ASRC BOD Meeting – 10/11/14
Unfinished Business - C

TOPIC: Dispatching and Alerting the Conference

DETAILS: asrc_bod email thread (below)

ACTION TAKEN: Dispatch details and SM Roster (with contact information) posted to
members-only page on asrc.net

From: asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com [mailto:asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 13, 2014 1:07 PM
To: asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com; asrc-bod@yahoogroups.com
Subject: Re: [asrc-ops] SAR Ops in Eastern Panhandle of WV

The ASRC website has been updated with alerting procedures:

http://www.asrc.net/members/

Note anyone, not just ASRC officers, can contribute to the conference by helping update the website.

On Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 11:43 AM, Christopher Ruch ruch.chris@gmail.com [asrc-ops] <asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com> wrote:

I agree with Doug and Jim in principle, that the ASRC has taken a step backward in this area. However, using AMRG as an example isn't a great one, since the 1-800-MED-STAT number actually is the backup for us, not the primary system. Many years ago we provided a direct email alert email address to the ASRC as primary alert system. The MED-STAT number should only be used as a backup for that system. That list is currently being used correctly once ASRC dispatch is opened. For local notification from RAs, we are alerted directly through the county 911 system, with MED STAT as the backup for that as well, and our other local non-ASRC teams activate us through a One Call notification system (again, MED-STAT is the backup for that system). We also have a backup system of call down notifications should STAT not get a response from us for any reason, so that gives us triple redundancy in the system. I assume all other teams have built in redundancy like this.

But the big problem is that no one knows how to alert the ASRC to open dispatch. Unless you happen to have an ASRC alert officer on your team, the individual team has no way of opening ASRC dispatch. And when was the last time the ASRC created a new ASRC alert officer? There should be information on the ASRC website about how to get a 100 page out to ASRC alert officers and this should be widely distributed to the teams.

Chris

On Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 11:08 AM, Douglas Moore II doug@karstsports.com [asrc-ops] <asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com> wrote:

Bru, All;

I completely agree that one person as the contact is not the best solution. In the case of the cave rescue we have to remember that not only was I mowing the grass (thus didn't get the call for 2 hours) but the 2 additional numbers that they called also failed. One of which was a 911 center that MARG had given out in the past but apparently had been changed by the 911 center.

The point here is that every system needs to have a backup. It is okay to have an individual as the first number called but if they are unreachable then the caller needs to have a second number to call. I like to limit it to only two numbers within the tree.

The point on the cave rescue as to why I'm called is really to eliminate a circular system.

If they attempt to call me first they will hopefully get me. For north central WV if they instead call the local 911 center the 911 center is supposed to call VDEM. For cave rescue I'm in the top 4 list in their system so will be called fairly quickly by VDEM. This is because there are no formal cave rescue teams within the VDEM system for the mid-Atlantic.

Now with all that said I personally believe the ASRC has taken a step back as far as alerting. We are now so dependent on the individual team alert system that we do not have a system wide fail-safe in place. What happens if say the 1-800-MEDSTAT number isn't working. What is the mechanism to alert AMRG and do all the teams know it? Every team needs to have a fail-safe system in place which generally means a phone tree of the senior members.

So what is the fail-safe method for alerting each of the ASRC teams? Do the other 7 teams know? Heck I know with MARG if the cell phone system goes down we would not be able to reach more than half of our members in a timely fashion. Is this even acceptable for a public service agency?

-Douglas Moore

Separate Thread – same subject

From: asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com [mailto:asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 13, 2014 5:29 PM
To: asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com
Subject: RE: [asrc-bod] Re: [asrc-ops] Fwd: Website Report 1.1 - AGM 2013

I am comfortable with the "model A" that the local teams are the primary means of getting the conference involved in a mission. I am also comfortable with "model B" that includes a central means of accepting a request and alerting local teams when there is a mission.

As far as I can tell, "model A" is currently lacking for 4 of our 9 teams, and "model B" direct contact with a Conference AO is not possible, from the perspective of a local agency that would like our assistance.

A few days ago I did a survey of the team web pages, to discern the listed "local" alerting methods:

AMRG – 800-MED-STAT   (Medical Helicopter Dispatch Center)
BRMRG – VDEM or 911
DMVSAR 1-410-541-6329 or though DMVSAR web page

MARG   304-329-1026 (911 Center)
MSAR   ?????
PVRG   ????? on web page, recent email recommends Alan's Cell Phone
SAR-O   614-285-7223
SMRG - VDEM or 911

The only information on the ASRC web site is to call 911 or VDEM for VA

I will continue to maintain that EVERY TEAM needs to have a system that will alert their team, outside of reliance on VDEM. The exact mechanism is flexible, but I would suggest that expecting an AHJ to log onto our gmail account to alert the conference is not OK.

The old website did have a box one could fill in that sent a text message, I believe that functionality is no longer.

So there are two outcomes I am seeking. First that EVERY team develop (and maintain) an alerting system that is accessible to external entities (either mobile web- or telephone-based), and second that the conference develop a similar externally-accessible alerting mechanism to reach a conference alert officer. These mechanisms are both for internal use and also for marketing our services to AHJs.

It might also be helpful to publish (on the secure part of the conference web page) the contact information being used by the conference AO to reach the individual teams.

Carl

From: asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com [mailto:asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 13, 2014 3:22 PM
To: ASRC Ops List
Subject: Re: [asrc-bod] Re: [asrc-ops] Fwd: Website Report 1.1 - AGM 2013

All:

I'd like to add to Doug's comments.

I find it disturbing, to say the least, that the Ops Officer appears to be setting policy for the ASRC, without due process.

As Doug has mentioned, there are very good reasons to maintain an operational component to the ASRC, at least until something better comes along that has been fully considered by the ASRC membership and the BOD.

As I understand it, the current policies are well documented in the Ops Manual and each team has agreed as a condition of membership in the ASRC to adhere to those policies.

Whether the ASRC Alerting System is working well or not may or may not be connected with policy issues. The alerting system as it is currently documented has worked extremely well for us in the past

and there is no reason, other than membership education and ensuring a sufficient cadre of alert staff why it can't continue to serve us well into the future.

I'm sure everyone would be only to happy to see improvements to the system, however, the introduction of system with a single-point-of-failure is one reason why we have the system that currently exists.

Best regards,

Alex McLellan

Search Manager Type 1 | Area Command Authority | Mobile: (703) 628-9109

On Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 1:39 PM, Douglas Moore II doug@karstsports.com [asrc-ops] <asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com> wrote:

In the past few years the entire makeup of the conference has changed and I really do not believe it is for the good.

 In the past if MARG wanted to alert AMRG to an incident we did this through the ASRC. Of course we could have gone direct but I personally do not believe that is the best method because opening up conference dispatch performs multiple functions.

 (a) Provides one dispatch point where you can get anything from 1 to 8 teams.

 (b) Provides situational awareness to the teams not initially dispatched that there is an incident taking place.

 (c) Activates the insurance coverage of the conference.

 (d) Provides easier access to other search managers. Very critical for the early stages.

 (e) And most importantly moves the mission from an individual team to the ASRC which allows for teams to move across state lines.

 I'm sure there are multiple other points that could be made. If this is a shift from the conference to individual teams then is there really a need for the operational side of the ASRC? Shouldn't we just get rid of the major portion of our insurance which covers the liability of response? Will this mean an end to teams being able to cross state lines as easily as we have in the past? As a search manager I will never be able to go up to the AHJ and ask if I can alert the Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group or any other ASRC team because the first thing they are going to ask is where they are located and after I answer that almost all credibility just went out the window because they are going to ask what about the dozens of other teams that are closer.   On the other hand if I state MARG is a member team of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference that is composed of 8 teams with several hundred members and I would like to alert the conference that generally allows the SM to make the call as to what assets to utilize.

 When it comes down to it if there is another Jacob Allen level incident the ASRC better have a functional conference dispatch and better act as one organization. I'll agree times are changing but there are still going to be times in the future where the knowledge and depth of the ASRC is going to be what saves a life on a multi day mission and we absolutely cannot forget that. That may come across as elitism toward the conference but I'm sure

northern WV isn't the only area where there just isn't the support from non ASRC teams to provide large mission base operations over multiple days.

-Douglas Moore

That seems like a radical change to ASRC policy that should have been communicated to the teams ahead of time and/or approved by the Board. The ASRC used to have an easy way to notify all the teams and that simply went away with the new website. There didn't seem to be any policy change associated with it, it just went away, making all our documentation out of date and not replacing it with anything else. The ASRC used to be the first organization that we notified because it was so easy, now its among the last because of this kind of confusion and difficulty and having to make individual phone calls instead of just sending a message. My team's dispatch manual doesn't even have individual contact information for every other team in the conference because that wasn't required before. If big changes like this are happening, they should be communicated ahead of time and documented on the website, not come up after a team struggles to alert other teams in the middle of a search and not be documented anywhere.

 I'm at a complete loss as to why there is resistance from the officers to documenting these things on the website where it is easy to reference and keep current, instead of in email on this list. A simple update to the website with a little information would resolve this entire thread.

 Chris

 On Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 12:37 PM, Michael Hansen caninehandler@gmail.com [asrc-ops] <asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com> wrote:

No, this will be handled in the Ops Manual.

 For now, anyone can call me and I'll help get you what you need. 443.812.1430 If you need to alert the conference about something, your first stop should be me.

 Again the conference dispatch is to coordinate and distribute information regarding an incident to multiple teams to relieve that pressure from the owning team's dispatcher. There should be few instances when the conference dispatch is opened and used. If you need the resources of an adjacent team, then your dispatch officer can coordinate that direct. Conference dispatch should not be used to coordinate one other team. If you need help with that, call me.

Fill out the conference dispatch website when your team is engaged in a search to notify the conference of your mission and have documentation that you have done so. But you do not have to send out any "alerts" or "pages." Alternately you can send me an email to notify the conference you are engaged in a search.

 If the mission circumstances require and your RA is permitting and you need other teams to respond then your options now are: i) call me and I'll get the process going, or ii) have your team dispatcher or other member follow Eric's instruction on his email. I understand the concept of the Alert Officers and all that - but arguably that system is broken and there is no list of current "approved" "Alert Officers" and there are fewer folks who even know what that is. The system must be updated and simplified.

This will be covered in the revised Ops Manual - including providing guidelines on when to use the conference dispatch system.

Michael Hansen
Operations Officer

On Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 12:12 PM, Kenneth Chiacchia chiacchiakb@gmail.com [asrc-ops] <asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com> wrote:

Should we just work on a written manual and/or flip book for alerting and callouts to be given to AOs and team dispatch officers?

Ken Chiacchia
chiacchiakb@gmail.com

 On Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 12:06 PM, Christopher Ruch ruch.chris@gmail.com [asrc-bod] <asrc-bod@yahoogroups.com> wrote:

There are several problems with this -- one having to refer back to an email from more than a year ago that doesn't have a subject relating to alerting or dispatch is unlikely to be found by anyone in the middle of a search when they are doing a million other things. People are going to go to the ASRC website and they should be able to find the information there.

 Second, the directions say that the alerts need to be senT from the ASRC dispatch account. Only ASRC certified Conference Alert Officers should be using that account, so 1) I would not share that information widely with my team members who are not ASRC Alert Officers and 2) it doesn't answer the question of how someone who is not an Alert Officer can send out a 100 page to get an Alert Officer to call them.

Chris

On Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 11:55 AM, Eric Menendez ericmenendez@gmail.com [asrc-ops] <asrc-ops@yahoogroups.com> wrote:

If anyone, from any team, does not know how to open conference dispatch, please refer to the email below, first distributed to the BoD list on 5/16/2013.

I assumed at the time each team's BoD representatives would share the information with their team.

Eric

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Eric Menendez <ericmenendez@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, May 16, 2013 at 8:08 PM
Subject: Website Report 1.1 - AGM 2013
To: asrc-bod@yahoogroups.com

** Please disregard my earlier email entitled "Website Report - AGM
2013." It contained typos; correct information follows. **

All --

Firstly, THANK YOU for all your support during the ASRC's website move this spring.

Please see below for final, permanent information regarding our website.

As always, if you experience any issues with the website, now or in the future, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the BoD.

I also encourage all current and prospective CDOs to log in and check out the new site to be prepared for an actual callout.

ASRC Website 2013
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Dispatch:
URL: http://dispatch.asrc.net
Username: asrc
Password: thatothersmaylive

Alerting:
Send alerts from asrcdispatch@gmail.com (Password: thatothersmaylive)
There are two email addresses for alerts, *but only one should be used at a time*
Alert ASRC via cell phones, pagers, and email: alert-cell@asrc.net
Alert ASRC via email only: alert-email@asrc.net
Again, please send each alert to *either* address, but but *not both*.

Dispatch log:
Use asrcdispatch@gmail.com Google Drive
Start with "Blank ASRC Dispatch Log" and make a copy *first thing*

Website:
All old content from asrc.net has been archived, but help is needed to populate the new website.
This is *your* website! If you have an idea for improvement, or just want to help, contact secretary@asrc.net.