



## Search and rescue group adds technology to arsenal



Cochrane Search and Rescue Association's newest graduates. The volunteer organization now has approximately 50 trained and active members. Photo by Cori Lee Miller

Thanks to a grant from the Calgary Foundation, Cochrane Search and Rescue (CSAR) has added some new tools to its arsenal.

The \$11,255 grant has allowed the group not only to purchase some new technology, but also to increase efficiency and cut down on search times. CSAR was able to purchase 12 new GPS units, 8 copies of Mapitfirst software, 2 laptop computers, a printer, wireless adapter and training on how to use the new software.

CSAR members Jerry McGillivray and Tom Rooke said the new technology will help the group complete searches faster and more efficiently than ever before, especially important when lives are hanging in the balance.

The Mapitfirst software allows the group to create a digital version of the search area, mapping routes, clues and the exact locations of each search team and where they have searched. In the past CSAR was forced to use time-consuming methods, such as drawing out footprints they'd found and mapping the co-ordinates, explained McGillivray. Now the information can be recorded digitally with the GPS, cutting down on time and human errors.

"You actually map with your GPS exactly where that boot print was and you can take a picture of it with the camera," McGillivray said. Rooke said it will also help when search teams switch shifts, since an easy-to-read digital search map will allow teams to seamlessly change over without being unsure of information. Both hope if the technology is a success in the field, other search and rescue groups and law enforcement agencies will take notice and utilize the technology as well.

In 2009, CSAR attended five active searches and held several mock searches for training purposes. On Jan. 29, CSAR welcomed 17 new members, bringing it's membership up to 50 active members. CSAR covers an area ranging west to Kananaskis, south to Bragg Creek, north to Bottrell and east to Airdrie, a region containing approximately 50,000 people.

*Article written by Cori Lee Miller and printed from Cochrane Eagle Online – Cochrane's Source of News and Opinion: <http://www.cochraneagle.com>*