

To: Andrew Hower, Operations Section Chief/Plans Section Chief  
From: Dawn Smith, Search Mission Coordinator  
Subject: February 18-19, 2011 Tidewater Full-Scale Exercise  
Date: 12/22/2011

I wanted to recognize your performance during the February 18-19, 2011, Tidewater Full-Scale Exercise. This event simulated a large-scale search response for multiple missing persons and based on design and real-world concerns during the exercise (e.g., fire weather danger, possible real-world missing boy scenario), the event provided a real test of individual capability to respond to a search mission.

We both arrived during the initial shift and provided support to the initial SMC, Bart Drummond, and following discussions about the need to work in shifts, we were both organized as members of the second shift.

The following morning, we reported and began the turn over process with the SMC and his team. I requested that you fill the role as the Operations Section Chief. Based on real-world fire weather concerns, you worked to get representatives from the local fire department to visit the command post and provide a briefing to everyone participating in the exercise. Additionally, you went about organizing evacuation equipment for multiple finds, taking planned tasks from the previous evening and organizing teams, and responding to immediate concerns as they arose.

During the course of the day and my assessment of the command staff, I requested that you assume the role of the Plans Section Chief. Such a transition during the middle of a shift can cause difficulty, but you supported the transition and you were able to easily take on the role. Based on your actions, our plans section became organized and would easily have been ready to transition to the next shift coming on board.

Finally, during the course of the exercise, a team of searchers came across a boy looking for his missing brother. For close to an hour, we paused the exercise and started to lay the groundwork for a real-world response. Based on direction from the VDEM representative, Billy Chrimes, the exercise staff maintained their positions for the real-world response. Your actions during this time were extremely supportive of the response and were appropriate for a real-world response.

It was a pleasure to work with you during this exercise. I look forward to working with you again!

Thanks again!!

*Dawn E. K. Smith*