SAR Team in partnership with SAC is a nonprofit, charitable organization that receives a limited allocation each year from the Sheriff's Office to help offset the cost of equipment, uniforms, and training. The great majority of our operational budget is funded directly by the volunteer unit from donations, grants, and fundraising efforts. Our volunteers are unpaid and must purchase the personal gear they need themselves. We have a substantial and ongoing need to replace team equipment and to seek professional training in the many disciplines needed to be a proficient SAR unit. You can support us by donating online at [MCOSAR.COM](https://www.mcosar.com).



**501(C)(3)**  
**EIN: 77-0118273**



*Alex at the 2023 Pajaro Flood Rescue Operations*

# TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

IN THIS EDITION OF RESCUE BEACON, LET'S GET TO KNOW VOLUNTEER ALEX MARES.

**Q: Please tell us a little about yourself and your family.**

I am a middle child with one older brother and a younger sister. We grew up in San Clemente, CA (Orange County) and really thought i would never leave. But, an opportunity brought my wife and I to Monterey County and we fell in love with the place and the people. At home its myself, my wife Christina and our two dogs Vista (10 yr old Vizsla) & Jazzy (12yr old maltese).

**Q: Please tell us about your education and career.**

I obtained my BA from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. I was a philosophy and Spanish double major. After graduating I did a lot of different industries ranging from Gold/Silver Wholesale, Real Estate Auctions, Variable Annuities & Mutual Funds. But, after the 2008 financial crisis I had a heart to heart with myself. I decided to pursue law because that is what I always wanted to do (after I decided the priesthood was not my calling). I graduated from Southwestern Law School (Los Angeles). After passing the bar (thank God it was only once); i practiced Workers Compensation Law and eventually transitioned to criminal law. I currently practice Criminal Defense as a Deputy Public Defender for Monterey County. My role is as the "immigration specialist" for the county; essentially writing opinions and doing research to advise any noncitizen of the immigration consequences of the charges they are facing. Since my role is niche & varied I am able to volunteer with SAR which has been great for my personal growth and to engaging with my community in a different way.

*Continued on next page...*

*Member spotlight continued:*

**Q: What inspired you to join MCSOSAR?**

From 2010 - 2016 I ran a lot of ultra marathons. I successfully completed several 50 and 100 mlle trail races. I found out about SAR while doing a training for MCSO and was motivated to share my trail knowledge with others. Also, I want to be able to serve my community in a different way and I don't think there is anything more special than our effort being able to bring someone home.

**Q: What is the best thing about being a SAR volunteer?**

The best thing is learning from others. I think that our varied experiences and interests make the team stronger since we all have insights to offer.

***What are the challenges you face as a volunteer in this role?***

The challenges are managing logistics and making sure that you stay within your ability. Many of us, myself included, will sometimes want to help so much that we may be hindering more than helping so for me its always important to be mindful of the situation and collaborate with others so we accomplish the mission whilst being safe and getting home.

# JOIN US

**The Monterey County SAR Team is always looking for qualified new recruits. If you feel that you have what it takes to join the team, visit our website to for more information: [mcosar.com/apply](https://mcosar.com/apply)**



## OUR LIFESAVING PARTNERS: DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

We extend our deepest gratitude to all our generous donors and supporters. Your contributions enable the Monterey County Search and Rescue team to continue our vital work, ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. Your support is a lifeline to those in need, and we couldn't do it without you.



**Union Pacific Community Ties Giving Program**



**The Rocky Talkie Search & Rescue Awards**

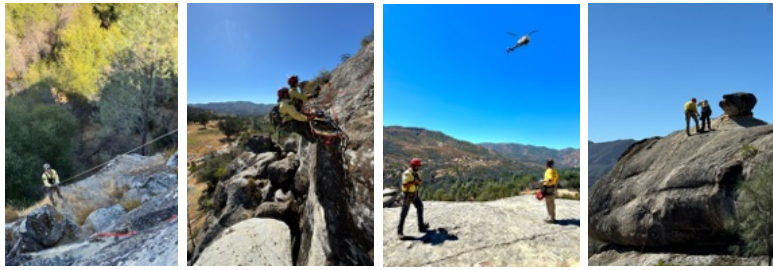
# SAR IN ACTION



California SAREX 2024



SAR Mission



September overnight training

HRT Training, Ground School



**CONTACT US:**

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