

EXCERPTS FROM:

Annex I-AA to Volume II, Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan - Peacetime Disasters

Subject: Search and Rescue

DEFINITIONS:

- A. Search and Rescue (SAR) - The employment and coordination of personnel and resources in:
  - 1. locating persons who are reported lost, trapped, stranded, or missing, and
  - 2. removing persons who have been found from the site of the hazard to a place of safety.
- B. SAR Coordinator - Official or agency responsible for coordination of SAR operations within a given geographical area.
- C. Mission Coordinator - The person designated by the SAR Coordinator for coordinating and controlling a specific SAR mission. At local government level the SAR Coordinator frequently assumes this task also.
- D. AFRCC - Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.
- E. CGRCC - U. S. Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Center, Fifth Coast Guard District, Portsmouth, Virginia.

I. REFERENCES:

- A. Search and Rescue Agreement between the State of Virginia and the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service in support of the National Search and Rescue Plan.
- B. The National Search and Rescue Plan.

II. SITUATION:

The Commonwealth of Virginia is subject to incidents requiring air, ground, or water search and rescue efforts.

- A. Requests for SAR assistance emanate from several sources:
  - 1. The public as a result of hearing or seeing apparent incidents or through personal knowledge of an incident.
  - 2. Official sources such as a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) facility or law enforcement agencies.

3. Distress signals - visual, audible, or electronic.
- B. Search and Rescue missions are conducted to locate and assist:
1. Overdue, missing or downed aircraft.
  2. Lost, stranded or entrapped persons.
  3. Disabled, sinking, or lost boats.

III. MISSION:

The SAR mission is to use available resources and personnel effectively to locate and render necessary assistance to persons who are in distress.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND TASKS:

A. Organization:

1. The State Coordinator of Emergency and Energy Services, by direction of the Governor, is the State SAR Coordinator. Each local government designates a SAR Coordinator. The local SAR Coordinator is responsible for ground and water search and rescue operations within his respective political jurisdiction. State agencies provide SAR resources and conduct SAR operations as a supplement to local efforts. Volunteer SAR organizations participate in SAR operations in accordance with agreements with the State and Local SAR Coordinators. Federal agencies participate in SAR operations within the Commonwealth either because of direct SAR responsibilities or in answer to requests from the State to assist.

B. Tasks:

1. State Agencies

a. Office of Emergency and Energy Services

- (1) Coordinate overall State SAR effort
- (2) Coordinate SAR training
- (3) Arrange for SAR resources to assist in SAR operations when requested by local SAR Coordinators, or the AFRCC, or CGRCC.

- b. State Police
    - (1) Provide personnel and equipment for SAR operations when requested.
  - c. Marine Resources Commission
    - (1) Provide personnel and equipment for tidal waters SAR operations when requested.
  - d. Department of Military Affairs
    - (1) Provide personnel and equipment for air and ground SAR operations when requested.
2. Local Government
- a. Conduct ground and water search and rescue operations within area of responsibility.
  - b. Participate in ground portion of air search and rescue as requested.
3. Civil Air Patrol, Virginia Wing
- In accordance with the joint agreement between Virginia Wing Civil Air Patrol and the Virginia Office of Emergency and Energy Services:
- a. Provide Mission Coordinator for air search and rescue.
  - b. Conduct air search and rescue; conduct integral ground SAR operations in coordination with local SAR coordinator.
  - c. Provide personnel for ground search and rescue when requested.
4. Federal Agencies
- a. The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) controls search and rescue operations for downed or missing military aircraft, scheduled air carrier aircraft, aircraft carrying persons of national or international importance, and civil aircraft on interstate flights.
  - b. The Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Center, Fifth Coast Guard District (CGRCC) controls search and rescue operations in the coastal waters area.
  - c. The National Park Service controls search and rescue on lands under its jurisdiction.

## 5. Volunteer Search and Rescue Organizations

Provide SAR resources at the State level in accordance with agreements with the State SAR Coordinator. Provide SAR resources at local level in accordance with agreements with the local SAR Coordinator.

## V. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS:

### A. Air Search and Rescue

#### 1. Inland Area

- a. The AFRCC will control air SAR for incidents involving military aircraft, air carrier aircraft, aircraft carrying persons of national or international importance, and civil aircraft on interstate flights. The AFRCC notifies SAR organizations and designates the Mission Coordinator. The CAP will notify the State SAR Coordinator when it is assigned a mission by the AFRCC. Ground search forces other than Federal or CAP personnel to augment Air Search will be requested by the AFRCC through the State SAR Coordinator (State Office of Emergency and Energy Services).
- b. The State will control SAR for incidents involving civil aircraft within the boundaries of the Commonwealth except air carrier aircraft, aircraft carrying persons of national or international importance, or aircraft on interstate flights. The Civil Air Patrol Virginia Wing will provide the Mission Coordinator for State-controlled air SAR.

#### 2. Coastal Waters Area

The CGRCC has SAR responsibility over the coastal waters and will coordinate search and rescue efforts of assisting agencies.

### B. Ground Search and Rescue

1. Ground search will be under the control of the local SAR Coordinator.
2. State and other assisting agencies will be given mission-type assignments and will remain under the control of the agency on-scene commander. Employment in the search effort will be coordinated by the local SAR Coordinator.
3. Ground search in conjunction with air search will be coordinated with the agency having control of the air search.

C. Water Search and Rescue

1. Inland Area

Local SAR Coordinators control water SAR within their respective political jurisdictions. State and other agencies assist as requested and their employment in the SAR effort is coordinated by the local SAR Coordinator.

2. Coastal Waters Area

The CGRCC controls SAR within these areas.

VI. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES:

A. Ground Incidents

1. Requests for SAR assistance come from the agency or person having knowledge or becoming aware of the incident requiring the SAR effort. Normally, requests should be made to the local government SAR Coordinator who will initiate and control the search. The local SAR Coordinator may request that State or other agency personnel act as mission coordinator.
2. The local SAR Coordinator will notify the State SAR Coordinator (State Office of Emergency and Energy Services) if assistance is needed.
3. The State SAR Coordinator will notify State agencies which have SAR responsibilities/capabilities appropriate to the incident.
4. The State SAR Coordinator will notify volunteer organizations which have particular SAR capabilities that are needed.
5. The State SAR Coordinator will notify the AFRCC if assistance is needed.

B. Air Incidents

1. The AFRCC receives FAA Flight Service Station/Air Traffic Control Center Information Requests and Alert Notices. The State and the AFRCC also receive notification from law enforcement agencies or other individuals/agencies which have knowledge or become aware of a lost, downed, or missing aircraft.

2. On receipt of an alert notice, action will be taken to initiate a SAR mission. If the incident involves civil aircraft within the boundaries of the State and air carrier aircraft or persons of national importance are not involved, the State SAR Coordinator will request a mission number from the AFRCC to authorize the Virginia Wing Civil Air Patrol to participate in the mission.

C. Water Incidents

1. Local SAR Coordinators respond to SAR requests using local resources. If local resources do not have the desired capability, the local SAR Coordinator will request assistance from the State SAR Coordinator who will obtain it from State or other agencies.
2. Water incidents in the coastal waters are reported to the CGRCC which controls the SAR.

D. Requests for Search and Rescue

Requests to the State, AFRCC, or CGRCC, for search and rescue assistance should provide the following information insofar as possible:

1. Name, telephone number, political jurisdiction, official position of person making the request.
2. Nature of the emergency (lost, overdue, aground, fire, etc.).
3. Name(s), age(s), and address(es) of persons for whom the search is instituted.
4. Type of search requested (air, ground, water, mountains, wooded area, etc.).
5. Area of search (geographical location).
6. Weather in search area.
7. Reporting point for SAR participants.
8. Mission Coordinator in search area (Sheriff, Emergency Services Coordinator, Police, etc.).
9. Method of contacting mission coordinator (telephone number, radio call sign and frequency).
10. Search activities already in process.

## VIRGINIA STATE POLICE

The State Police can provide helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft for search and rescue missions; both are suitable for aerial survey search. The helicopters do not have hoists, but they do have lights suitable for illuminating a large area. If the helicopter is requested for the evacuation of a patient, please indicate this in the request, so the aircrew may make arrangements for a litter patient. The State Police also have tracking dogs (ground-scenting) which may be requested for SAR missions.

Requests for State Police assistance should go directly to the local office, or if there is no answer there, to the Appomattox office. Requests need not come from a Responsible Agent or a law enforcement agency; any organization may request assistance.

## CIVIL AIR PATROL

The Virginia Wing, Civil Air Patrol (CAP) effectively serves as Responsible Agent for downed aircraft search in Virginia, through agreements with the State Corporation Commission, which is assigned authority for intra-state downed aircraft SAR, with a few exceptions. (Those exceptions are under the authority of Scott AFB, so many of those go to the CAP as well.) The CAP also provides services for lost person search, disasters, and other emergencies.

Virginia Wing CAP can provide:

1. fixed-wing aircraft for aerial survey search,
2. vehicles, including four-wheel drive ones, with VHF communications,
3. an extensive VHF and HF communications net covering the state, including mobile communications vans with emergency power, and
4. Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) teams which are trained and equipped to work in the field for lost person searches. Specify GSAR College-trained teams in your request, as the majority of CAP personnel are no better than local volunteers for lost person SAR work.

If CAP assistance is desired for a lost person search or other emergency, the request must be routed through proper channels. Requests for disaster or other similar assistance should be made to the Virginia Office of Emergency and Energy Services; requests for lost person search assistance should be made directly to Scott Air Force Base. Scott AFB will honor only requests made by, or approved by, a local Responsible Agent. If it is not clear who the Responsible Agent is, Scott will honor a request or approval from the local law enforcement agency.

## APPALACHIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE CONFERENCE (ASRC)

The Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC), of which the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group is a local "Group" or chapter, provides search and rescue information and training services, and provides certain specific SAR capabilities. It is committed to preventive search and rescue through survival education, and also provides training in certain SAR subjects and techniques to other SAR organizations.

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The ASRC can provide three major types of assistance for lost person searches:

1. A Quick Response Team. A Quick Response Team (QRT) from the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group can be on the road travelling to the scene within 30 minutes of a call to the ASRC emergency phone number. The value of a QRT is that in the initial stages of a lost person search, a quick response of trained searchers able to search in any terrain or weather, day or night, may be able to find a victim quickly. In many cases, an ASRC Quick Response Team may be able to start searching earlier than other agencies can (e.g. the first night someone is missing).
2. Base Camp Mission Staff. The ASRC can provide a management team for lost person searches, so as to free members of the Responsible Agent's staff for other important search needs. The ASRC Mission Staff functions to keep the search efforts coordinated, keeping track of all teams' progress, plotting search efforts, and registering searchers in and out of the mission. The ASRC Mission Staff members have considerable experience and training; several members are graduates of the National Search and Rescue School.
3. Searchers for Difficult Terrain or Weather. The ASRC has Basic Members with hundreds of hours of training in search and rescue, who can be used as Field Team Leaders with other personnel, or combined to form teams capable of searching in any weather or terrain found in Virginia. The ASRC can also call on a pool of about 80 Auxiliary members, all of whom have outdoor experience and equipment, and have had the training necessary to serve as members of Field Teams in rigorous outdoor conditions.

An ASRC Quick Response Team (or the ASRC personnel at a search) can perform rescue tasks in wild or back-country situations. Each QRT carries personal equipment for 48 hours without resupply, can work in any weather or terrain, and can work at night. The Team carries VHF-FM radios for communications, mountain rescue equipment and litters, and medical equipment (all Basic Members have at least basic Emergency Medical Technician certificates; some have advanced EMT certification). ASRC QRTs can also provide rescue, extrication, and evacuation services for backwoods airplane crash victims.

AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICES (ARES)

Radio amateurs have provided much-needed communications, both short and long range, in many disasters. High-frequency (HF) ham communications can pass messages to anywhere in the state, the country, or the world. However, the very high frequency (VHF) communications capability of hams is perhaps the one with the most potential for search and rescue missions. Many hams have mobile, portable, or hand-held radios on the ham VHF frequencies; combined with the large number of ham repeaters (automatic relay systems) and the fact that SAR communication on the ham bands do not generally interfere with important operations (unlike police, rescue squad, or fire channels), this means that hams can provide excellent communications for missions with a minimum of disruption to other services.