

Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference Incident Staff Requirements

Member's Name: Andrew Richard Hower Member's Group: AMRG

Members should note the date each item is accomplished. The signature of the Group Training Officer attests that the member has completed the requisite accomplishments and has been voted on by the group at a regular business meeting. Members are responsible for keeping an accurate record of accomplishments. Incident staff certifications must be voted on at an ASRC quarterly board meeting after the member has received the nomination of an ASRC GTO.

Certification Requirements

Requirement	Date/s	Details
1. Be an ASRC Field Team Leader (FTL)	11/12/08	Issued by William Evans, AMRG GTO Signed by Dale Lersch, AMRG Commander
2. Have served as FTL on at least three field tasks	6/13-18/ 2006	Gabrielle Bechen Search, Greensboro, PA ASRC Full Call Out, FTL For Several Tasks
	10/15-16/ 2007	Jacob Allen Search, Dolly Sods, WV ASRC Full Call Out, FTL For Hasty Tasks
	12/23-25/ 2009	Sarah Foxwell Search, Salisbury, MD ASRC Full Call Out, FTL For Hasty / Open Grid
3. Meet the technical standards described in the ASRC Training Standards Section VI.c	03/30/ 2009	Demonstrated through service as the AMRG Operations Officer (2005-2006), Training Officer (2007), Communications Officer (2008), and ASRC AMRG BOD Representative (2007); Teaching of Several Classroom and Field Modules; and FTM/FTL/IS Staff at several searches 2005-2011.
4. Be proposed for Incident Staff qualification by a Group Training Officer at an ASRC Board of Director's business meeting and receive a simple majority of the vote.	9/3/2011	Nomination by Ken Chiacchia, AMRG BOD Rep
5. Complete Managing Search Operations, Managing the Search Function, or equivalent training;	2/17-18/ 2007	PA DCNR and Fire Academy MSO Class delivered at Allegheny Twp Community Building, Leechburg, PA by Don Scelza, CDS Outdoor School
6. Complete Practical Search Operations, Search Operations for Staff, or equivalent training; and	8/1/2011	See PSO Justification
7. Serve as a member of the Command Post or Base Staff on one incident.	4/9-11/ 2010	Planning Section Chief for ASRC FSE and AGM in Maryland. Don Ferguson, MARG, assisted with GIS in Planning at Mission Base (SMRG Trailer)

The member whose name appears above has satisfactorily accomplished the requirements for Incident Staff in accordance with the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference training standards.

Group Training Officer Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

CTO USE ONLY		
CTO Name	Signature	Date
Approved/Rejected	ASRC BOD Minute #	Date
Credential Start Date	Credential End Date	Credential Issued

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PSO Justification – Andrew R. Hower

Practical Search Operations has been described as a 40 hour class which addresses the actual functions of managing a search operation under the Incident Command System (ICS) in a step-by-step approach. Organizing the staff, planning, operations, information management and documentation are presented in discussion and tabletop exercises. The class course work is completely done in a classroom environment. The limited information which has been published publically about the Search and Rescue Training Associates, Inc (SARTA) Practical Search Operations (PSO) class by David Carter includes “three table top missions as well as a variety of exercises which will allow them to use and practice the skills and knowledge learned”.

Early offerings of the PSO Class prior to 2009 required those attending to have the Managing the Search Operation (MSO), or equivalent prior to attending. This requirement was lifted in 2009. I started my quest to take the PSO class in 2007 after attending the February MSO class in Leechburg, PA.

In April 2007, the commander of AMRG along with the AMRG Training Officer and through many discussions with ASRC leadership, attempted to bring the PSO class closer to Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania teams. Initially, this class was scheduled for June 1-3/July 13-15, 2007 in Uniontown sponsored by AMRG and MARG with 14 interested in taking the class. This class was postponed due to a conflict with Mr. Carter on April 30, 2007.

After speaking with those interested in taking the class, a rescheduled and confirmed set of dates were published. The class would be hosted by MARG in Morgantown, WV on July 13-15/Aug 17-19, 2007. Discussions with both ASRC and non-ASRC teams indicated that 10 people were interested, however because deposits were not made prior to class start for six, it was cancelled by David Carter on July 12 despite confirmation of the “course is go” on July 6, 2007 from the same.

ASRC, MARG, and AMRG queried its membership and sister groups to propose another set of dates because of the need for the class. These dates were Oct 26-28/Nov 16-18, 2007, however SARTA did not agree and the class never formed.

The next PSO class wasn’t offered until March 2008. The class was announced via the ASRC Training List for Mar 7-9 and Apr 4-6, 2008 in New Kent County, VA, however it was announced on Feb 6, 2008, less than 30 days before the start of the class and was only offered through VDEM’s registration page. For the six MARG and AMRG members who needed the class, this would have been a 14-hour round trip drive for two weekends with lodging and meals at the expense of members because they were from outside Virginia. Despite emails between those in the Pennsylvania/West Virginia area, a car pool could not be formed, and none of the MARG and AMRG members who needed PSO attended.

Mr. Carter has indicated in email exchanges and through the ASRC list that “there are several issues in making one of these classes go” including date changes and single personnel qualified to deliver the material. He has further indicated that he is “not willing to continue to {print materials and take financial responsibility for class delivery} ... for personal financial reasons.”

After working with the ASRC and because of the distance for the North West teams, another class was organized for Feb 20-22/Mar 6-8, 2009 in Morgantown, WV. When the proposed class dates were announced on December 17, 2008, I already had a conflict with the Feb 20-22 weekend because of a G300 Class being offered in Allegheny County Pennsylvania, and a prerequisite for my normal employment. Several of the MARG and AMRG members, including Don Ferguson (IS) and Bru Randall (IS) took this class to meet their final IS candidate requirements.

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No further announcements were made via the ASRC since the 2009 offering. Doing some research, apparently part of the PSO was offered as part of the VDEM Ground SAR school the weekend of October 24, 2010, but no information for registration or the other weekend dates were found¹.

Taking the description of the class, I have provided a brief breakdown of my equivalent experience to the PSO class through my volunteer involvement with AMRG, the ASRC, and the Pennsylvania Wing Civil Air Patrol, as well as my professional career as an Emergency Management Specialist with the City of Pittsburgh and Technological Hazards Program Specialist with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center Inland Search and Rescue Planning Course (24 hour), planning considerations are made for managing a search operation taking into account containment, probability, theory, and statistics. The class focuses on how the National Inland SAR Plan is employed utilizing the Incident Command System.

For experience, I have completed Intermediate Incident Command for Expanding Incidents (24 Hours) and Advanced Incident Command Systems (16-Hours) along with specialized ICS training in resource management and tracking, Emergency Operations Center Management (16 Hours), Documentation Unit (24 Hours), Situation Unit (24 Hours), and classes to bridge the command and general functions in ICS with EOCs, all dealing with organizing staff, planning, operations, information management and documentation and all under the Incident Command System (ICS). The Inland SAR School ran through three tabletop exercises – two which were problems done in breakout groups, and one as a class final, and like the PSO class, done in a classroom environment. In a practical sense, my primary duties on a daily basis incorporate planning. In the City of Pittsburgh's Emergency Management and Homeland Security, I served as the principal planner for the City. In this role, I served as the Emergency Support Function representative in the EOC for Emergency Management (ESF 5), Communications (ESF 2), Medical (ESF 8), and also as the EOC Manager. For events including the floor collapse at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, the Steelers Super Bowl Celebration in 2006, and the Gateway Center Water Main Break, I served in command roles to include incident commander, planning section chief, logistics chief, and safety officer. I also served as the Area Commander at PNC Park for the 2006 MLB All Star Game.

If specific requirements are needed in the particular field of Search And Rescue for organizing staff, planning, operations, information management and documentation, I have been an active participant in many search and rescue exercises and missions in the last several years serving in the incident command post base. Most recently, I assisted the operations officer and the logistics officer at the West Virginia Search and Rescue Full Scale Exercise in Dillys Mills, WV the weekend of April 16, 2011. Evan Koepke (Chair / IS) addressed a letter dated April 12, 2011 acknowledging my participation and involvement. The weekend of February 18, 2011, I served as the Planning Section Chief for the first operational period, and the Operations Section Chief for the Tidewater Full Scale Search and Rescue Exercise sponsored by VDEM and Tidewater Search and Rescue. Dawn Smith (IS) served as the incident commander and can attest to my documentation, planning, and operations experience at this event with ASRC and former ASRC incident staff. During the 2009 ASRC AGM and FSE during the weekend of April 9, 2010, I worked through the second operational period as the Planning Section Chief with Don Ferguson (IS) near Flintstone, MD utilizing GIS tools as a proof of concept of its value to Search and

¹ Damkot, Michael. Re: October Meeting to ASRC-BOD@yahooogroups.com. Message 1a, Sep 24, 2011 8:22 pm (PDT).

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Rescue planning and operations. I have also served as incident staff for several other searches in Pennsylvania while with AMRG.

The current NIMS Search and Rescue Working Group Job Titles does not define any specific PSO requirement for a Wilderness Search and/or Rescue Manager found in the SAR Job Title 33 description.

I feel that I have been patient in the process to actually attend the PSO course without success. I also feel my experience in the field coupled with professional and volunteer experience meets the equivalency of the PSO class as it applies to meet the standards for Incident Staff in the ASRC. Please consider this letter as an attestment to this request.

Thank you,

Andrew R. Hower