



Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference
PO Box 400440
Charlottesville, VA 22904

April 12, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

At 1800 hours on April 8, 2011, the West Virginia Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management began its annual statewide SAREX. During the conduct of this full-scale exercise, I served as a member of the initial response period Planning/Operations staff (April 8) and as Operations Section Chief for the second operational period (April 9). At the insistence of WVDHS-EM, local responders both led and conducted operations during the initial period, and outside resources were gradually introduced towards the end (in order to simulate an actual mission scale-up).

I first saw Andrew Hower during the evening of April 8 while he was assisting the local search managers deploy field resources from the staging area. There he ensured that teams were being properly briefed, equipped, and debriefed, helping provide the stability of operations necessary for the incoming incident staff to organize and prepare for that evening's command transition. After the transition occurred, Andrew was a significant contributor to the operational planning and task development process.

After the commencement of second operational period, Andrew joined the Operations Section staff as an Executive Assistant, roving around base and helping fix the various coordination and functional difficulties that arose during the mission. His chief contribution in this regard was overseeing the preplanning for and assembly of a rescue and evacuation team that remained on standby throughout the mission. For this he wrote the task assignment forms, hand-picked the team and assets he would utilize, and took it upon himself to ensure that all members were trained to fulfill their roles (an impromptu patient packaging class outside of base comes to mind). This team was invaluable in ensuring the rapid and efficient care and evacuation of the subject after the find was made.

In all, Andrew was a major asset to both incident management and field personnel throughout the course of this exercise. His calm, methodical, and professional personality, combined with his high level of technical proficiency, made him a sounding board for the operations section, jack-of-all-trades right hand man, and a pleasure to work with. I look forward to watching his career in Wilderness SAR progress – he is a credit to his training and the teams he serves with.

Sincerely,
Evan Koepke

Chairman – ASRC
Incident Staff/FTL – ASRC/BRMRG