

## **Deputy Brian S. Melvin #194 / DPSST# 36039**

### **Career experience**

Thank you for giving me the time to speak to this committee today. I have been a Deputy Sheriff with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office for over 20 years. For about 13 of those years, I have been involved with Search and Rescue. I have been the Search and Rescue coordinator for the Sheriff of Douglas County for about 8 years.

I am a member of the Oregon State Sheriff's Association's, Search and Rescue instructor cadre and have taught many new SAR coordinators and managers. I currently instruct using the Oregon State Sheriff's Association's "Ground Search Management Course" curriculum.

I am also an instructor in the California Office of Emergency Services (formerly known as California Emergency Management Administration) model of Search Management as well as Emergency Response International's Search Management model.

I have testified in Douglas County Circuit Court in cases involving Search and Rescue and in 2013, I testified before Judge Ronald Pool in the case involving Stephen Litsey. Stephen Litsey was a man who went missing in the wilderness in the Twin Lakes area of the Umpqua National Forest. Stephen Litsey went missing on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011, while hunting deer. On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013, my court testimony as well as search efforts and law enforcement investigations proved enough for Judge Pool to declare Stephen Litsey as deceased.

I have also worked cases involving lost persons in wilderness settings where through the investigative process, I would not support nor do I think the courts would rule that a person is beyond any doubt deceased due to being lost.

## **Protocol of investigations in SAR.**

- 1) Sheriff is given notification of a missing or lost subject.
  - A) The initial information obtained is analyzed and a determination is made to search or gather more information.
  - B) When a person is reported missing or lost, that person is entered into LEADS as a missing person.
  - C) Detailed information on what the subject was doing or about to do is gathered. If anything comes up suspicious, a missing person investigation is conducted. This often is conducted by a criminal investigator at the direction of the Sheriff.
  
- 2) Search and Rescue mission is activated.
  - A) Local SAR resources are called and deployed. When in a wilderness setting, types of SAR resources need to be more specialized and therefore local resources are scarce.
  - B) Regional and State wide resources are requested to assist in the search.
  - C) Law Enforcement investigation begins. Examples; credit card use, cell phone forensics, social media, hospital checks, jail checks, DMV search.
  
- 3) When a person is believed to be lost in a wilderness and is not found.
  - A) All documentation of actions taken are evaluated. Examples of documentation is Subject profile, Team Assignments, Debrief forms, Maps.
  - B) When all reasonable efforts are determined to be completed, a meeting with the Sheriff, SAR managers, and family go over all efforts both investigative and search. It would then be determined that the subject being looked for is unresponsive. Search efforts would then be scaled back or suspended.

A very small percentage of cases end with these kind of results. Over the hundreds of SAR missions a year, it is very rare a case will go unsolved in a short period of time. SAR doesn't suspend wilderness missions easy. Wilderness missions are worked diligently over a long period of time. Only after all SAR resources are depleted, investigative leads have resulted no new clues, and the subject is believed to be unresponsive ie: believed to be deceased do we scale back or suspend. Even when a search is suspended or scaled back, small search efforts over the next few months are conducted but only on a limited scale.