






THE USE OF SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS IN THE CONTEXT OF FLASH FLOODS: LEARNINGS & TRAINING

The Gard Region K9 SAR Team's experience














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Gard region: from the Cévennes to the sea, a diversity of territories

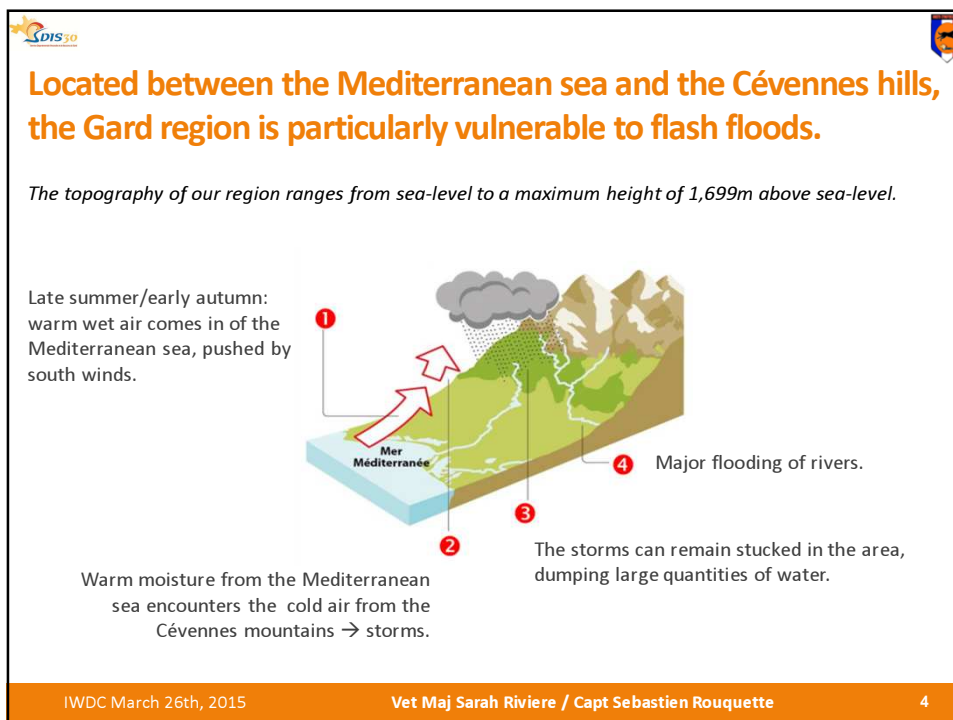
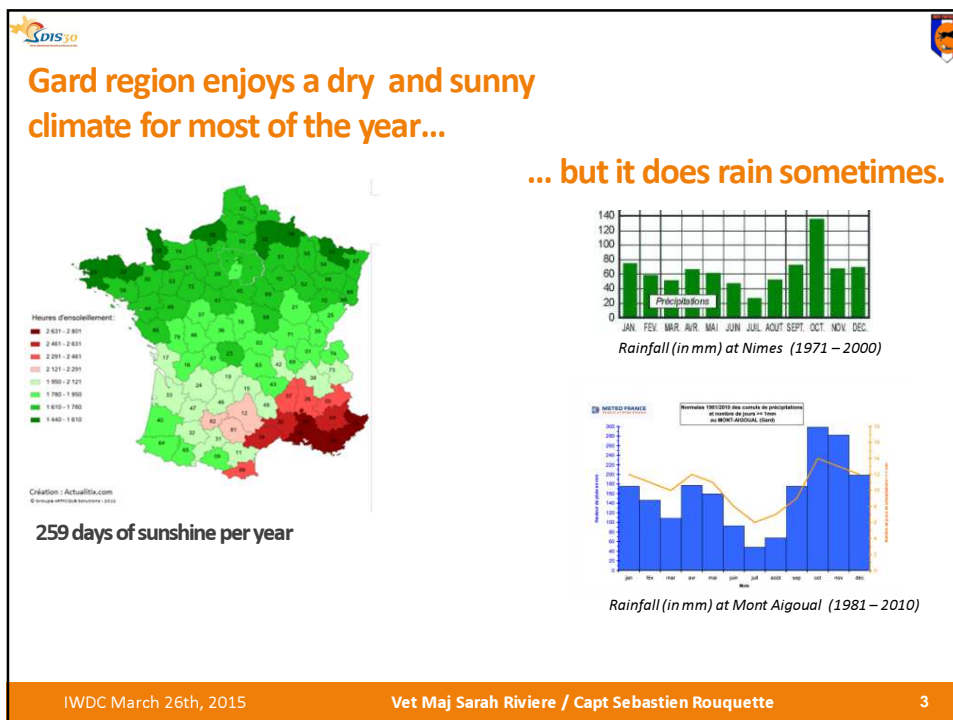












5.900 km²

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During autumn, “Cevenol storms” can occur, making numerous towns and villages particularly subject to severe flash floods.

Extreme cevenol storms that occur from Sept to Nov 2014: 9 episodes, 4 of them causing heavy damages

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Cevenol storms are monsoon-like heavy rainfalls

➤ Seasonal phenomena

➤ Heavy located rainfalls

Oct 2014: cumulative rainfall in 14h period

➤ Major flash flooding of rivers:

- a very low water levels during the summer
- Rise up to several meters in few hours
- After few hours the water is cleared from the land

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The suddenness of these events surprises people: the SAR dogs are valuable components of the rescue teams.





“Embâcle”




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**IN THE CONTEXT OF FLASH FLOODS:
QUALITIES & COMPETENCIES
EXPECTED FROM THE SAR DOGS**

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Case study: Area search in nov. 2014 (3 missing people)






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Acute phase of the event

- ⇒ To be at ease, self confident in this specific aquatic environment
- ⇒ Mental and physical qualities



Dense vegetation

- ⇒ search drive
- ⇒ Physical ability to inspect this vegetation

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Many people and dogs
⇒ sociable

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Case study: Area search in Sept. 2014 ("doubt removal")







Acute phase of the event: waterlogged fields
⇒ physical qualities to perform the research
⇒ Mental qualities to overcome the difficulties

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Cases study: Area searches in Oct. 2014 (1) (1)




Inspection of “Embâcles”

- ⇒ Self-confidence in these specific circumstances
- ⇒ Physical qualities

Be trained to free search and systematic search

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Case studies: rubble searches in Oct. / Nov. 2014 (“doubt removal”)



Delayed effect of the Cevenol storms: damaged buildings

- ⇒ Be trained to urban search

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To be efficient in the context of flash floods, the SAR dogs need to have specific mental and physical qualities

The main physical qualities	The main mental qualities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, muscular body • Optimal condition, very strong stamina • Move easily • A coat suitable for that purpose • At ease in the water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of self-confidence • Develop adequate behaviour in specific situation • High level of search drive • Perseverant • Courage • Sociable

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The usual technical competencies of the SAR dogs are necessary in the context of flash floods

SAR dogs of the French Fire Departments are trained to area search and rubble search.



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SAR DOGS: SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR THE CONTEXT OF FLASH FLOODS

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Specific training in aquatic environment

- Be confident with this environment
- Be at ease in the water (*even if during acute phase they don't work in the water*)
- Be trained to locate missing people in the water


















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➤ To know how to work with the other specialised teams

➤ To be at ease on boat

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Specific environmental conditions






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Specific training to heli-hoisting

- Management of this stressful situation
- Knowledge of the safety procedures
- Get used to this specific noise: in case of flash flooding events , it is usual that helicopters fly over the area.







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Conclusion

- In the Gard region, the risk of flash floods events influence the SAR dogs training.
- The competencies of the SAR dogs make them valuable component of the rescue teams

BUT a specific training, from the early age, is necessary (specific environment, specific way to operate)

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In Gard region, flash floods are one of the circumstances we have to train the SAR dogs to operate in.










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Thanks to the Team!












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