

## Local Hams and ARES assist Sheriff with Search

ARES members and local amateur operators provided communication assistance to the Albany County Sheriff's Department in searches west of Vedauwoo on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. ARES members, Sheriff's Deputies, Anthropologists and volunteers searched on foot in teams of 6 to 8 in ongoing efforts focused on the area due to previous finds.

Local ARES members and HAMS have been assisting the Sheriff's Department to provide backup communication between field search groups and the base of operations established just west of the Vedauwoo Recreation Area road on county road 475. These searches provide an opportunity to test the readiness of ARES and local HAMS in a foot search situation where large areas need to be covered in detail.

Local Amateur Radio operators participating Saturday and Sunday August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> included ARES EC Rhett ND70, Admin EC Bill AF7E, Brent KC0FUP, Jerry N7JT, Doris KD7RQX, Suzanne AA7AY, Jerry KD7CTP, John KD7NAE, Dick KD7FHE, Steve WL7CMA, Doug KD7W and Fred KS7Q.



Dog teams from Rescue International assisted the groups on Sunday with more detailed examination of particular areas. The highly trained dogs and owner-trainers travel all over the country. The Rescue International dogs and their proud owners had successfully located gravesites in Colorado the day before dating from the early 1800s.

Activities concluded early Sunday afternoon before cooling thunderstorms moved through the area. Hams utilized 146.580 MHz simplex on handhelds with the foot teams while two vehicle based rigs manned by Steve and Dick relayed to EC Rhett at the base location. Bill AF7E coordinated activities with Neil and John of the Albany County Sheriff's department at the base. Sheriff's Deputies in charge of each team utilized their HH rigs in "talkabout" simplex mode to maintain contact with other law enforcement officers and vehicles.

Limitations of 2 meter communications over rough terrain were apparent, but contact with the operations base was maintained at all times with the help of vehicle-based relays Dick KD7FHE and Steve WL7CMA. Field teams checked in with Rhett or Bill at base every half hour while in the field. Radio-requested assistance was provided to one team who became disoriented in relation to their vehicles near the end of Saturday morning's hike. Sheriff's Deputies accompanied by Doris KD7RQX and Suzanne AA7AY were dispatched to the team's vehicles where they operated sirens to provide an audible beacon for direction finding. The team had no difficulty hearing and moving to their starting point.

Doris enjoyed operating the sirens. Suzanne used her motorcycle and Deputy Neil used a 4-wheeler to traverse the two-track which defined the southern boundary for the team's morning search. The team had crossed south of this line where the track became overgrown and circled back south of where they intended to be. Team members did not have a GPS in the group and agreed that this tool should be a part of each team's gear in the future.

ARES and other volunteers may be called on again to engage in non-emergency searches or other activities. Events of this kind provide an opportunity to test equipment, methods and preparedness and build a good working relationship between all the agencies and individuals involved. The Sheriff's Department appreciates the assistance provided and has learned more about the capabilities of ARES, HAM and other volunteers. Many enjoyed the search as an opportunity to spend some time out doors a foot using handheld radios and GPS receivers to coordinate group activities. The lessons learned will provide for more effective operations in the future.

TNX to all those who were able to assist and enjoy some time in the very beautiful Medicine Bow Vedauwoo area east of Laramie.

John KD7NAE