

Proposal for Correcting & Updating the ASRC AO Training Standard

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Summary

A clerical error in changing the ASRC AO standard in 2003 resulted in a standard as written that does not actually reflect the intended policy of the ASRC BOD from Feb 2003 meeting. At that time, the BOD requested IS to be removed from the AO qualifications. But as written currently, FTL is not required for an AO, which should be at least initially. Also, the introduction of the CDO standard in July 2008 did not update the AO requirements. So we now allow AO certifications who are not qualified to do conference dispatch. Yet, the Ops Manual Annex J requires the AO to do conference dispatch and dispatch supervisor functions if they can't find one.

A proposed update to the AO standard is contained here to address these issues, and to reformat the text of the standard using NIMS style structure. Also Annex J requires AOs to be able to do things but does not describe necessary knowledge and skills that other ASRC standards provide. So instead of listing the details of the knowledge and skill expectations in the standard itself, I propose to add them in Annex J where they can be more easily modified than in the training standard itself.

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Current ASRC Training Standards v6.3

This is the text of the current AO standard as written in ASRC Training Standards v6.3 Oct 2008:

VIII. ASRC Alert Officer (AO)

A. Qualifications

To become Alert Officer qualified, the applicant must:

1. Have successfully completed the Field Team Leader (FTL) course and the Managing Land Search Operations (MLSO) or an equivalent course.
2. Complete the ASRC AO Training Course. Pass the written test.
3. Display knowledge, confidence and political competence in a practical examination given by an experienced AO selected by the Alert/Dispatch Coordinator. This examination will include the candidate acting as AO in several simulated Alert scenarios involving varying complexities and complications of political, organizational and technical nature.
4. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at a Group business meeting.
5. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at an ASRC Board of Directors meeting.

Issues Discussion

The last update to the AO standard as noted in the change notes of the current standard v6.3 was

March 2003 (Edition 6.1)

Updated ASRC address. Adjusted AO requirements (VII.A.1) based on Feb 2003 BOD meeting to require FTL and MLSO or equivalent instead of being IS.

The text of the minutes from the Feb 2003 BOD meeting:

“It was resolved that the Training Manual be revised such that the requirements for AO no longer include IS as a requirement but still maintain the requirement for MSO or equivalent. It was noted that there is a minimum need for six AOs and often the ASRC operates at below 3 qualified people. Action Training.”

I could not find an ASRC Training Stds v6.0 or earlier which contained the text before the last AO change was made. But from 1993, I found this original proposed definition of the AO standard. It is so similar in text to the current text, I think it a reasonable reference as to what the AO standard was at the time the BOD intended to modify it in Feb 2003:

PROPOSED ALERT OFFICER (AO) CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS (1993)

1. Be certified as Incident Staff (IS) or Incident Commander (IC).
2. Serve as IS or IC on at least 3 missions (simulations are NOT acceptable). On at least one of these missions, begin serving as IS or IC within the first operational period of ASRC involvement.

3. Complete the AO training course. Pass the written test.
4. Demonstrate knowledge, confidence and political competence in a practical examination given by an experienced AO selected by the Alert/Dispatch Coordinator. This examination will include the candidate acting as AO in several simulated Alert scenarios involving varying complexities and complications of political, organizational and technical nature.
5. Complete a training course concerning the peculiarities of the area in which the AO will function. Pass the written or oral test.
6. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at a Group business meeting.
7. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at an ASRC Board of Directors meeting.

As you can see in the text above, “be certified as an IS” implies being certified as an FTL (although v6.3 of the training standards currently do not require recertification of IS have a current FTL. Therefore this proposal only requires FTL certification once but not ongoing).

VIII. ASRC Alert Officer (AO) (v6.3 Oct 2008)

A. Qualifications

To become Alert Officer qualified, the applicant must:

1. **Have successfully completed the Field Team Leader (FTL) course and the Managing Land Search Operations (MLSO) or an equivalent course.**

As written, the standard does not require current ASRC FTL certification, only that two “courses” were successfully completed. The prior standard that required IS would have required FTL certification

Also, we know an “FTL training course” for self-training groups can be nebulous because they teach a multitude of classes not specifically an FTL course.

The current language allows a “training course” to have been taken 20 years ago and so does not appropriately capture currency expected of a recertified FTL.

Requiring current FTL certification also solves the problem that, as written here, an AO doesn’t have to have actual field experience on missions which was not the intent of the BOD policy change.

So this text should read: “Be currently certified as an ASRC FTL.”

2. Complete the ASRC AO Training Course. Pass the written test.

Do the AO course and the test exist ? I can only find mention of the Conference Dispatch Officer training:

<http://www.asrc.net/asrc/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=1&tabid=66>

This standard for AO was apparently not updated when the Conference Dispatch Officer (CDO) standard was adopted in 2007. Shouldn’t an AO be a certified CDO first, or at least be capable of doing CDO work ? They should also be able to do dispatch supervisor. If not, we create the situation where an AO is not certified as a CDO. While we may not care about formal certification, we should definitely care that the AO knows everything a CDO should know.

So this text should be amended to read:

2. Be a currently certified ASRC CDO.
3. Complete the ASRC AO Training Course. Pass the written test with 75%, etc like the CDO standard.

3. Display knowledge, confidence and political competence in a **practical examination given by an experienced AO selected by the Alert/Dispatch Coordinator. This examination will include the candidate acting as AO in several simulated Alert scenarios involving varying complexities and complications of political, organizational and technical nature.**

Has the practical examination been defined ? How does the candidate pass or fail the examination ?

4. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at a Group business meeting.

No issues.

5. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at an ASRC Board of Directors meeting.

No issues.

Proposed Addition to AO Annex J, ASRC Operations Manual

The current training standard for AO lacks Knowledge and Performance expectations that other training levels have. These could be defined in the training standard document itself to stay with convention, or put in the ASRC Operations Manual, Annex J which defines the duties and responsibilities of the AO. While it seems to break with convention, I like the Annex J approach.

The following additions are proposed to Annex J, ASRC Alert Officer Duties and Responsibilities. The current Annex J can be found here:

http://www.asrc.net/asrc/uploads/operations/OpsMan_Annex/J-AlertOEd1.doc

These new items below define knowledge and performance expectations to ensure AOs can fulfill their duties of Annex J using both online Internet alert systems and offline traditional methods if required.

J1.5 Knowledge and performance expectations:

1. Handle an alert, and coordinate a full-callout of all ASRC resources, provide a resource status report to the RA and responding AR, and transition to dispatch, using your cell phone, the Internet and online AO resources available through the ASRC website or other web services and sites and computer software.
2. use "[alternate forms of alerting ASRC groups](#)"
3. notify VDEM of Virginia ASRC groups responding out of state
4. decide whether ASRC members with various levels and types of dogs in training are allowed to respond with their dog
5. decide whether the only IS member available can respond with a non-search dog in the car. If they don't bring their dog, they can't respond at all.
6. collect appropriate information and follow correct procedures for requesting CAP search resources to respond
7. assess appropriateness and availability of aerial search resources
8. assess appropriateness and availability of aerial transport resources for an overhead team
9. assess appropriate use of ASRC resources for an incident: missing child in rural/suburban area, evasive mental subject in rural area, elderly wanderer in urban area

10. carry a cell phone with inbound and outbound text messaging capability. Receive inbound and send outbound text messages containing 225 character directions to a search
11. use a pen, pad of paper to legibly record notes, record alert information, and events in an AO log. Then fax those notes to dispatch.
12. use a keyboard and type notes and record alert information and events in a log that can be emailed
13. document urgency calculation for an incident based on MLSO guidelines
14. fill out relevant parts of a missing person questionnaire through talking with the RA
15. email and fax a blank missing person questionnaire to an RA
16. provide Lat/Long and GPS coordinates of mission base given only directions to base provided by the RA. Should be able to use both detailed 7.5min or 15min paper maps and online web-based or computer mapping tools.
17. handle an alert, and coordinate a full-callout of all ASRC resources, resource status report to the RA and responding AR, and transition to dispatch, without using your cell phone, the Internet or a computer. Only a single land-line phone, pagers and paper files can be used.

J1.6 Maintain the following information:

1. Contacts in the AO cell phone of:
 - ASRC emergency alert phone numbers and email lists
 - the ASRC chair, vice chair, operations officer, ADC
 - all other alert officers
 - all IC-1s
 - emergency alert numbers and operations officers for each ASRC group

Contacts consist of: first & last name, group affiliation, cell phone# at least. Preferably including: home and work phone numbers, pager, and email address.

2. Offline (meaning not Internet accessible) paper copy or computer files updated once a year of:
 - ASRC emergency alert phone numbers and email lists
 - the ASRC chair, vice chair, operations officer, ADC
 - All other alert officers
 - All ASRC IS and ICs
 - Emergency alert numbers and operations officers for each ASRC group
 - State road maps of VA, WV, MD, NC, PA current to last 5 years. Road atlas or AAA mid-atlantic map is fine.
 - Delorme Gazateer for VA, MD, WV, PA (and any others if necessary for AOs in ASRC response area, such as Delaware)
 - Subject Information Sheet
 - SAR Resource Guide
 - State maps shows counties where ASRC has responded, and jurisdictions where ASRC has had political difficulties (for Annex J, section J1.4 History of Searches).
 - [*Lost Person Behavior: A Search and Rescue Guide on Where to Look - for Land, Air, and Water*](#) Robert J. Koester 416 pages 2008 (for J1.1 providing initial suggestions to RA)

Proposed New AO Standard

The text below defines the AO standard in the NIMS format used by the CDO standard, and adds to the existing AO standard the following items:

- The requirement to be at least once have been a certified FTL (consistent with IS recert standard)
- The requirement for an AO to be an experienced CDO and be able to be a Dispatch Supervisor
- The requirement to stay current with both CDO and AO training every 3 years.
- Decertification provision
- Temporary certification suspension provision
- Recertification requirements and equivalent experience

VII. Conference Alert Officer (AO)

A. Standard

Alert Officer's (AOs) shall be able to perform the tasks and responsibilities described in the ASRC Standard Operating Procedures, Annex J, ASRC Alert Officer Duties and Responsibilities.

Additionally, AOs shall be expected to perform the duties of:

- ASRC Conference Dispatch Officer (CDO)
- ASRC Conference Dispatch Supervisor
- ASRC Field Team Member
- ASRC Field Team Leader

B. Training

New and recertifying AO applicants shall complete:

1. The CDO Training Course within the previous 12 months of application. (may be part of the CDO certification)
2. The AO Training Course within the previous 12 months of application.
3. Review of any new documents, ASRC BOD policies, ASRC Operational Manual, MOUs, or other materials directed by the ADC upon request within 30 days at all times. This is certified by email confirmation by the AO to the ADC.

C. Certification

In order to be certified as an AO, new and recertifying applicants shall:

1. Have been a certified as an ASRC Field Team Leader (current certification not required)
2. Be a currently certified CDO, and
3. Complete the AO written test and achieve a grade of 75% or better, within 12 months of applying for certification, and
4. Satisfactorily complete an AO simulation exercise conducted by an authorized AO instructor, and
5. Receive a written recommendation from the ASRC ADC or an authorized delegate

New AO applicants shall:

6. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at Group business meeting as facilitated by the Group Training Officer or their delegate.
7. Be approved by a simple majority of eligible voters present at an ASRC Board of Directors meeting.

At any time, decertification can happen by:

- Individual requests decertification
- Group vote
- ASRC BOD vote

At any time, ASRC Operations Officer or ADC can temporarily suspend certification, pending investigation of a complaint against the AO, concerns over competency or other issues. Temporary suspension of certification must be sent to the AOs group, the ASRC BOD and the AO. Suspension lasts until restored by the officer doing the suspension, or until the next ASRC BOD meeting.

D. Qualification

New applicants for the AO certification shall:

1. serve satisfactorily a minimum of 2 shifts (each of 3 hours or more) as an acting CDO under the supervision of an ASRC Dispatch Supervisor, ASRC AO, the ASRC ADC, or an authorized representative of the ASRC ADC. Such supervision may be provided remotely. Simulations may not count toward this qualification.

Applicants for re-certification as an AO must complete:

1. serving as AO on 5 incidents, including at least 2 that are handled from the start, during the preceding credentialing period
2. satisfactory equivalent service as an authorized ASRC CDO instructor, during the preceding credentialing period, may count towards a maximum of 2 incidents.
3. satisfactory equivalent service as an ASRC Dispatch Supervisor (min 3 hours) during the preceding credentialing period, may count towards a maximum of 2 incidents.
4. satisfactory equivalent service as an authorized ASRC AO instructor during the preceding credentialing period, may count towards all requirements.

E. Credentialing

The AO credential shall be valid from the date of issue and shall expire after a period of three (3) years commencing at the end of the calendar year in which the credential is issued.

AOs shall be issued credentials containing:

1. the name and group
2. the credential and expectations therein
3. the credential issue and expiration dates
4. the name of the credentialing authority
5. the signature of the credentialing authority authorized representative

F. Accreditation

The credentialing authority for AOs, AO trainers, and AO certifiers is the ASRC Board of Directors (BOD).

The ASRC BOD delegates this authority to the ASRC Operations Officer.

The ASRC Operations Officer may delegate AO credentialing authority to the ASRC Alert and Dispatch Coordinator (ADC).

The ASRC ADC is the issuing authority for AO credentials.