



Beach Patrol Receives Marine Animal Rescue Training

The Ocean City Beach Patrol has worked with the National Aquarium in Baltimore in several ways over the past twenty years. Beach Patrol Instructors even went to the Aquarium at one point to teach those involved in the dolphin shows how to stabilize and extricate members of their team if they were to sustain a spinal injury in one of their pools. As our stands dot the Atlantic shoreline for a ten-mile stretch, we are often the first agency to encounter marine animals that, for whatever reason, are either stranded or in the process of coming to shore. This makes our partnership with the Marine Animal Rescue Program (MARP), based at the aquarium, a natural fit. Over the years members of their team would come to Monday meetings to give an overview to SRTs in how to care for live, stranded animals. Sergeant Uebel would dutifully don the dolphin mask and lay down with his arms against his sides, his hands acting as flippers. Lt. Lee and others would then roll him onto a stretcher. Each summer, we would put that basic knowledge to work as we initiated care for dolphins, turtles, seals and other animals that found their way to the beach. For a few years the MARP team had an ambulance stationed at the Coast Guard station in Ocean City. Several of our officers were trained how to use the nets and equipment on the ambulance to move injured or sick animals to a protected environment were they could receive care. We were called on a few times to drive the MARP ambulance to stranded animals, once traveling all the way to Virginia to transport a seal pup that stranded on a marshy island near Chincoteague. The Beach Patrol has assisted the MARP team many times with the release of animals that were successfully treated and rehabilitated. We often drive them from their transport vehicles to the water's edge, and provide an extra level of crowd control as curious spectators rush in to see what's going on.

Our training for handling stranded animals has taken great strides in 2011. Members of the MARP team came to both of our Surf Rescue Academies this year and taught all of our rookies the basics of caring for stranded animals. Then, on Saturday, November 5th, 19 of our employees attended a MARP training class at Beach Patrol Headquarters that was arranged by Sgt. Falcon, and led by Jennifer Dittmar of the MARP team. Those 19 Beach Patrol employees received manuals and reference guides and, at the end of the class, were given their official MARP Staff T-shirts. Jennifer has agreed to hold additional "Marine Animal Rescue Responder" training during our season so others that were not available for the November 5th responder level training will have additional opportunities. We will be adding this newest training to our OCBPSRA



certification program, and of course we will be designing a certification patch and certificate for those who complete this training.

This is just another example of our efforts to provide the best possible training to our employees. Having these skills and this knowledge helps us to fulfill our mission by caring for the beach environment, the animals that live there, and by keeping our human visitors safe and away from animals that can be dangerous when sick, injured, or when they feel threatened. Thanks to all of the participants in these latest training opportunities, and a special thanks to Jennifer Dittmar and the MARP team for making it all possible.