

# **ALERTING and DISPATCHING the ASRC**

## **I. WHO ALERTS THE ASRC?**

- A. The Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) is usually alerted by the Virginia Department of Emergency Services (VADES).
- B. When the ASRC is requested by a state other than Virginia, the Alert Officer (AO) arranges deployment of ASRC resources with the Responsible Agent or the RA's designee. VADES will then be notified by the AO and given details of the ASRC response. Response need not be coordinated through VADES.
- C. When the ASRC group learns of a search where the ASRC has not been requested and has an interest in approaching the RA, any contact will be made through an ASRC Incident Commander (IC) or the Conference Chairman. This may include notifying an IC from another Conference group.
- D. All calls to the VADES concerning searches where the ASRC has not been requested will be routed through the Conference Chairman, or the Conference Operations Officer.

## **II. THE ALERT OFFICER**

- A. An Alert Officer (AO) is a Incident Commander or Incident Staff member of the ASRC who has been nominated by the ASRC Alert Coordinator and is approved by the ASRC Board of Directors (BOD). The AO is activated by a 100 page on the ASRC net or by a telephone call.
- B. The alert officer (AO) handles the initial contact that the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) has with a responsible agent and/or another resource, agency, or person calling on the behalf of a responsible agent (RA). This initial contact may come in the form of a page or call.
  - 1. The AO's response to the call or page.
    - a. The AO must make sure that they have a block of time free to handle the call, approximately one hour.
    - b. The AO then makes sure that they have pen, paper, and an available telephone to use.
    - c. The AO calls the number on the pager.
      - 1. If the number is for a state agency the AO calls the number, asks for the name that they were given and gets the pertinent information.
        - Name and title of Responsible Agent (need to have)
        - Telephone number
        - Age and sex of the missing person
        - Where is person the missing?
        - How long has the person has been missing?
        - What is the weather like?
        - What is the terrain like?
        - Is the subject equipped for the outdoors (knowledge, experience, equipment)?
        - Does the subject have any pertinent medical/social history?
        - What has been done as of now?

- What other resources are on scene or responding?
- Who is the RA (get name and number)?
- Does the RA want an ASRC response?
- Get directions and a phone number to base or response area.
- What kind of a response is the RA looking for?
- When does the RA want the ASRC response?

2. If the number is for a RA, then the AO gets the same information as in above.
3. If the initial contact is not with an authorized state agency or responsible agent, ASRC cannot respond without first getting permission from the authorized state agency or responsible agent.
4. After making the initial call to the telephone number on the pager, then the AO sets of the 101\*xxx where xxx is the AO's PIN number over the ASRC net.

C. It will be determined by the AO, after talking to VADES or to the RA, what level of callout the search requires.

1. Notification - The ASRC is on notice that a search is occurring. Resources have not been requested and a callout does not seem imminent.
2. Alert - The ASRC has a high probability of responding to a search within the next 24 hours. Members should be contacted, availability's should be determined and a response team organized.
3. Overhead Team - Only ASRC Incident Staff and Incident Commanders are being asked to respond at this time.
4. Limited Callout - An ASRC OHT has been requested plus a limited request of other resources.
5. Full Callout - All available resources of the conference are requested.

The following items must be considered when deciding on the level of response:

1. Is the ASRC involved in any other searches? If yes, what are the ASRC resource availability's and how do the search urgencies compare?
2. Is this something that the ASRC is equipped to do?
3. Are there other resources that are better suited for this situation?
4. Does this pose too great a threat for the ASRC?

If the ASRC does respond, the AO must determine if there are steps that the RA is not taking that may need to be taken such as:

1. Are there needed resources that have not been alerted (an agency, dogs, police, etc.).
2. If the urgency is high enough, does air transportation need to be arranged?
3. Does containment need to be arranged?
4. Has the PLS been protected and so on.
5. The AO may need to help the RA decide what level response is needed by the ASRC at that time.

D. Once the AO has determined that the ASRC is responding, they must find at least one IC. This can be done by using a 102 page, but may call for phoning each of the IC's personally. If this fails, then the Area Command Authority can be activated to approve an Agency Representative.



**IF AN IC OR APPROVED AR IS NOT FOUND THE CONFERENCE CANNOT RESPOND. CALL THE ASRC CHAIRMAN.**

- E. Once an IC is on scene and has assessed the situation, he or she will determine any change in callout status. All groups must call in when the pagers are activated to determine the status of the callout.
- F. If a limited number of resources are requested (a limited callout for example), the AO may decide to place nearby groups on full callout while the rest of the Conference is on Alert.
- G. It is the responsibility of the AO to determine the initial IC based on who can be on scene in the least amount of time. This may entail changing ICs while one or more ICs are en route to the incident. **THE FIRST IC TO ARRIVE AT A SEARCH INCIDENT ASSUMES COMMAND OF THE INCIDENT.** This command may be passed to another incoming IC at the discretion of the initial IC. If more than one IC from the same group travel together, it should be determined before arrival who will be in charge.
- H. If any part of the response is flown into the mission, a ground response must follow to insure that the staff flown to the mission will have a ride back to their points of origin.
- I. The AO must then get conference dispatch started. This can be done by:
  - 1. Calling the BRMRG locker and finding someone there.
  - 2. Calling a conference dispatcher and asking them to go to the BRMRG Locker.
  - 3. AO going to the locker him or her self. **IF NO ONE IS AVAILABLE THE AO MUST BE THE DISPATCH OFFICER UNTIL SOMEONE IS AVAILABLE.**

Once this is done the AO must see that all the groups are notified. The AO is responsible for identifying a Dispatch Officer (DO) for each group. This is done by using the "ALERT NUMBERS OF THE ASRC" sheet. Notifying each group might include:

- 1. setting off the ASRC pager net with the appropriate code.
- 2. setting off each groups individual pagers.
- 3. calling down each groups roster (or whatever their personal alerting procedures).

The AO must priorities each groups response by:

- 1. the response requested by the RA.
- 2. the location of the search in comparison to the groups location.
- 3. the urgency of the this search in comparison to the urgency of another search, existing or possible.

- J. The AO is responsible for making sure that there is a Dispatch Supervisor (DS) to supervise the Conference Dispatch Officer. If none are available, then the AO must be the DS.
- K. The AO's job is complete when all groups have been notified, and a Conference Dispatch Officer and a Dispatch Supervisor have been found.

### **III. CONFERENCE DISPATCH**

- A. Conference dispatch is responsible for alerting all the groups of a search.
  - 1. Conference DO will try to reach the groups using their primary alerting method, usually the ASRC pager net.
  - 2. Then the conference DO will go down their secondary and tertiary alerting methods until someone is reached.
  - 3. The conference DO is responsible for having a name and a method of reaching each group dispatcher (this includes telephone #, pager # and etc.).

- B. The Conference DO is responsible for keeping an up to date status board, with the availability's for all the groups. This board should also show when ASRC personnel is en route, on scene, or homeward bound.
1. The conference DO will get availability's from all groups and post them on the board.
  2. The Conference DO will have the names of all IC and IS personnel and the numbers of all FTLs, FTM's and CQs responding.
    - a. This will be listed under the group name on the board for each group.
    - b. Then these availability's will be broken into response teams.
    - c. Each response team will have a time of departure (estimated, then actual) and an estimated time of arrival.
    - d. The Conference DO is responsible for talking to base at least every six hours and updating the board and base on available and needed personnel.
  3. The conference DO is dispatch for their own group and must contact all of their own members as well.
- C. The conference dispatch is responsible for giving all the necessary information to group dispatches.
1. changes in weather, Base location or directions;
  2. Changes in alert status, and
  3. When a group members reach or leave base.
- D. The Conference DO is responsible for keeping a log of all the telephone conversations during the mission and the time they occurred.
- E. The Conference DO is responsible for filling equipment requests from base. This includes calling other groups to see what is available. This may mean dispatching personnel to the search solely for the purpose of transporting equipment.
- F. Once Dispatch has been notified by base that there is a find, or that a decision has been made to suspend the mission, all groups must be contacted immediately. If there are teams en route, a turn-around page must be issued. If teams are en route without a pager and have not called in, Dispatch must notify Base that there are still incoming personnel.
- G. Dispatch must remain open until all teams are back, or until all group dispatchers except responsibility for their homeward bound teams.
- H. Conference Dispatch will remain open or reopen if there are any unaccounted for members of the ASRC.
- I. The conference Dispatch must let all teams, VADES, and Medium (if notified); when it is closing down.
- J. If contacted by members of the press, the Conference DO has two options:
1. The DO can refer the reporter to the IC.
  2. The IC may approve a press statement to be given out by the Conference DO.
- K. In the case of a second search, all pages dealing with the second search should look like: 2-XXX-\$\$\$-\$\$\$-\$\$\$, where XXX is the pager code and the \$\$\$-\$\$\$-\$\$\$ is the pertinent telephone number. All pages dealing with the first search will have a 1- in the front of them.

#### **IV. GROUP DISPATCH**

- A. The Group Dispatch Officer (GDO) is responsible for alerting all members of their group of the situation. This may be done any number of ways.
1. When the GDO contacts his or her members they should ask for that persons availability.



2. The GDO then needs to call the conference DO and give them the groups availability's. This needs to be done as quickly as possible.
  3. If a mission is closing the group dispatcher must tell all members, but most importantly they must reach teams about to leave. If there are teams en route that cannot be reached the GDO must let the conference DO know.
- B. The GDO has important information that the conference DO needs to do their job. Therefore communications between the two need to flow freely. The GDO is responsible for passing on to the conference DO these things:
1. The availability of members and their training levels. If the person is an IC or IS conference DO needs their names also.
  2. Conference dispatch also needs to know the estimated time of departure, arrival, and length of availability.
  3. Then the GDO should also notify conference dispatch when people actually leaves for the search.
  4. The group dispatch should let conference dispatch know likewise when teams arrive home.
  5. The group dispatch should let conference dispatch know if any of the responding members have a change in their ETA (due to car trouble, bad directions, etc.)
  6. The group dispatcher should know who is riding with whom and whether there is a pager carrying member in the car. This information should be given to the conference dispatch.
- C. The group dispatcher has other responsibilities.
1. No matter what the dispatching set up, there should always be a person that the conference DO can reach for information. This person should be available to make local calls for the group or conference dispatch.
  2. If the group dispatcher has any questions, problems, information, or contact with the press; they should alert the conference dispatch.
  3. If the problem is with the conference DO they should ask to speak to the AO on Call or the Alert/ dispatch officer. One of these people will get back to the DO immediately.
  4. If the conference dispatch hands the responsibility for teams in route to the group dispatchers and a team is over due or there is some problem, the group DO should let conference dispatch know even if it is closed. The group DO should page across the ASRC net 100 and the call back number and an AO will call back.
- D. If a GDO is contacted by a member of the press, he or she must refer the reporter to Conference Dispatch.
- E. The GDO is responsible for answering every page from Conference Dispatch. There may be more information to pass along, or a change in the callout status. The 554 page means for GDOs to call Conference Dispatch.
- F. The GDO is responsible for contacting members after being notified that a mission is closing. This is particularly important for members who are preparing to respond or who are en route. If members en route can not be reached, the Conference DO must be notified.
- G. The GDO is responsible for knowing when all group members have returned from a mission and must remain open or available until receiving notification that all members have returned.

## **V. DISPATCH SUPERVISOR**

- A. A Dispatch Supervisor (DS) is an experienced Conference Dispatch Officer appointed by the ASRC Dispatch Officer.
- B. The DS is utilized as a resource for when the Conference Dispatch Officer does not know what to do. The DS is activated by a 106 page on the ASRC pager net. The DS should be available for phone communication with the Conference Dispatch Officer.
- C. The DS may be activated by the Incident Staff at a search or by a Group Dispatch Officer but only when the effectiveness of a mission is being effected by the Conference Dispatch Officer.

## **VI. AREA COMMAND AUTHORITY**

- A. The Area Command Authority (ACA) is an experienced IC nominated by either the ASRC Alert Coordinator or the ASRC Dispatch Officer and approved by the ASRC BOD.
- B. The Area Command Authority can be activated by any of the following: an IC on scene, an AO, or a DS. It should be activated when conflicts arise between the needs of two separate missions or when no IC is available for a mission.
- C. In the case where there is no IC available, the ACA may appoint an non-Incident IC, preferable IS, member to be the Agency Representative (AR). The AR is responsible for the ASRC's role in the mission and for the safety of the ASRC members. An IC should still be sought after to replace the RA.
- D. In the case where the needs of two separate mission conflict, the ACA will act as an outside third party to mediate the conflict between the two mission by communication with the two on-scene ICs.
- E. The ACA is activated by setting of a 103 page on the ASRC pager net.

## **VI. OTHER DISPATCH INFORMATION**

- A. A toll-free number ((800) 800-2772) has been established that rings in the locker of the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group in Charlottesville, VA. This number is to be used by Base personnel when Conference Dispatch is located in Charlottesville. It is not to given out for use by RAs, nor is it to be used by group DOs.
- B. Members en route to a search who wish to use a toll-free number to check in should call the VA VADES at (800) 468-8892. Teams should check in with VADES, Conference Dispatch, or their group DO at least every hour.
- C. All teams should notify Conference Dispatch when they arrive at base. Conference Dispatch will then notify Group Dispatches of the team's arrival.



Code #	Term	Definition	AO Requirements	Conference Dispatch Requirements	Group Dispatch Requirements
111	Notification	A search is occurring somewhere. The ASRC is not being asked to respond or only one group from the ASRC is being asked to respond. The likelihood of greater ASRC involvement is low.	The AO may set off a 111 page and inform the Group Dispatchers of the situation. No further action is required. The page may be delayed as is deemed appropriate by the AO.	Is not required to open unless there is ASRC group involved that does not take responsibility for itself.	Needs to answer the 111 page. No further action is required.
222	Alert	A search is occurring somewhere. The ASRC is not being asked to respond or only one group from the ASRC is being asked to respond. The likelihood of greater ASRC involvement is high.	The AO will decide if availabilities for the next 12 hours are required for any of the groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If availabilities are not required the 111 procedure will be followed, except set off a 222 page.</li> <li>If the AO decides availabilities are required the AO will set off a 106 for a DS to open conference dispatch. The AO should consider the need for staging. The AO must turn over all information to the DS and leave a way to be reached for questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If availabilities are not required the 111 procedure will be followed.</li> <li>If availabilities are requested, conference dispatch is required to open and contact all groups. Conference dispatch should remain open until a potential overhead team and group availabilities (for the AO selected groups) are obtained. The DS needs to leave a way to be reached for questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If availabilities are not required the 111 procedure will be followed.</li> <li>If availabilities are required, the group dispatch should obtain availabilities of ICs and staffs first, then FTLs and below. Follow any other request and/or instructions from conference dispatch.</li> </ul>
331	Overhead Team	A request for an IC and 1-3 staff members to respond at any time.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The AO will set off a 102 for an IC. The AO is responsible for getting an IC or an ACA approved AR.</li> <li>The AO should consider the need for staging, air transport, and which ASRC groups should respond.</li> <li>The AO will set off a 106 for a DS to open conference dispatch. The AO must turn over all information to the DS and leave a way to be reached for questions.</li> </ol>	Conference dispatch open, sets off a 331 page and contacts all groups. Conference dispatch should get availabilities from all groups, but only send people from the AO selected groups. Conference dispatch remains open until the end of the search. <i>The DS has the prerogative to meet the AO request in the most efficient and timely manner.</i> The DS needs to leave a way to be reached for questions	The group dispatch should obtain availabilities of ICs and staff first, then FTLs and below. Carefully note if your group is being asked to send resources at this time and what type. Follow any other request and/or instructions from conference dispatch.
332	Limited Callout	A request for a specific type or number of ASRC resources to respond. Ranges from a larger version of an overhead team to almost a full callout.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The AO will set off a 102 for an IC. The AO is responsible for getting an IC or an ACA approved AR.</li> <li>The AO should consider the need for staging, air transport, and which ASRC groups should respond.</li> <li>The AO will set off a 106 for a DS to open conference dispatch. The AO must turn over all information to the DS and leave a way to be reached for questions.</li> </ol>	Conference dispatch open, sets off a 332 page and contacts all groups. Conference dispatch should get availabilities from all groups, but only send people from the AO selected groups. Conference dispatch remains open until the end of the search. <i>The DS has the prerogative to meet the AO request in the most efficient and timely manner.</i> The DS needs to leave a way to be reached for questions	The group dispatch should obtain availabilities of ICs and staff first, then FTLs and below. Carefully note if your group is being asked to send resources at this time and what type. Follow any other request and/or instructions from conference dispatch.
333	Full Callout	All conference resources are requested to respond at this time due to the urgent nature of the search.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The AO will set off a 102 for an IC. The AO is responsible for getting an IC or an ACA approved AR.</li> <li>The AO should consider the need for staging and air transport.</li> <li>The AO will set off a 106 for a DS to open conference dispatch. The AO must turn over all information to the DS and leave a way to be reached for questions.</li> </ol>	Conference dispatch open, sets off a 333 page and contacts all groups. Conference dispatch should get availabilities from all groups for the next three days. Conference dispatch remains open until the end of the search. <i>The DS has the prerogative to meet the AO request in the most efficient and timely manner.</i> The DS needs to leave a way to be reached for questions	The group dispatch should obtain availabilities of ICs and staff first, then FTLs and below. Follow any other request and/or instructions from conference dispatch.