

Use of the SAROP

The ASRC Search and Rescue Operations Plan (SAROP) is intended to be a comprehensive plan for all missions the ASRC might be called to perform. Such broad coverage is obtained not with a multitude of individual contingency plans but rather one relatively simple but general plan which lends itself to intelligent adaptation to suit individual circumstances. The entire machinery of the Plan will never be employed except on a large scale search involving several organizations, many volunteers and lasting for many days. The trick to making the plan work during less ambitious undertakings is to select only those aspects which are applicable and useful. The SAROP should be viewed as "collapsible" to suit any situation. Listed below are several suggestions and warnings for using the SAROP.

- 1) The forms provided for in the SAROP can simplify and organize necessary procedures; use them, but don't use them for their own sake.
  - 2) Keep the five phases in mind and activate only those necessary
  - 3) Don't assign people to positions just because it is in the SAROP; assign positions to the fewest number of people which will get all of the jobs done. Some good combinations are:
    - a) FTL and RS, but keep the Medic separate.
    - b) RO can be just about anyone.
    - c) On a straight rescue the MC might as well go along as QRL
    - d) On a simple search or moderately complicated rescue, the OO, PO, EO, and CO can often be combined. Probably the first job to be sorted out would be the CO. EO and PO should be combined as often as possible to streamline the task assignment procedure.
    - e) Be careful not to let the CO serve as a base RO except under circumstances which clearly call for it. The CO has other things to do and RO is a full time job.
  - 4) The alert procedure described in the SAROP should always be carefully followed to avoid costly oversights. Note, however, that positions can be effectively combined, particularly those of AO and MC. Care should be taken in deciding to combine MC and DO. In a search situation, where much information must be gathered, this combination would probably be a mistake. On the other hand, in a straight rescue mission with clear information from the Complainant, much time may be saved if the MC does the callout himself.
  - 5) Unity of command is indispensable to unity of effort and to effective operation. There is always more than one way to procede, but efficient operation demands that only <sup>one</sup> procedure be followed. Command decisions must be quickly made and closely followed if chaos is to be avoided. On a large and complex mission, such as a search, a hierarchy of authority distributes the burden of command decision-making and leadership, allowing for more competent action without destroying the unity of command. Such a system cannot be expected to work, however, unless the command structure is well defined, truly hierarchal, and not artificially large or complex. These requirements will be fulfilled only if the Mission Coordinator carefully considers the specific exigencies of the mission at hand in his execution of the SAROP, and if all the people involved in the operation are sufficiently disciplined to follow the Plan as it is employed by the MC.
- In most circumstances, it is hoped that the problem of adaptation of the SAROP will be a straightforward matter of

deciding which aspects of the Plan to employ and which not, and of assigning functions to the people available. The extent to which this is the case is an important test of how effectively the Plan fulfills its function of providing useful operational guidance. Admittedly, however, circumstances will arise in which the Mission Coordinator's course is not clearly outlined in the SAROP and his adaptation of it will be a highly creative act. It is in these circumstances that the Mission Coordinator's greatest leadership skills and creative effort will be called upon to maintain unity of command, and the greatest discipline and cooperative effort will be required of the other leaders and searchers in helping the MC to do so. A wise leader will hew as closely as is possible to the prescribed structures and procedures of the SAROP since this is what is expected by the other searchers, and surprises lead to errors: but everyone must bear firmly in mind that the Plan details very little, providing instead a leadership structure capable of acting upon specifics in a unified way.

Preserving the unity of command is not a trivial thing, but some guidelines can be offered. Three are listed below:

- a) When in a superior position, delegate authority to keep from spreading yourself too thin. Supervise your subordinates and enforce your expectations, but don't interfere with their work.
- b) Clearly communicate your needs to your superior and your expectations to your subordinates. Make sure you know your own job.
- c) Know your place in the command structure and try to deal as much as possible only with your immediate superiors and immediate subordinates. Bypassing authority damages the integrity of the command structure.

ADDITIONS:

- ① MC AT BASE
- ② DO, KNOWN TO UVAPD OR WITH PAGONS