

Lost Person Behavior

Per "Search Management for the Initial Response Incident Commander, 2000"

Subjects are:

Children (1-6 years)

Child (7-12 years)

Youth (13-15 years)

Despondent

Psychotics

Mentally Retarded

Alzheimer's

Miscellaneous Adult (mushroom/fruit pickers, photographers, rock hounds, surveyors, forestry workers, conservation officers)

Hikers

Hunters

Others (Fisherman, Climbers, Skiers)

Lost Person Behavior

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Children (1-6 years)

Characteristics

Young Children, 1-3 years

- Unaware of the concept of being lost.
- Navigational skills and sense of direction almost non-existent.
- Tend to wander aimlessly.
- Do not respond to whistles or calls.
- Good survivability because of tendency to find shelter.

Children, 3-6 years

Have a developing concept of being lost and will attempt to return home or go back to a familiar place.

They may panic and become further lost as they attempt to 'find themselves'.

Do not understand the fact that a return trip is needed – their explorations are usually one way.

Tracks, trails, etc. plus 'short cuts' that may not readily appear as well defined track to an adult.

More mobile than children 1-3 years.

May become lost following an animal or group of older children into the undergrowth or in exploring.

Where

They often seek out a place to lie down and go to sleep – under thick brush, an overhanging rock, a picnic table, inside a car boot, inside an abandoned appliance, Etc.

They are difficult to detect.

Rarely walk out by themselves.

Distance from IPP (12 cases)

	Km's	Miles
10%	0.47	0.29
20%	0.54	0.34
30%	0.61	0.38
40%	0.72	0.45
50%	0.95	0.60
60%	1.16	0.73
70%	1.51	0.94
80%	1.89	1.18
90%	2.27	1.42
100%	2.65	1.66

How

Passive attraction methods are rarely successful and confinement is a low priority.

Air scenting dog teams alongside rapid response teams.

Thorough searching of high priority areas close to ;IPP – Urgent response needed.

Sign cutting teams along main trails.

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Child (7-12 years)

Characteristics

Navigational and directional skills are much more developed than 1-6 years olds. They are learning to construct primitive 'mental maps' of their environments which may be highly inaccurate.

Frequently become lost while attempting a short cut to a familiar location.

May become lost during fantasy play-adventuring etc., and may find the play and reality confusing.

They may become upset and confused when lost and react irrationally.

Often resort to trail running which may take them some distance from the PLS/LKP.

They may respond more maturely if with a friend or sibling.

They will attempt to 'find themselves' through often lack adult tactics.

Where

Tracks, trails, shortcuts – check with friends for any 'secret' places and/or favorite places, hideouts or routes.

Landmarks, high points, features – ponds, lakes, streams, drainages, forest edges and clearings.

Any 'known' places – secret play places.

Distance from IPP (9 cases)

	Km's	Miles
10%	1.12	0.70
20%	1.29	0.81
30%	1.46	0.91
40%	1.68	1.05
50%	2.10	1.31
60%	2.62	1.64
70%	2.97	1.86
80%	4.24	2.65
90%	6.78	4.24
100%	8.00	5.00

How

Confinement should be a high priority.

Rapid response teams to high priority areas.

Use air scenting dog teams

Passive attraction methods are rarely successful

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Youth (13-15 years)

Characteristics

Navigational and directional skills are much more developed than 6-12 years olds.
Frequently become lost in groups whilst engaged in exploring or adventure activity.

They rarely travel far in groups.

Will usually respond to calls and whistles.

Often resort to 'direction sampling', looking for a familiar place or landmark.

They may respond more maturely if with a friend or sibling.

They will attempt to 'find themselves' though often lack adult tactics.

May panic and resort to irrational tactics to locate themselves.

Where

Tracks, trails, shortcuts – check with friends for any 'secret' places and/or favorite places, hideouts or routes.

Landmarks, high points, features – ponds, lakes, stream, drainages, forest edges, and clearings.

Any 'known' places – secret play plaes.

Distance from IPP (20 cases)

	Km's	Miles
10%	0.56	0.35
20%	0.72	0.45
30%	0.87	0.54
40%	1.13	0.71
50%	1.80	1.13
60%	2.68	1.68
70%	3.73	2.33
80%	4.82	3.00
90%	5.91	3.70
100%	7.00	4.38

How

Confinement a low priority unless subject is alone.

Rapid response teams to high priority areas.

Use air scenting dog teams.

Passive attraction methods can be successful.

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Despondent

Characteristics

It is not usually their intention to travel far, but to find a place where they can be alone and possibly contemplate suicide.

Frequently located at the interface of two types of terrain and/or vegetation boundary.

Often head for a scenic location or well-known beauty spot such as a hill that may overlook civilization.

Sometimes these places are well known to them.

Rarely found in dense underbrush or trees.

They rarely respond to calls and whistles and may even hide and avoid searchers.

There is an extremely high fatality rate – drugs and/or alcohol are frequently involved.

Where

Scenic locations, high points overlooking beauty spots and/or civilization.

Places well known to them, favorite places previously/frequently visited – favorite walks, tracks, and trails.

Terrain interfaces – vegetation changes, breaks of slope, cliffs.

Two distinct groups: (1) subjects merely seeking to get out of sight. This group will be close to the IPP. (2) subjects seeking out a specific location, often scenic and/or significant in their life. This second group may travel long distances to get there.

Distance from IPP (74 cases)

	Km's	Miles
10%	0	0
20%	0.16	0.1
30%	0.16	0.1
40%	0.24	0.15
50%	0.32	0.2
60%	0.4	0.25
70%	1.2	0.75
80%	2.0	1.25
90%	6.4	4.0
100%	32.0	20.0

How

Investigation important – speak with friends, family, work colleagues, etc. to build an accurate subject profile.

Response should be urgent.

Thorough search of small area (up to 70%)

Confinement is a low priority.

Passive tactics not successful.

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Psychotics

Characteristics

- May be evasive and run away and/or hide.
- Most do not respond to name.
- Rarely travel purposefully to an identifiable target.
- Associated medication and/or lack of it may be a problem.
- May be frightened of authority and of being found.
- Can be aggressive – be aware of safety of searchers – seek advice.
- Rarely 'lost' in the traditional sense of the work.
- Behavior may be difficult to predict.

Where

- Tend not to penetrate woods and/or thick undergrowth.
- Often found in woods (edges) – 20%; buildings – 23%; along roads – 23%.
- Detailed checks of buildings in search area should be done by Police.
- Drainages, streams, tracks, and trails,
- 21% walked out.

Distance from IPP (25 cases)

	Km's	Miles
10%	0	0
20%	0.16	0.1
30%	0.4	0.25
40%	0.5	0.3
50%	0.64	0.4
60%	0.8	0.5
70%	1.6	1.0
80%	3.2	2.9
90%	6.0	4.8
100%	12.8	8.0

How

- Search urgency high.
- Investigation is important – speak to any professionals involved as well as family and friends to build an accurate subject profile.
- Air scenting dogs around woods and drainages starting near to IPP.
- Containment along roads/tracks a priority.
- Re-search areas and tracks.
- Use of trackers near to IPP.
- Cut for sign along roads and tracks.
- Detailed investigation essential.
- Ongoing through systematic search of building and residence.

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Mentally Retarded

Characteristics

- Blend of Young Children and Alzheimer's – lack concept of being 'lost'.
- Good survivability.
- Rarely respond.
- Possible associated physical impairment.
- Rarely travel to a set target though often make a random building to seek shelter.
- Will travel and penetrate into woods, forests and undergrowth.
- Subject may run away from and avoid searchers.

Where

Dense undergrowth, 11%, forest edges and will penetrate inside 16%, often to seek shelter.

Building, (21%) yards, gardens (16%) and outbuildings.

Not 'route' orientated.

21% found in drainages

Distance from IPP (29 cases)

	Km's	Miles
10%	0	0
20%	0.16	0.1
30%	0.3	0.2
40%	0.4	0.25
50%	0.8	0.5
60%	1.2	0.75
70%	1.6	1.0
80%	2.8	1.7
90%	4.8	3.0
100%	6.0	4.8

How

Search urgency is high.

Investigation is important – speak to any professionals involved as well as family and friends to build an accurate subject profile.

Early deployment of air scenting dogs near to IPP.

Detailed ground search of areas up to the 50% zone.

Check any streams and drainages.

Re-search of areas is important – plan for short search assignments.

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Alzheimer's

Characteristics

This profile is based upon search subjects suffering from possible Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.

Poor memory.

Impaired ability to make sense of surroundings, and recognize hazards.

May experience hallucinations or perceptual distortions.

Loss occurs when subject leaves residence or nursing home, possibly with last sighting on a roadway.

Previous history of wandering.

Coexisting medical problems limiting mobility.

Possibly looking for a private location in which to urinate.

Will not cry out for help or respond to shouts.

Will not leave many physical clues.

Usually succumbs to the environment (hypothermia, dehydration).

Where

50% are found within 0.6 miles of IPP; 96% are found within 1.5 miles of IPP.

Usually a short distance from a road.

Usually found in a creek or drainage and/or caught in briars/bushes and often continue until they get stuck.

May cross roads and/or trails, tracks.

May attempt to travel to a place previously known to them.

Distance from IPP (87 cases)

	Km's	Miles		Km's	Miles
10%	0.16	0.1	60%	0.8	0.5
20%	0.16	0.1	70%	1.1	0.7
30%	0.4	0.25	80%	1.6	1.0
40%	0.5	0.3	90%	2.0	1.25
50%	0.8	0.5	100%	3.2	2.0

How

Search urgency is high.

Early containment is essential.

Early use of trackers at IPP.

Early use of tracking dogs at IPP and along roadways.

Early deployment of air scent dog teams in drainages and streams, starting nearest IPP.

Early deployment of hasty ground teams into drainages and streams nearest IPP.

Thoroughly search the residence/nursing home and surrounding grounds and buildings; repeat every few hours.

Cut for sign along roadways.

Search heavy briars/bushes.

Search nearby previous home sites and the region between homes sites and IPP.

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Miscellaneous Adults

Characteristics

This category includes **mushroom/fruit pickers, photographers, rock hounds** and generally people engaged in some outdoor occupational activity such as **surveyors, forestry workers, conservation officers**, etc.

Often inadequately equipped and prepared for activity or the circumstances they find themselves in.

Many subjects found away from trails and tracks.

May panic on realization of situation.

Poorly developed way finding skills and may not have map and compass.

Attempts to 'find themselves' often exacerbate the situation.

40-50% are adequately equipped.

Cause is subject error.

50% followed a trail or drainage at some time while missing.

30-50% move at night.

High percent are communicative.

90% are found within five miles of IPP.

Where

Frequently located near natural boundaries and vegetation interfaces – and navigation aids – walls, fence lines, shelters, etc.

Sometimes wander away from regular tracks and trails and become lost.

Need to identify 'magnets' that may have attracted them.

Distance from IPP (29 cases)

	Km's	Miles		Km's	Miles
10%	0.39	0.24	60%	3.34	2.08
20%	0.68	0.43	70%	3.77	2.36
30%	0.98	0.61	80%	5.37	3.36
40%	1.35	0.84	90%	8.60	5.38
50%	2.05	1.28	100%	19.00	11.88

How

Investigation is especially important for this 'mixed bag' category

Through careful terrain analysis, need to identify relevant locations (magnets), which may have attracted the person.

Rapid response teams and air scenting dogs to cover trails, tracks, streams, forest edges, fence lines, lines of least resistance, etc.

Trackers and trailing dogs at PLS/LKP.

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Hikers

Characteristics

They are trail oriented and often become lost when their trail becomes obscured or when they encounter a confusing junction or intersection of trails.

They tend to travel further than other categories.

Sometimes poorly prepared and lack experience of remote areas.

Will attempt to find themselves by trail running or finding high spot.

May follow 'lines of least resistance' such as a stream, forest edge, etc.

May regress to less effective methods when panicky.

May look for shelter at nightfall or if injured.

Where

Tracks, trails, lines of least resistance, forest edge (navigation aids).

Sheltered points.

High ground – lookouts.

Distance from IPP (24 cases)

	Km's	Miles		Km's	Miles
10%	0.87	0.54	60%	2.74	1.71
20%	1.21	0.76	70%	3.14	1.96
30%	1.55	0.97	80%	5.64	3.53
40%	1.93	1.21	90%	10.87	6.80
50%	2.33	1.46	100%	24.00	15.0

How

Confinement a priority.

Aerial survey to plot lines of least resistance, trails, navigation points and 'likely spots'

Check route plans.

Small widely spaced, rapid response teams and air scenting dogs.

Tracking dogs and trackers from IPP.

Clue aware searchers tasked to run trails.

Be aware of potentially large distances and area that may be involved.

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Hunters

Characteristics

Their concentration on game often distracts them from navigation.
Frequently become disoriented chasing wounded game into thick areas of trees or bush.

They tend to overextend themselves in darkness and push beyond their physical abilities.

When game laws prescribe the wearing of 'hunter orange', they can be easily detected from a distance or from a helicopter.

Will respond to calls and whistles – may fire shots to attract searchers.

May try to walk out unaided at daybreak after building shelter for the night.

On average 1 in 3 walk out unharmed.

High survivability rate.

A common cause is subject error.

Weather a factor in 18% of cases; darkness a factor in 33% of cases.

39% follow drainages.

Significant number wanders and go cross-country.

Many are communicative.

66% found within two miles.

Where

Trails, tracks and forest roads.

Drainages, stream/river banks.

Forest edges, clearing, points for shelter.

Check local knowledge for favorite places and current conditions.

Distance from IPP (100 cases)

	Km's	Miles		Km's	Miles
10%	0.80	0.50	60%	3.09	1.93
20%	1.28	0.80	70%	3.50	2.19
30%	1.61	1.00	80%	5.00	3.13
40%	1.94	1.21	90%	8.00	5.00
50%	2.40	1.59	100%	19.31	12.07

How

Confinement is a priority.

Thorough investigation (subject profile) is important.

Aerial survey to plot tracks, trails, forest roads and any clearings.

Attractive methods may be effective.

Clue aware teams along trails and river banks.

Small rapid response groups to high priority areas.

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Others

Fishermen

Generally, **they are very will oriented** because of the directional flow of a river or the position of a lake.

The **reason they are overdue is most often accident related**, such as slipping into the water, falls over cliffs while trying to move up or down stream, or swept off of feet in fast moving water.

A very high percentage of this mission category is boat related.

Often this will be a recovery mission.

Climbers

The individuals in this category are **generally well equipped and self sufficient.**

They **tend to remain on or near designated routes.**

A **primary factor for these incidents is weather or hazardous conditions** which limit an individual's abilities.

Other major factors are falling debris and avalanche.

Technical expertise is generally needed for both search and recovery.

For backcountry mountaineers, the cause is often due to the climbers taking longer to complete the route than planned, or lower limb injuries on non-technical terrain.

Skiers

Cause is human error, weather (33%) or darkness (20%).

Generally follow paths, trails, drainages; 25% attracted by civilization.

Almost all are communicative, 50% are mobile.

85% found within 5 miles of IPP.

83% are not moving after the first 24 hours; 30-45% move at night.

50% found by SAR effort using hasty search, visual tracking, 50% find themselves.