



# Philadelphia Search and Rescue

## Customer case study

### TECHNOLOGY/PRODUCTS

- Fargo Persona C30 Card Printer

### TOP REASONS WHY GREATER PHILADELPHIA SEARCH AND RESCUE CHOSE FARGO PRINTERS FOR THIS PROJECT:

- Ease of printer use
- Reliability of the printer, but support when needed
- Availability of supplies, including ribbons and cards
- Simple cleaning process with card cleaning roller in the ribbon cartridge

*"This printer has saved quite a bit of work and made it much easier to make individual IDs."*

Mark Hopkins  
Chief,  
Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue

### Search and Rescue Organization Finds Better ID Cards with Fargo Printers

#### The Challenge

The intrusion of unauthorized personnel in a search and rescue operation can steal precious minutes and take the eyes of rescuers off the main goal – to save lives. "When a person is lost or endangered, seconds can mean the difference between life and death," said Mark Hopkins, Chief, Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue (GPSAR). "That's why the use of ID cards is so important for scene safety and identification."

"Fortunately I can recall only two situations where someone misrepresented themselves as a member of our team," added Hopkins. "The one that stands out was at a search for a missing autistic boy where a woman put on colors that matched our uniform and outfitted her dog appropriately. In the confusion, she disappeared into the woods. There is always the possibility of something of this nature during the chaos of a large operation, but the ID system helps to reduce the possibility of someone going undetected. I've found that having the IDs displayed prominently makes other agencies take notice and pay attention to the lack of an ID on someone."

The Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue is a non-profit organization that relies on 40 dedicated volunteers to respond to search requests in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. There is no charge to the community. Founded in 1979, GPSAR volunteers are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, engaging in rescue operations in the wilderness or urban areas, in caves or on ice, in water or in collapsed structures. Their mission is to respond so "That Others May Live."

The importance of identifying authorized individuals on the scene of a search and rescue is obvious. Up until 2006, GPSAR had been issuing ID cards printed on glossy photo paper and laminating them one at a time. Because the ID cards used in search and rescue operations often are exposed to the elements, including icy water, they must be durable. Administrators wanted something more long-lasting and more professional than their hand-made cards.

#### Solution Found

Hopkins was familiar with Fargo printers and asked one of his officers to contact the company. "I had worked with Fargo products in the past," he said, "and knew firsthand of their reputation." He chose the Fargo Persona C30 Card Printer, one of the easiest Fargo printers to use. Hopkins said he also was looking for support, reliability and availability of supplies. "This printer has saved quite a bit of work and made it much easier to make individual IDs," he added.

Users appreciate the easy nature of the machine, including the fact that the ribbon cartridge also contains the card cleaning roller, simplifying the cleaning process. This was an important consideration for GPSAR, according to Hopkins. "Others thinking about choosing a new printer should match the product with their needs and budget, and also price the consumables," he advised. Consumables include ribbons, blank cards and overlamine materials.

#### Results

ID cards are typically printed from a laptop computer in the GPSAR office. They are double-sided, combining graphics with photos. "I try to be a perfectionist with graphic elements," said Hopkins.





"Eventually we'll have different IDs for people based on their status within the team. The obvious choice is different colored cards. Right now, we have it broken down with a simple title above the name for clarification. We also are working on equipment tags."

According to Hopkins, GPSAR is also going to produce tags for rescue dogs. Dogs play a large part in many rescue operations, using their keen sense of smell to follow the scent of a missing person. Introducing distracting scents from other dogs can severely inhibit the work of the rescue animals.

"Our animal partners play an incredible role in our team," he added. "The mere presence of a professional looking handler and canine helps to comfort the family of a missing person in many cases. The animals help us by dramatically narrowing the area and covering more area faster. While they don't eliminate the need for other tactics, they supplement them nicely. Identification of these animals is important so we can see their qualifications at a glance."

When GPSAR officials went searching for an upgraded ID card system, they found Fargo. "We have had problems in the past with unauthorized people on the scene of a search," said Jennifer Christian, team secretary. "With the help of Fargo, we can now make ID cards on the spot, if necessary." And because seconds count in rescue missions, this simple fact may mean the difference between life and death.

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