

BRMRG Alert and Dispatch

Alert

BRMRG serves as the primary alert and dispatch group for the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC). BRMRG is normally alerted for search and rescue operations by the Virginia Department of Emergency Services (DES) through their Emergency Operations Center (EOC), although we are sometimes requested through other means such as UVA MEDCOM. The normal procedure (>90%) is as follows:

- 1) Local Responsible Agent (RA), usually law enforcement, calls DES requesting state SAR resources;
- 2) DES activates ASRC pagers;
- 3) ASRC Alert Officer (AO) responds to alert page and contacts DES EOC;
- 4) the AO requests to speak to the Search and Rescue Duty Officer (SARDO);
- 5) the SARDO informs the AO what ASRC resources are being requested as well as relaying mission and subject information; and
- 6) the AO determines the level of ASRC response and activates pagers for BRMRG and the ASRC.

There are three levels of response:

- 1) Notification - a search is occurring and the ASRC is not responding. An ASRC response is unlikely.
- 2) Alert - a search is occurring and the ASRC is not responding. An ASRC response is likely in the next 12 hours.
- 3) Callout - there are three levels of callout:
 - a) Overhead Team (OHT) - an IC and 1-3 IS to respond;
 - b) Limited (LCO) - a request for a specific type or number of ASRC resources to respond; and
 - c) Full (FCO) - all Conference resources are requested to respond.

Dispatch

Dispatch is handled by a Dispatch Officer (DO). The success of a search is often greatly influenced by the quality of the work done by DO's. The importance of the DO in a search mission cannot be over emphasized. Once a search begins, at least one DO is on duty at all times. The dispatch office remains open until everyone is back from a search.

One of the primary duties of the DO is to call members who are not carrying pagers in order to notify them that a search is occurring and to have them determine their availability. With the initial phone call, members will be told the basics about the mission (such as location, age of subject, medical info, missing since, etc.). Please do not ask for details at this time. The DO is very busy and may make as many as 60 contacts in the first hour of a mission. BRMRG's Locker number is (804) 924-3472.

What the DO needs to know from you initially are answers to the following:

- 1) When are you available?
- 2) How long are you available?
- 3) Do you need a ride?
- 4) If not, how many people and how much gear can you take in your car?

Questions you need to answer for your own safety and mental stability.

- 1) Do I have the proper gear for the expected weather?
- 2) Do I have 48 hours of food?
- 3) Do I have water?
- 4) Do I have my essentials?
- 5) How will this adventure effect my academics or employment?
- 6) How will my instructors/boss react to me missing class/work?
- 7) Will I be able to makeup lost work in a reasonable and timely manner?
- 8) Am I in good physical and mental shape for a search?
- 9) How much sleep have I had recently?

If the answer to and of the first 4 questions is no, **YOU CANNOT GO ON THE SEARCH!** However, your services will still be needed by dispatch. You will have to decide about the other questions yourself.

Becoming a Dispatch Officer

Dispatching is one of the first decision making roles that a new member is able to assume. It is an ideal position for one who cannot dedicate several hours or days to field searching or for one who cannot go on the search for other reasons such as lack of proper equipment.

One learns dispatching by watching and being supervised by an experienced DO. This can only occur while a search is in progress. Therefore, whenever a search is occurring, you are encouraged to go to the Locker and get on the job training. There is a DO manual on the desk that explains the procedures and duties of a DO. This manual also has important telephone numbers and checklists to assist the DO. All new members are encouraged to stop by the Locker and read the DO manual. Also, to assist the DO with problems and to answer questions, there is a Dispatch Supervisor (DS) on call at all times.

Pagers

Pagers are the primary method in which group members are notified about a search. BRMRG owns over 40 alphanumeric pagers. The priority of pager assignments is based on one's level of training, availability for searches, and search experience. New members of BRMRG will be notified by phone unless they own their own personal pager.