Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group

Dispatching Procedures

Introduction

Dispatch plays a critical role in responding to a search and rescue incident. It is essential to keep track of all of the personnel who are available to respond to a search. The Dispatch Officer is also a vital resource to the members in the field when addition information or resources are needed during a mission. "Dispatch Officer" is a role that anyone on the team can play, it is not a title or permanent position. Most searcher will have many people playing the role of Dispatch Officer.

AMRG Callout List

The AMRG callout list is an e-mail list that is maintained to facilitate rapid communication of callouts to the entire group. Callout messages can be sent to cell phones, alpha/numeric pagers, regular e-mail addresses, and the regular AMRG e-mail distribution list. Members must keep the Operations Officer informed of any changes to their contact information in order to ensure that the Callout list is always up to date.

Overview of an Alert

Typically a search starts with a representative from the Responsible Agency (RA), such as Police, Fire, DCNR, or another SAR group will contact STAT MedEvac to request a response from AMRG. STAT MedEvac operates a 24-hour communication center and acts as AMRG's initial alert point. The STAT dispatcher will get the details of the request from the caller and inform them that an AMRG Alert Officer will call them back. The information taken will generally include:

    a. Name, department, and call back number of the caller.
    b. General nature of the incident.
    c. General location of the incident.

The STAT dispatcher will then send an e-mail to the AMRG Callout list. There is a standard format that STAT will use so that the important callout information will be properly displayed on a cell phone or alpha/numeric pager. The page will look something like this:

    Subject: 100 * 412-647-7828
    Body: Latrobe, Westmoreland co. Missing 2y/o since 1100h

This is referred to as a "100 page" because of the pager code used. A "100 page" means "Alert Officer Call the following number." In the example above the subject means the following: "Alert Officer please call 412-647-7828 (STAT dispatch number)." The body of the text is self-explanatory.

When a 100 page is received an available Alert Officer (AO) will call STAT to acknowledge the page was received and to get further details of the call. If STAT does not receive a response they will attempt to page the group a 2nd time. If they still do not receive a response the pager system may not be functioning and STAT will begin calling individual AO's until they reach one. The AO's for AMRG are FTL's and higher and are trained to interface with the requesting agency and determine the needed response and to make suggestions about what to due until AMRG personnel arrive. Any AMRG FTL or higher can take the initial callout and determine if AMRG will respond to the callout. Only FTL's and higher are permitted to respond to a 100 page. If you are not an FTL, you the 100 page is simply a heads up that a callout is possible and begin to prepare to respond.

After an AO has called STAT and received the details about the search they will send a "101" page to let the other AO's know that the call has been handled and prevents multiple people from calling STAT for the same callout. A 101 page will be a very simple: "101 Handled"

The AO will then contact the requesting agency and discuss the search and a possible AMRG response. Based on this conversation, the AO will then send out a page explaining the response requested. The e-mail will be as detailed as possible and will include a phone number for you to call, if appropriate. See the section below for an explanation of the possible pages.

At this point, members will call, email, or text the AO to give their availability for the search. The dispatcher must record who calls, what their status is, and a telephone number where they can be reached. This enables us to tell the RA what resources to expect, and when they will be on scene. It also tracks who is responding, so that we can be sure that all members who are responding are accounted for.

Alternative Alert Methods

The standard way AMRG is alerted is through STAT, however, there are several other ways that we receive requests for service, including activation by Allegheny County 911, the ASRC, the Western Pennsylvania SAR Alliance, PSARC, or a direct call from an RA or another team. In this case, the alert

goes directly to one or more Alert Officers and no "100" page will be sent to the callout list and the AO will activate the team directly.

Dispatching Goals

1) At all times, maintain searcher safety.
The most important job of the dispatcher is to ensure effective communication throughout the search. In doing so the dispatcher helps to maintain the safety of searches en route, on scene, and homeward bound.
2) Keep track of searchers en route to the scene, on scene, and en route home.
It is critical that the dispatcher keep team members availabilities accurate at all times. The dispatcher needs to keep track of people in the field, and know the resources that will be available to base.
3) Keep complete and accurate documentation using the Dispatch Log and Search Information sheet.
Documentation is important in getting a sense of the history of a search, recording important information in case of mishaps and for legal reasons.
4) Determine the availabilities of AMRG members.
Dispatch is responsible for trying to get base the personnel resources it needs to run an effective search. Dispatchers should try to get availabilities through pages, email, and personal phone calls.
5) Determine the equipment, personnel, and other needs of Base and work to meet those needs.
Dispatchers need to understand what resources Base needs, and if the dispatcher doesn't know, they need to call and find out. Meeting those needs means getting appropriate personnel and sending them with the appropriate resources, as well as performing or delegating any other errands Base needs run.
6) Ensure that there are dispatchers available for future shifts.
Dispatchers need to ensure that someone is available to replace them, and they should also try to fill future shifts.

Initial Response- Alert Officers

1) Answer 100 page by calling the given telephone number (usually STAT):

- Give your name and group affiliation to the STAT dispatcher, and verify that nobody else has responded
- Get the following information from the STAT dispatcher:
    - The name of the agency in charge or the agency requesting the callout (RA or SAR resource)
    - The name and position of the person who called STAT
    - The name and position of the person to contact (may be different than the person who called)
    - A telephone number to reach the contact

2) Send out a 101 page with your name to indicate that you have handled the call and start a new dispatch log. Dispatch logs are managed in Google Docs under the account dispatch.amrg@gmail.com (pw: amrgasrc) – Immediately make a copy of the dispatch log template and give it a new new.

3) Call the requesting agency:

- Give them your name, group affiliation, and dispatch telephone number
- Get the following information from the agency:
    - What kind of incident
    - Location of incident
    - Brief subject profile (Name, age, sex, and major medical issues)
    - Time last seen
    - Responsible agency
    - Agency directing the search
    - Person to report to
    - Telephone number(s) for Command Post and RA
    - Detailed directions, including street names and landmarks if applicable

- Ask the following logistics questions:
    - What kind of response do they want
    - What resources are already on scene
    - What additional resources are needed, such as topos, radios, ops kits and forms, etc.
    - When do they want the resources, will we be searching at night

- Determine what kind of response they would like, and what kind of response is warranted. Ask if they would like us to activate any other SAR teams and how many searchers they require.

- Get as much contact information as possible, and inform the contact that you will get back to them with resources available and an ETA.

4) Send the appropriate page to the callout list: CALLOUT@AMRG.INFO.
    - The subject should be the appropriate pager code, followed by your telephone number
    - The body should include essential details only. Be brief! Some phone can receive fewer than 100 characters.
    - Example: Subject: 333 * 412-555-1212
                      Message: Search in Uniontown, Fayette Co, 412-555-1212 with avails.

- As each call comes in, document time of calls, availability, etc.

5) Send and email to the AMRG group list (members@amrg.info) with the details of the search, directions to search base and when personnel should arrive.

6) If the RA or the on scene commander requests additional help from other teams, you can activate the Western Pennsylvania SAR Alliance for additional local teams: The Alliance includes AMRG, WOSAR, AirSAR, Fayette County Sheriff SAR, PaWSAR, and Lower Kiski SAR. We can request any or all of these teams. To send a message to the leaders of the team, use the one call now system:

- Call: 1-877-698-3261

- When prompted, enter Group ID: 137067

- And PIN: 2675

- Record a message with the details of the search and how to get back in touch with AMRG dispatch. After recording the message, enter SUBGROUP #: 91 (*please assure that you use this subgroup number*)

7) Notify ASRC that the search is happening. You can either just notify the ASRC that AMRG is on call out or ASRC can be contacted to request additional resources. To notify ASRC, log into the follow email account: asrcdispatch@gmail.com (pw: thatothersmaylive) and send email to the ASRC Alerts alert-cell@asrc.net list. This list works just like AMRG's callout list, but it goes to all the ASRC teams.

If no additional resources are needed we still need to notify ASRC and get them on standby in case they are needed later. In this case you should send an alpha-numeric page indicating a limited callout (332).

8) Begin calling AMRG members who are on the system, but have not responded. Leave messages.

11) Call the command post or the responsible agency to give them availability and ETA.

Switching Dispatchers:

Dispatch changes will happen frequently as dispatchers respond to the search or have to conduct other business away from their phone. To switch dispatchers:

1) Find an available dispatcher and get an accurate telephone number.

2) Make sure the dispatch log is up-to-date, and give a copy of it to the new dispatcher (email, fax). This should include:
- All the information from the RA, including accurate directions and contact number
- Which team resources are responding and their status
- Which other agencies have been contacted by AMRG (MARG, ASRC, etc) and contact info for them

3) The new dispatcher then sends out a 105 page, followed by the NEW dispatch number

4) Contact CP/RA to inform them of the change of dispatch numbers

5) Contact ASRC, MARG and other agencies as necessary to inform them of the change

6) Contact people not on the pager system who have been contacted to inform them of the change.

Mission Updates:

 As the mission progresses the Dispatch Officer may receive information that should be shared with the group. This could include anything from updated directions to requests for additional resources. The Dispatch Officer should forward these on to the rest of the group as appropriate. If the information is urgent or pertinent to people who are already on their way to the search it should be sent out in the form of a page. Lower priority information can be e-mailed out or told to members as they call in.

The most common mission update is that the search has been concluded, either suspended or because a find has been made. This is urgent information so that people know that the mission has ended and that additional resources are not needed. This information should be sent to the group as a page, using the pager codes below:

441	Status 1, subject found alive
442	Status 2, subject alive but needs medical attention
443	Status 3, subject not alive
444	Teams en route turn around
445	Search is suspended

> Example:
> > Subject: 441/444
> > Message: Uniontown search has ended Status 1. Teams en route turn around.

Closing Dispatch:

Dispatch does not close after a mission until all AMRG personnel have returned home safely. As personnel reach their home's they should call dispatch to inform them of that fact. If any members fail to report in the dispatch officer should attempt to contact them to ensure that they are safe. After all members have reported in the mission can be concluded.

The following steps should be taken to close down dispatch:

1) The dispatch officer should send a final page to the group in the format below:

> Subject: 888
> Message: All members home safe, dispatch is now closed.

If it is very late at night it may be appropriate to simply send an e-mail to the AMRG list, rather then a page to the group, so that you don't wake up people who have just returned from the search.

2). The dispatch officer should also call ASRC dispatch and other teams, if it they have been activated, to inform them that the mission has been concluded.

3) Any final documentation should be included in the dispatch log. The log should then be saved.

ASRC Dispatch:

Any time that more than one ASRC team is on an active mission Conference dispatch will be opened. The purpose of ASRC dispatch is to coordinate the response from throughout the conference. The ASRC dispatcher is available to support each of the Group dispatchers, facilitate communication between the different groups, keep track of Conference resources, and stay in touch with the search base. ASRC dispatch will remain open until all of the Conference's members have returned home and all of the Group dispatches have closed. So it is important to keep the ASRC dispatcher informed of what you are doing. They will call and check on the status of team members and ask for ETA's on when AMRG dispatch will be closing.

Pager Codes

000	Disregard Previous Page
XX	Pager Number
100	Alert Officer call the following number
101	Handled; 100, 103, 106 has been answered
102	Incident Commander call the following number
103	Area Command Authority call the following number
105	Dispatch Changed to the following number
111	Notification; an AMRG response is unlikely
123	Pager test, please call the following number
222	Alert; an AMRG response is likely
331	Overhead Team of an IC and 1-3 IS to respond
332	Limited Callout, specific resources
333	Full Callout, all resources requested
441	Status 1, subject found alive
442	Status 2, subject alive but needs medical attention
443	Status 3, subject not alive
444	Teams en route turn around
445	Search is suspended
551	Base call the following number
552	Dispatch call the following number
553	Teams en route call the following number
554	All group dispatchers call the following number
777	AMRG meeting this Tuesday, call for info
888	Dispatch Closing
999	Disaster Callout

Incident #_____

IMPORTANT: Please follow instructions given on the second page of this form.

Search Information

Alert Officer Name: *(Please Print or Type):*		**AO Phone:**		**AO Date & Time**	
Dispatch Officer Name: (Please print or Type)		**DO Phone:**		**DO Date & Time**	
Search Date:	**From:**		**To:**		
Subject Information:					
IC Name:				**Base Phone:**	
Resources Requested?	☐	**YES**		**Date/Time Needed**	
	If Yes – Please Explain				
	☐	**NO Resources Needed**			
Comments:					

Site Information

Subject Information:	
Search Location:	
Directions:	
Weather:	
Terrain:	

Instructions for Completing the Alert Information Form

Fields

Incident #   This is the AMRG incident number for this search. The DO provides this number. The Alert Officer should leave this field blank. See the Allegheny Mountain Rescue group Dispatch Procedures for details on picking an Incident Number.

Alert Officer Name: This is the name of the Alert Officer who answered the 100 page.

AO Phone: The phone number for the AO above.

AO Date & Time   The date and time that the AO answered the 100 page.

Dispatch Officer Name: The name of the dispatch officer who filled out the Alert Information Form.

DO Phone: Phone number of DO. This is generally the main dispatch office.

DO Date & Time: Time and date that the DO filled out the Alert Information Form

Search Date: The date of the search.

Subject Information: General subject information. This should include subject age, sex, length of time missing and general incident type. "This is a search for a 42 year old male missing for 15 hours from a group home."

IC Name: This is the name of the IC or of the contact at base.

Base Phone: The 10 digit phone number of the base phone.

Resources Requested: Simple check box stating if resources are currently needed. This will be the difference between a 111/222 page and a 33x page.

Date & Time Needed: When are the requested resources needed. "Resources are needed for the 2nd operational period starting at 0700 hrs on March 3rd."

Resource Type: This is the type and number of resources requested for the incident. "The request is for an overhead team" or "This is a full call out."

Comments: Other general information.

Subject Information: This field is used for more detailed subject information. This might include the *search data* that is currently available at base.

Search Location: The location of the search and of base. "This search is in the Laurel Highlands of western Pennsylvania about 5 miles west of Somerset PA." It might also include GPS coordinates.

Directions: Directions to the staging area. These should be as clear as possible.

Weather: Current and expected weather conditions at the search area.

Terrain: The type of terrain that is to be searched.

Dispatch Officer Name: *(Please Print or Type):*		Phone:		Pager:	
Dept.					
Search Date:	From:		To:		
Search Location:					
Search Information:					

Date and Time	Activity	Follow up Action?