

several "self-teaching modules" that will help you toward FTM certification. To become a FTM, you must have a current Red Cross Standard First Aid and Personal Safety card, or be able to demonstrate equivalent first aid ability by passing a 27-question true-false test administered by the Training Officer.

Members who want to wear the ASRC uniform must become certified at least to FTM level.

Field Team Leader (FTL) certification is a level above FTM, and has stricter and more extensive standards. As the name suggests, FTL's are expected to lead teams of trained or untrained responders on a search or rescue task, as well as demonstrate a higher level of competence in search and rescue skills.

Dog Handler(DH) requires that the member demonstrate a high level of competence working with a canine partner on ground search tasks. Prospective dog handlers must be prepared for a year or more of intensive canine training in addition to regular unit training before they are ready to test for operational status.

Rescue Specialist (RS) standards go beyond the FTL standards in technical mountain rescue, and is the level one must reach to become a Mountain Rescue Association "Rescue" member and to wear the MRA "Rescue" patch.

Base Radio Operator (BRO) is for those with radio expertise, operating primarily at Base Camp. BROs must have FTL certification.

Incident Staff (IS) certification requires FTL certification as a prerequisite, and is the basic level of certification for helping to run operations from Base Camp.

Incident Command (IC) certification is required to be able to run an ASRC operation, and is only



rarely conferred by the Board of Directors of the ASRC itself.

When you have passed your FTM test, you will be issued an ASRC patch. You should put together an ASRC uniform as specified in the ASRC Operations Manual, and if you wish, a uniform parka (patches and nametag go in the same place, and no other emblems are to be worn on uniforms or parkas). You should wear your uniform to all official Group activities, including training sessions.

We have an initiation fee of \$30, which includes the first year's dues (this helps cover the cost of your patches and Member's Manual). Dues are \$20/year, or \$30 for a family membership if you just want a single copy of mailings. All are tax-deductible.

Please talk to any Group member if you have questions. Remember, there is no obligation to join; you may come to training sessions as a non-member. Business meetings are the first Tuesday of each month, at 6:30 PM in the second-floor administration conference room (room 2126) at Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh. The unit normally trains on the second Sunday of the month, with additional trainings scheduled for test preparation and special events.

For information, contact **Heather Houlahan, WEMT** who is currently both **Chair and Training Officer for AMRG**, (724) 772-7837 (H) or houlahan+@pitt.edu

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Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group

Information for Prospective Members



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Welcome! to the Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group of the **Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC)**. We hope that, though it might be challenging at times, working with us will be both enjoyable and rewarding.

The **Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG)** is the Pittsburgh area Group (local chapter) of the ASRC. Our training standards, operational standards, and administrative requirements are all set by the ASRC. Group members wear an ASRC uniform, and when we go out on a mission, all members function under a unified ASRC command. In addition to AMRG, there are ASRC Groups in Columbia and College Park, Maryland; Morgantown, WV; and in McLean, Charlottesville, Roanoke, and Norfolk, Virginia. AMRG is a certified member team of the Mountain Rescue Association. The ASRC is also affiliated with the Eastern Region of the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) and the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR).

ASRC missions occur about once every three weeks, though sometimes we have several close together and then none for a long time, and not all ASRC Groups are called out on each mission. Operations are mostly lost person searches with a few downed aircraft searches and mountain or cave rescues for variety, but the majority of our rescue work is when we look for a lost person or downed aircraft. For some reason, most of our operations seem to occur at three in the morning during freezing rain (so don't say you weren't warned!) There's never any requirement that you go on a particular mission.

If you are interested in joining, come to some of our meetings or training sessions, and get to know the members. After you've had a chance to get to know the members and vice versa, see our Training Officer and ask to be proposed for Probationary Membership at one of the meetings. If the

membership is willing, you'll be voted in as a Probationary Member (that's why you should get to know the members first).

Probationary membership is good for up to a year, during which time you are expected to work with the members enough that you will be voted in as a full member. After three months as a Probationary Member, you are eligible to be voted in as an Active Member. Before you can be voted in as an Active Member, though, you must have done the following:

- ❖ "completed 32 hours of activity with the ASRC." (This means coming out on several training sessions or missions.) And,
- ❖ "read the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Training Standards, SAROP, and Operations Manual and signed a statement to that effect." You will be issued a copy of the Member's Manual, containing all these publications, when you pay your \$30 initiation fee.

Active members don't have to do anything but participate in business meetings on a regular basis. For instance, lawyers or CPAs who help out with the Group's administrative work and who attend meetings on a regular basis can be Active Members with full rights of voting and holding office, even if they've never set foot in the woods. Members may help out at a search base without any special training or certification.

However, since we are a mountain rescue team, most who join go on to become certified, at one or more levels, for wilderness search and rescue work. Here are the certification levels:

Callout Qualified (CQ): you're not likely to kill yourself (or someone else) the first time you go into the field. To become CQ, you must:

- ❖ Be accepted for probationary membership;

❖ Attend an ASRC search and rescue orientation class approved by the Group Training Officer (we often do these after meetings); and

❖ Obtain the proper personal equipment:

- Appropriate clothing and footwear;
- Water bottle of 1 or 2-liter capacity;
- 5 large plastic leaf bags;
- Headlamp (preferred) or flashlight, and second light source;
- Compass (orienteeing type preferred);
- Waterproof pen/pencil and notebook (keeping your regular notebook and pencil in a zip-lock bag is adequate);
- Daypack;
- Food for 48 hours;
- Lighter, waterproof matches and candle, or other fire source;
- Knife;
- Personal first aid kit;
- Whistle;
- Two pairs of latex or plastic exam gloves.

Field Team Member (FTM). FTMs meet the minimum requirements for being competent in the field according to the ASRC's definition. To become FTM certified, you must first meet the CQ standards, participate in four training sessions, including one on wilderness survival and one on search theory, get additional personal equipment, and meet a set of technical standards. You must pass a standard written and practical test on these standards, and then, at a Group business meeting, receive a favorable vote for FTM certification. You may find details of the standards in the ASRC Training Standards, which is part of your Member's Manual. The Member's Manual contains