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Appalachian  
Search and Rescue  
Conference, Inc.



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O P E R A T I O N S

M A N U A L

November 14, 1988

As approved by the ASRC Board of Directors, August 1988

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### ASRC Operations Manual

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# **Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference Operations Manual**

Version 1.0  
November, 1988

## **1 General Information**

### **1.1 Authority**

Article I of the bylaws of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference, Inc. (ASRC), grants the Board of Directors the power to establish, publish, and enforce standards of procedure for search and rescue operation in the form of an ASRC Operations Manual.

### **1.2 Purpose**

This manual is intended to disseminate the policy of the ASRC through its Board of Directors to all its members and other interested parties. Such information should assist the public through greater familiarity with ASRC search and rescue (SAR) operations and thus result in more efficient joint ground search and rescue operations.

### **1.3 Responsibility**

The ASRC Operations Officer is responsible for the accuracy and maintenance of this manual. The ASRC Secretary is responsible for its publication and dissemination.

### **1.4 Administration of Operation Policy**

This policy shall be administered by the following:

#### **1.4.1 Group Chairman**

The ASRC is composed of organizations called Groups. The Group Chairman (or other chief executive officer) is responsible for ensuring Group compliance with ASRC operational policy.

#### **1.4.2 ASRC Incident Commanders**

An ASRC Incident Commander (IC) serves as the responsible agent of the ASRC on incidents and must make and enforce all operational decisions. During the course of an incident involving the ASRC, the ASRC IC (or ASRC Agency Representative) is responsible for ensuring compliance by ASRC members with ASRC operational policy.

1.4.3 Chairman of the ASRC Board of Directors

The Chairman of the ASRC Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring ASRC-wide compliance with ASRC operational policy.

1.5 Application of Regulations

These regulations shall be in effect whenever members of the ASRC represent themselves as such or respond as an agent of the ASRC.

1.6 Changes and Updates

The information in this manual and its appendices may be changed, if necessary, by the ASRC Operations Officer, who shall be the Chairman of the Operations Committee. Such changes may take immediate effect, but all such changes must be approved by the ASRC Board of Directors or General Membership at the next meeting to remain in place. Upon making a change to this manual or any of its appendices, the ASRC Operations Officer must notify all groups of the changes and their intent.

Alternatively, the ASRC Board of Directors or General Membership may recommend and approve changes to this manual or any of its appendices. However, the input of the Operations Officer and other members of the Conference Operations Committee should be sought prior to any proposed changes.

1.7 Annual Review

The ASRC Operations Officer will conduct an annual review of this manual (and its appendices) and will present suggested changes to the ASRC Board of Directors at the first Board of Directors meeting of the new year.

2 Administrative Requirements

2.1 Minimum Group Equipment List

The following equipment will be acquired and owned by every ASRC Certified Group, and will be brought, when necessary, to an incident when members of that Group respond:

- (1) Incident Operations Kit
- (1) Adult-sized Field Litter (Stokes, Sked, etc.) with ASRC pre-rig
- (2) 150' or 200' 11mm or 1/2" static kernmantle rescue ropes
- (1) Semi-Tech Kit -- comprised of equipment to permit one field team to conduct a semi-technical evacuation in wooded terrain
- (1) Base Radio (with all ASRC 155.000 MHz band frequencies)
- (2) Hand-held field radios (with all ASRC 155.000 MHz band frequencies)
- (24) Rolls of surveyors/flagging tape
- (1) Field Medical Kit (EMT-Basic level)

2.1.1 Incident Operations Kit Contents

The following is a minimum list of equipment and materials which will comprise an ASRC Certified Group's Incident Operations Kit:

ICS Forms:

ICS-201 Incident Briefing  
ICS-202 Incident Objectives  
ICS-203 Organization Assignment List  
ICS-204 Division Assignment List  
ICS-205 Incident Radio Communications Plan  
ICS-206 Medical Plan  
ICS-207 Incident Organization Chart  
ICS-209 Incident Status Summary  
ICS-213 General Message  
ICS-214 Unit Log  
ICS-215 Operational Planning Worksheet

ASRC Forms:

PPAS Projected Personnel Availability Summary  
SIR Incident Individual Sign-In Record  
LPR/C Lost Person Report/Checklist  
TAF Task Assignment Form  
CSOF Crash Scene Observation Form  
SDF Subject Debriefing Form

Medical Forms:

ASRC Wilderness Basic Life Support Protocols  
Other appropriate local forms (e.g., trip reports)

Documents:

NASAR's Search is an Emergency Field Guide  
ICS Field Operations Guide (ICS-420)  
Current ASRC Group Rosters  
ASRC SAR Resource List  
ASRC Communications Quick Reference  
ASRC Search and Rescue Operations Plan (SAROP)  
ASRC Operations Manual (includes Virginia and Pennsylvania SAR Council Standard Operating Procedure, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources SAR Preplan)  
ASRC Radio Licenses  
Virginia SAR Council Standard Operational procedures  
Guidelines for SAR Coordination through the Virginia Emergency Operations Center

Materials:

ASRC Grid Overlay Templates  
Map Board w/ Acetate (1)  
State Highway Maps (VA, MD, PA, WV)

State Aeronautical Maps for VA, MD, PA, WV  
Pennsylvania Topographic Map Atlas  
Washington and Cincinnati Sectional Aeronautical Charts  
Clip Boards (2)  
Field Notebook  
Carbon Paper  
Calculator  
File Folders  
Paper Tablet (Legal Pad)  
Permanent and Non-Permanent Colored Pens  
Colored Ball-Point Pens  
Pencils  
Ruler  
Drawing Compass  
Erasing Template  
Permanent Pen Eraser  
Pencil Eraser  
Paper Clips  
Scotch Tape  
Drafting Tape  
Tacks  
Stapler and Staples

#### 2.1.2 Semi-Technical Evacuation Kit Contents

The following is a minimum list of equipment which will comprise an ASRC Semi-Technical Evacuation Kit:

- (3) Belay Devices -- either large "Rescue-Eight" figure-eight descenders, or Rappel/Brake-Bar Racks
- (5) 20' lengths of 11mm or 1/2" rescue rope
- (3) Pair of Large Leather Gloves
- (3) large, Locking-D Carabiners
- (2) Directional devices (pulleys or equivalent)

This equipment would not outfit an entire evacuation team; it is assumed that ASRC members participating in an evacuation will have personal semi-technical gear.

#### 2.1.3 ASRC Pre-rig for Field Litter

The following is a minimum list of equipment which will comprise an ASRC Pre-rig for a Field Litter:

- ✕ A rigid or semi-rigid field litter (stokes basket, Sked, etc.) with adequate spinal immobilization
- ✕ A "Y" yoke attached to the head of the litter, using at least 11mm static line, with one large locking-D carabiner
- ✕ An Ensolite insert for the bottom of the litter
- ✕ Three wool blankets or equivalent
- ✕ One set of victim tie-straps (cf. Appendix C -- ASRC Technical Rescue Standards)
- ✕ One climbing helmet with eye/facial protection

- x A tarp or similar wet-weather patient covering

## 2.2 Conference Record-keeping Requirements

The following list is the minimum information which must be kept for official ASRC records. This information is necessary so that the administrative functions of the ASRC have an official information source on its members. Groups must keep pertinent information up-to-date with the ASRC Secretary. The following information must be passed to the ASRC Secretary:

- Name
- Social Security number
- Mailing Address
- Phone Numbers (both Home and Work)
- Membership Type
- Training Qualification(s) and Date of Expiration
- Level of Medical Training and Expiration Date
- Vehicle Information (car type, capacity, license plate, radio equipment)

## 2.3 Callout Roster Requirements

The following is a list of minimum information which must be presented upon an official Group Callout Roster. This information is necessary so that ASRC operations function effectively:

- Group information (alerting phone #, etc.)
- Name
- Address (preferable geographic)
- Phone Numbers (both Home and Work)
- Training Qualification(s)
- Level of Medical Training
- Vehicle Information (car type, capacity, license plate, radio equipment)

## 2.4 Thirty-six Month Review

All Certified Groups shall undergo a comprehensive review, to be defined and conducted by the Board of Directors, at regular intervals not to exceed thirty-six months.

### 2.4.1 Requirements of Review

#### 2.4.1.1 Minimum Equipment

Certified Groups shall maintain minimum equipment requirements as set forth in the ASRC Operations manual, and be prepared to show physical evidence of the existence of such equipment.

2.4.1.2 Minimum Membership

As specified in the ASRC Bylaws, Article III, Sections 3.4 and 3.6, a Certified Group shall be comprised of at least sixteen (16) Active Members, of which six (6) must hold Field Team Leader or higher certification, and ten (10) must hold Field Team Member or higher certification at each thirty-six month review. Group membership shall not drop below this figure for more than four (4) months of any year. Members may be tested by the ASRC Board of Directors to determine if they meet standards for stated level of training.

2.4.1.3 Financial Solvency

Certified Groups shall provide their books and financial papers for a complete audit by the Conference Chief Financial Officer. Groups must also be prepared to show continuing evidence of meeting all financial obligations, both to the Conference and to other organizations.

2.4.1.4 Conference Involvement

Certified Groups shall attend twelve (12) or more Conference events with at least five (5) members present at each event over the 36-month period. The Group must be able to indicate the events at which it met this requirement.

2.4.1.5 Compliance with Conference

Certified Groups shall show evidence of meeting and maintaining the standards of the ASRC, as set forth in the documents of the ASRC, including (but not limited to): the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Training Standards, and this Operations Manual. Specific areas of compliance must be demonstrable. Those areas include (but are not limited to): training; criteria for conferring the various levels of membership; compliance with political policies of the ASRC, including policies set by the Board of Directors; and a continuing state of operational readiness as set forth by the documents of the ASRC.

2.4.2 Failure of Review

The ASRC Board of Directors shall determine if these standards have been met. If the standards have not been met, the Board of Directors may apply the following measures. In the case of application of these measures, the Board of Directors shall notify the appropriate Group by certified mail within the 10-day period following the decision.

2.4.2.1 Deficiencies Found During Review

For any deficiencies found during the review: the Group shall be placed under observation for an 18-month period, during which time they must correct the problem. If by the end of the 18-month period the Group fails to conform to these standards, the Board of Directors may reduce the Group to probationary Certified Group status, and if so, the Group must meet all requirements (as set forth in Article III, Section 3.4 of the ASRC Bylaws) to return to Certified status.

2.4.2.2 Groups on Probation

If any offenses are noted during the time a Group is reduced to probationary status, Article III, Section 3.8 of the ASRC Bylaws shall be invoked, with the possible consequences of removal of the Group's charter.

2.4.2.3 ASRC Board Intervention

The ASRC Board of Directors reserves the right to intervene in all Groups. Intervention is appropriate in the case of major transgressions of ASRC policies, procedures, or Board directives.

2.4.2.4 Criminal Activities

In the event of a Group being convicted of any applicable state or federal laws, or an individual member of a Group convicted (of other than traffic-related laws) due to participation in search and rescue activities, the ASRC Board of Directors shall immediately place the Group on probationary status until such time as the matter has been investigated by the Board of Directors. At such time, the Board of Directors shall make a recommendation on any further action which may be taken.

2.4.3 Appeals

All Groups hold the right to appeal any decision made by the Board of Directors regarding their Group status. To make an appeal the Group in question shall provide written notification to the Board of Directors within thirty (30) days of notification of the Board of Directors' decision in question. At that time, the Board of Directors will choose two (2) Active Members, at random, from all ASRC Groups, except the Group in question. This panel shall hear all evidence regarding the decision and return an opinion to the Board of Directors within sixty (60) days of being convened.

### 3 Personnel Requirements

#### 3.1 Minimum Personal Equipment List

The following equipment will be brought and carried by all ASRC members when responding to an incident:

- Appropriate clothes and footgear for both fair and foul weather
- Water container of one- to two- liter capacity
- Day pack (knapsack will be sufficient)
- Five large, heavy-duty plastic trash bags
- Food for 48 hours
- Headlamp (or flashlight) and second light source
- Lighter, matches and candle, or equivalent WATERPROOF fire source
- Knife
- Compass
- Personal First Aid Kit
- WATERPROOF pen/pencil and paper
- Whistle
- Two pairs plastic or vinyl examination gloves

#### 3.2 Supply Requirements

All ASRC members responding to a mission, whether by air or ground transport, shall carry food and supplies to be self-sufficient for a period of forty-eight (48) hours.

#### 3.3 Callout Requirements

There is no requirement for any ASRC member to respond to an incident callout

#### 3.4 Air Transport Requirements

If members choose to accept air transport to an incident, they must commit at least forty-eight (48) hours to the mission. Return flights are not guaranteed. When flying in rotary-wing aircraft, members must wear fire-retardant clothing if available.

#### 3.5 Member Uniform Specification

All members responding to an incident will wear an ASRC uniform conforming to the following standards:

**Shirt:** A blue chambray or canvas shirt, to be worn either in base or in the field; or a yellow canvas shirt to be worn only in the field. A yellow ASRC T-shirt (with the Conference Logo on the front) is also acceptable base-camp wear.

**Pants:** Wool or cotton fatigues are acceptable. Other pants are acceptable, except that jeans are not to be worn.

**Other:** The ASRC patch is to be worn on the left sleeve, just below the shoulder; a patch showing medical certification is to be worn on the right sleeve, just below the shoulder.

An ASRC name-tag (blue, approximately 3/4" by 3", with the member's name and "Appalachian Search & Rescue" in white) is to be worn over the right pocket. Over or on the left pocket, members may wear one of the following:

- × the small MRA Rescue patch (for members with Rescue Specialist certification),
- × the MRA Support patch (for other members who are permitted to wear the uniform), or
- × the Virginia Search and Rescue Council patch.

Appearance on SAR incidents is an important way to buttress our professionalism in the eyes of other agencies and personnel. Members are required to appear and act professionally at all times during missions.

### **3.6 Identification**

All Active Members of any ASRC Group that is a member of the Virginia Search and Rescue Council will be issued a Virginia Search and Rescue Council Identification Card.

### **3.7 Personal Conduct**

#### **3.7.1 Behavior**

Professional attire and behavior is expected and required of all members. Members will comply with the directions of those ASRC members in a position of command responsibility over them.

#### **3.7.2 Intoxicating Substances**

Field team members or incident staff members under the influence of alcohol or intoxicating substances will be relieved of their assignments and reported to the Incident Commander and to the ASRC Board of Directors for appropriate disciplinary action.

### **3.8 Refusal of Assignments**

ASRC members have the right to refuse or discontinue any assignment or task if they perceive it unsafe or potentially unsafe, if it is not clearly understood, or if they believe it to be beyond their level of training, knowledge, or equipment.

## **4 Incident Policies**

### **4.1 Primary Mission of the ASRC**

The primary mission of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference, Inc. is to provide members trained for (and capable of) conducting wilderness search and rescue operations for missing and/or injured persons. This includes both management and field tasks. The ASRC is available for such tasks 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## 4.2 Secondary Missions of the ASRC

### 4.2.1 Training Other Organizations

The ASRC may provide training services to other organizations. Such training is usually provided to improve capabilities of other emergency services organizations. The ASRC assumes no liability for events resulting from either the use or misuse of information or skills taught to other organizations.

### 4.2.2 Preventative Search and Rescue

The ASRC may sometimes provide educational programs designed to decrease the likelihood of program participants becoming lost, or to improve their ability to deal with emergencies such as becoming lost. The ASRC assumes no liability for events resulting from either the use or misuse of information or skills taught with such an intent.

### 4.2.3 Downed Aircraft Incidents

The ASRC will respond to downed aircraft incidents if requested by the Responsible Agent. The ASRC will not attempt to coordinate large-scale aerial searching.

### 4.2.4 Cave Rescue

The ASRC will not provide an initial response for a cave rescue incident. In the event the ASRC is directly contacted for a cave rescue incident, whether in Virginia or elsewhere, the ASRC will refer the call to the Virginia Department of Emergency Services. The ASRC may provide above-ground logistical and management support if requested through proper channels.

ASRC members properly trained in cave rescue may participate underground as members of the ASRC. Such proper training must be formally recognized by the ASRC Training Committee. ASRC members who are not trained in underground rescue will not be permitted underground, unless specifically authorized by the ASRC IC.

### 4.2.5 Swiftwater Rescues

The ASRC will not provide an initial response for swiftwater rescues. In the event the ASRC is directly contacted for a swiftwater incident, the ASRC will immediately refer the call to the appropriate Responsible Agent or state coordinating agency. The ASRC may provide logistical and administrative support if requested through proper channels.

4.2.6 Disaster Assistance

4.2.6.1 Commonwealth of Virginia Disaster Plan

The ASRC may respond to any major medical emergency or statewide disaster, provided legal authorization is given. The ASRC may provide incident staff, logistical support, or strike teams. ASRC members may be required to be self-sufficient for greater than 48-hours.

4.2.6.2 Disaster Plans of Other States

The ASRC may respond to any major medical emergency or statewide disaster, provided legal authorization is given and the Conference Chairman agrees to support the mission. The ASRC may provide incident staff, logistical support, and/or strike teams. ASRC members may be required to be self-sufficient for greater than 48-hour periods.

As formal agreements with state governments are arrived at, additional sections will be added to this document detailing the ASRC's roll in that state's disaster response (cf. Commonwealth of Virginia Disaster Plan, 3.2.6.1).

4.2.6.3 United States of America Disaster Plan

The ASRC may respond to any medical emergency or national disaster provided legal authorization to respond is given. The ASRC may provide incident staff, logistical support, and/or strike teams. ASRC members must realize that they may be required to be self-sufficient for extended periods of time. If members accept air transportation, return flights usually cannot be provided until the incident is over.

4.2.6.4 International Disaster Plan

The ASRC may respond to any major medical emergency or disaster in a foreign country provided legal authorization through a United States of America Federal Agency is secured. The ASRC may provide incident staff, logistical support, and/or strike teams. ASRC members must realize that they may be required to be self-sufficient for extended periods of time. Members realize that return flights usually cannot be provided until the incident is over.

4.3 Incident Scope

4.3.1 Authorization to Respond

No ASRC resource may respond to an incident, representing him or herself as a member of the ASRC, unless an ASRC incident Commander (IC) has evaluated the incident and determined that the ASRC, either as an organization or as individual resources, will respond. Whenever possible, this should be the ASRC IC who will act as the IC (or ASRC response leader) for the incident.

The ASRC will not become involved in an incident, either as an organization or as individual resources representing themselves as members of the ASRC, without authorization from the legal responsible agent for the incident.

**4.3.2 Response Area**

While the ASRC considers its primary coverage area to be Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, the ASRC may respond to an incident anywhere provided proper legal authorization is granted.

**4.3.3 Incident Support**

Once committed to an incident, the ASRC will continue to be available for at least 72 hours. However, in the event of simultaneous incidents, the ASRC reserves the right to reallocate its resources. The ASRC reserves the right to withdraw its resources if the ASRC IC determines that further participation in the

**4.3.4 Declining an Incident**

The ASRC may decline to participate in an incident if the health and safety of its members are considered to be unduly jeopardized by participation. The ASRC may decline incidents not related to ASRC missions unless the ASRC has entered into a previous agreement. The ASRC will refuse any incident involving the search for or apprehension of criminals or suspected criminals. The ASRC will decline any mission considered to be the sole responsibility of a local EMS agency if adequate equipment, resources, and properly trained personnel are present.

**4.3.5 Patient Transport**

The ASRC will not transport any patients by vehicle or ambulance except if a major medical emergency exists and the local EMS agency requests or authorizes this service.

**4.4 Callout and Response to an Incident**

**4.4.1 Individual Callout**

Upon leaving for an incident, each member must notify his local group Dispatch Officer (DO). Each DO is responsible for tracking group personnel and resources on-scene, en-route, available and unavailable, as well as for passing this information on to Conference Dispatch Center. Each responder should bring his or her personal gear to an incident, and is responsible for notifying Incident Staff upon arriving at an incident unequipped for his or her level of training.

**4.4.2 Response to an Incident**

If possible, a "Search and Rescue" magnet placard will be affixed to responding vehicles. Members will proceed to incidents in a manner in accordance with all highway regulations. Personnel of the ASRC, when responding as members of the ASRC in private vehicles, shall not use or display flashing red lights. Any marking or signs on vehicles shall be approved by the ASRC Board of Directors if of an official nature. All individual drivers shall be given directions and an emergency contact telephone number. The driver and passengers in the front seat or front compartment of a vehicle shall have their seatbelts or other restraining device activated.

Any vehicle which has been designated as a Conference emergency response vehicle will be in accordance with any and all applicable regulations for all jurisdictions in which it is to be used. If possible, communications using ASRC-approved radio frequencies should be made available to vehicles.

#### 4.4.3 Aircraft Response

Members receiving air transportation must understand and agree to abide by the policies set forth in the section, "Air Transport Requirements" on page 6. In addition, any safety requirements established by the air carrier must be followed. Any certified group or affiliate group with an agreement or contract for specialized air transport must place a copy of the agreement with the ASRC Secretary and the ASRC Administrative Office.

#### 4.4.4 En-route Callbacks

Teams en-route (an not in immediate contact with the ASRC dispatch, for instance by radio) should call ASRC Dispatch (or the Virginia EOC, if involved) on an hourly basis. The first ASRC team to arrive on-scene should update ASRC Dispatch (and possibly the Virginia EOC) on the accuracy of directions to the incident. ASRC Dispatch (and possibly the Virginia EOC) should also be notified whenever directions change.

#### 4.4.5 Transport Reimbursement

The ASRC will not reimburse members for travel-related expenses.

#### 4.5 Arrival at an Incident

Upon arrival at an incident, ASRC members will sign in using the incident's check-in procedure. Members will represent themselves as part of the ASRC, and not of any individual group, while signing in and performing incident activities.

#### 4.6 Incident Commander Policies

##### 4.6.1 Selection of an Incident Commander for an Incident

The ASRC IC will be chosen from a list of approved ASRC ICs, as determined by the ASRC Board of Directors. The basis for the selection of an IC for a particular mission will be a decision by the ASRC Alert Officer on which potential IC would be able to respond most quickly to an incident.

##### 4.6.2 IC Management Style

ASRC ICs shall use any management style they deem necessary, provided such style does not conflict with the ASRC Search and Rescue Operations Plan or other requirements set forth in this document.

To ensure safety and clear judgment, an ASRC IC should coordinate an incident using twelve-hour shifts whenever possible.

##### 4.6.3 IC Command Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the ASRC IC to see that an ASRC IC is always in command of ASRC personnel on the incident. In addition, the ASRC IC should always be available to the Responsible Agent and to ASRC members for command decisions. The only exception to the above shall be when under written cooperative agreement, the ASRC participates in a unified command structure with the Responsible Agency. In this case, the ASRC IC will become an ASRC Agency Representative and will yield command over ASRC resources, while reserving the option to withdraw ASRC resources.

The ASRC IC is responsible for seeing that all group DOS and the Virginia EOC are kept up-to-date on the progress of the incident.

As per the EOC-VaSARCo cooperative agreement, the other SAR organizations of the VaSARCo will be notified by the EOC whenever the ASRC is involved with a mission.

##### 4.6.4 Documentation Responsibilities

The ASRC IC is responsible for mission records, medical documentation, personnel documentation, and debriefing the Virginia Emergency Operations Center as required. The ASRC IC should file with the ASRC Secretary a mission summary within thirty days and a mission narrative within ninety days of the close of an incident. Other documentation, such as sign-in sheets, should be filed with federal, state, or local agencies as appropriate.

4.6.5 Safety

The ASRC IC is responsible for insuring that all ASRC members are in adequate physical and mental condition to travel before being released from a search. Individual ASRC members are required to check out with the IC or an appointed Safety Officer upon leaving an incident, to verify they are able to travel safely.

Each ASRC member must notify the Group DO when the member is at home or his or her mission involvement ends.

4.7 Field Teams

4.7.1 Briefing

Prior to deployment, field teams will receive a briefing to include task assignment, equipment required, communications procedures and radio callsigns, safety precautions, and other applicable information.

4.7.2 Refusal or Modification of Assignments

Any field team leader may refuse, abort, or modify any task or assignment if deemed unsafe, potentially unsafe, not clearly understood, or beyond the level of training or equipment present on the team. The field team leader must make every effort to inform command of any alterations in task or assignment, including the reasons for such an alteration.

4.7.3 Tasks Along Roads

Whenever a field team works on or near a road, team members should use high-visibility clothing or vests if available. Whenever possible, law enforcement officials should be used to control traffic.

4.7.4 Debriefing

All field teams will be debriefed at the conclusion of their task.

4.7.5 Administrative Considerations

4.7.5.1 Leading a Field Team

Although ASRC Members under age 18 may become qualified as a Field Team Leader, the Incident Staff shall only assign members with Field Team Leader certification who are also 18 or older to actually command a team.

4.7.5.2 Carrying of Firearms

No member of the ASRC will carry into the field any firearms unless required by local, state, or federal statute.

4.8 Radio Communications

4.8.1 Clear Text

ASRC Communications shall be in plain English, with ITU-ICAO phonetic spelling where necessary. Accepted prowords, use of the standard status codes, and proper radio communications procedures are described in the appendix ASRC Communications Policies and Procedures.

4.8.2 Compliance with FCC Regulations

All FCC laws, requirements, regulations, and policies will be stringently followed. The call sign assigned by the FCC and shown on the radio license will be used at the beginning and end of each transmission or series of transmissions or once every half-hour on the half-hour as necessary.

4.9 Evacuations

4.9.1 Medical Considerations

4.9.1.1 MEDIC Qualifications

The MEDIC must have certification as an EMT or higher, valid for the state in which the medic is operating. The MEDIC must be at least 18 years of age.

4.9.1.2 Approaching the Victim

When victim status is unclear, only the FTL and MEDIC should approach the immediate area of the victim; other team members should act to protect a potential crime scene.

4.9.2 Triage

In multiple victim incidents, the MEDIC will perform triage as per the current standard of practice for his level of training, and will direct others in necessary medical care. The MEDIC will establish evacuation priorities for the use of the Field Team Leader and Rescue Specialist in planning the evacuation.

4.9.3 Use of Local EMS Agencies

Whenever possible and safe, a member of the local EMS agency should be a member of the evacuation team and may serve as the MEDIC. When the patient reaches the roadhead or a helispot, the medical responsibility of the ASRC is usually ended and the patient should be turned over to the local EMS agency. However, if the current ASRC MEDIC is of higher medical certification than the members of the local EMS agency, the ASRC MEDIC must accompany the patient until

an equivalent level MEDIC is available to accompany the patient, unless permission to turn over the patient is received from a legitimate medical command physician.

4.9.4 ALS Considerations

The MEDIC, if providing Advanced Life Support (ALS) treatment, must be licensed and operating under all applicable regulations and protocols. If ALS care is provided, the receiving medical facility and physician must be recorded. The patient's medical history will then be submitted to the ASRC's Operational Medical Director for review.

4.9.5 Documentation

In all cases of medical treatment being rendered, whether BLS or ALS, to the search subject or searcher, written documentation will be made. This documentation will be presented to the IC for review and approval.

4.9.6 Semi-Technical Evacuations

4.9.6.1 Equipment

All members of a semi-technical evacuation team shall wear gloves and a helmet. The patient will be secured inside the stokes basket by a method approved by the rescue specialist. Helmet and eye protection will be given to the patient unless medically contraindicated. Group or Conference equipment with a known history will be utilized whenever possible.

4.9.6.2 Procedures

All other procedures and equipment used will follow standards as established in the appendix ASRC Technical Rescue Standards.

4.9.7 Technical Evacuations

4.9.7.1 Equipment

All members of a technical evacuation team shall wear gloves, helmet, and other safety equipment as needed. The patient must be secured using an approved method. Helmet and eye protection will be given to the patient unless medically contraindicated. Group or Conference equipment with a known history will be utilized whenever possible. All other procedures and equipment used will follow standards as established in the appendix ASRC Technical Rescue Standards.

**4.9.7.2 Safety**

All knots, anchors, and critical points will be inspected for safety by at least two different members. The Rescue Specialist is responsible for the safety of all procedures. A separate safety officer will be appointed, if possible.

**4.9.7.3 Personnel**

All members of a technical evacuation team must be properly trained in technical evacuation skills.

**4.10 Ground Search and Rescue Procedures**

All operational procedures and protocol for ground search and rescue are outlined in the appendix ASRC Search and Rescue Operations Plan.

**4.11 Mutual Aid**

The ASRC will, whenever possible, enter into mutual aid agreements with other agencies, in order to ensure resources for SAR incidents should the ASRC be unable to respond. An example is the VaSARCo mutual aid agreement in its Standard Operating procedures.

**4.12 Situations Not Addressed**

In the event of a situation unaddressed in this document or any of its appendices, the Conference Alert Officer will contact an approved IC. The IC will then confer with other members of the Conference, the Responsible Agent, DES, and/or any other source of information in order to formulate the appropriate response.

**Appendix**  
**Virginia Search and Rescue Council**  
**Standard Operating Procedures**

**1 Purpose**

These Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are designed to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the Virginia SAR Council Agencies when they participate in SAR incidents in the Commonwealth of Virginia. These SOPs will help minimize risks to SAR personnel while optimizing the cost-effective care given to the subjects of SAR incidents.

**2 Application**

These SOPs address the alerting, dispatching, and responding of Field Operation Resources (FORs) to emergency SAR incidents along with the operational procedures used prior to, during, and after an incident. Figure 1 shows the functional flow chart for FOR usage.

**3 Situations**

**3.1 Primary Functions**

The Council recognizes four types of emergency SAR incidents where Council Agencies often provide primary, expert capabilities (via FORs) to help resolve emergency incidents. These are:

- Land SAR incidents
- Cave SAR incidents
- Missing Aircraft SAR incidents, and
- Water SAR incidents.

**3.2 Secondary Functions**

The Council recognizes that its member agencies also provide support services for other types of emergency incidents, including Disaster incidents.

**4 Responsibility for Activation**

**4.1 Department of Emergency Services**

The Virginia Department of Emergency Services (VDES) Search and Rescue Duty Officer (SARDO) may request and activate Council FORs for incidents in accordance with VDES's and each agency's operational requirements, and in accordance with existing statutes, agreements, and policies.

#### 4.2 Local Jurisdiction Requests

Council FORs may respond to direct requests for assistance from a local Responsible Agent (RA). The RA is defined as an authorized official from the appropriate state or local jurisdiction. If possible, requests from a local RA should be routed through the SARDO in order to (1) provide the SARDO information concerning the nature of the incident, (2) allow the FORs to respond as State Resources, and (3) allow the SARDO to track the status of the SARA resources presently available in the Commonwealth. If the request is not routed through the SARDO and the Council Agency does respond to the RA's request, then the Council Agency should inform the SARDO about the incident.

#### 4.3 Responding Without Direct Requests

Council FORs will not participate in any incidents without a request from a RA. Council agencies that know of an incident may offer their services by contacting the RA either directly or through the SARDO, but responses are not allowed unless the RA approves.

### 5 Initial Incident Aid Request

#### 5.1 RA Request

When a RA initially requests aid, the following data should be collected and evaluated:

- (1) The incident description and urgency (low, medium, high)
- (2) The RA's specific needs
- (3) Specific directions to the incident
- (4) The RA's title and name
- (5) A contact number for future communications.

#### 5.2 Initial Council Agency Response

The first qualified FOR that arrives on the scene should evaluate the situation and contact the SARDO with its findings. The data shall include any necessary updates to the incident urgency, travel directions, contact points, and resource needs. These findings must also be passed to the IC when the IC first arrives at the scene. The IC may update the SARDO as needed.

### 6 Mutual Aid

#### 6.1 General Mutual Aid

A Council IC may request other Council FORs in an incident. This request may be a general or a specific request for FORs. Requests should be routed through the SARDO from the IC or his designee.

6.1.1 Requesting ICs and their agencies will assume no financial or legal liability for the responding FORs.

6.1.2 Requesting ICs are responsible for arranging staging areas and briefings for the responding FORs.

## 6.2 Shenandoah National Park

The SNP will notify the VDES Emergency Operations Center (EOC) of any incident where it is requesting other Council FORs. Council Agencies may request SNP FORs to respond outside the SNP. The SNP will inform the EOC whenever any of its personnel respond to an incident in the Commonwealth that lies outside the National Park lands.

## 6.3 The SARDO

The SARDO will help coordinate the mutual aid requests by locating the necessary additional FORs while considering the incident's urgency, the Commonwealth's other SAR needs, the uncommitted FOR's status, the FOR's transportation difficulties, and other pertinent factors.

# 7 Incident Operations

## 7.1 Incident Management

Incident Management is necessary to efficiently and effectively resolve SAR incidents. This management function requires a proper chain of command and clearly defined management procedures. Any management system used must include the functions of Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance.

## 7.2 Chain of Command

7.2.1 Each agency that responds FORs to an incident must appoint an on-scene Agency Representative (AR) to act as the liaison between the agency and the Incident Management. This function must be maintained throughout the duration of the agency's participation at the incident.

7.2.2 A Council IC shall be appointed to (1) act as the liaison for all the SAR Council FORs involved at an incident and (2) coordinate all Council FORs and other pertinent resources.

7.2.3 The Council IC is initially appointed by the first responding Council agency in conjunction with the SARDO. The IC is responsible for passing the IC function off to another qualified Council member as necessary. Whenever a new IC is appointed, the old IC is responsible for informing the SARDO of the change in command.

**7.3 SOP Suspension**

An IC may suspend the use of any part of the SOP (including the use of the ICS) provided the IC determines that the incident requires special procedures.

**7.4 The Individual Responder's Requirements**

Any responding Council Agency member is responsible for (1) arriving properly prepared for the terrain and weather, and (3) being self-sufficient for 24 hours in the field. The individual member must obey all the directives of the Council IC that are concerned with safety issues.

**7.4.1 Air Transportation**

In some incidents, FORs may be flown to the scene via VDES coordinated air transportation. Any requests for VDES coordinated air transportation must be made to the SARDO via the IC. Such requests are mainly evaluated on the basis of the incident urgency. Any FORs transported by VDES coordinated air assets are expected to remain on scene for at least 48 hours. Furthermore, such FORs are not guaranteed return transportation.

**7.5 Safety**

7.5.1 When working near roads, especially near high-speed thoroughfares, SAR personnel should wear high visibility clothing. At night someone should be positioned near the road to flag down traffic. When possible, law enforcement officials should control traffic.

7.5.2 At all incidents the Council IC must assess the risks before deploying any FORs. These risks include, but are not limited to, the terrain, the weather, the mental and physical condition of the SAR personnel, and mental condition of the subject.

- 7.5.3 Whenever a reasonable chance exists that the subject may place the SAR personnel at a significant risk, the Council IC should obtain the advice of the RA, the SARDO, and the SCO (as appropriate), determine reasonable safety procedures. These procedures may include: suspending the incident, providing law enforcement escort with each field team, or withdrawing the volunteer resources.
- 7.6 In incidents where any Council FORs respond as State Resources, VDES will have an SCO assigned to the incident. Each agency's AR should report to the SCO when the agency's first FOR(s) arrive at the scene. The IC should periodically coordinate with the SCO. If the SCO is needed but is not present, contact the SARDO for the necessary aid.
- 7.7 **Multiple Incidents**  
If multiple separate incidents occur and not enough resources are available, the SARDO and the separate ICs will determine the best allocation of resources and determine if other resources are needed.
- 7.8 **Documentation**  
Standard SAR Council forms, ICS forms, maps, CAP forms, and unit forms should be used to document all actions taken and information received. A complete incident log should be maintained by the Incident Staff.
- 7.9 **Resources**  
In any extended incident the IC will establish a resource relief plan.
- 7.10 **Reporting**  
The IC will report the incident status to the SARDO at least once per shift.
- 7.11 **Dispatching**  
FORs in transit to incidents in progress are urged to call in to the EOC or the incident base for periodic incident status updates. Agency dispatchers should inform the on-scene incident staff whenever their personnel are leaving for the incident and whenever their personnel have returned to base.
- 7.12 **Land SAR Incidents**  
The Council shall use ICS as the standard management system when conducting Land SAR field operations.

7.12.1 Communications

7.12.1.1 Standard Frequencies

The following are the standard Council operation radio frequencies designations:

- (1) 155.160 MHz
- (2) 155.205 MHz
- (3) 155.280 MHz
- (4) 155.340 MHz
- (5) 155.400 MHz

7.12.1.2 Codes

No operational codes will be used except (1) map coordinates, (2) patient status codes, and (3) secure net requests. Patient care should never be restricted in order to maintain operational code protocols. The status codes are:

- (1) STATUS 1 - The subject is alive and will be able to walk out on his/her own.
- (2) STATUS 2 - The subject is alive and will require aid in extrication.
- (3) STATUS 3 - The subject is dead.

The secure net request is:

SECURE THE NET - The user is about to transmit sensitive information and requests that the other system take care in releasing the sensitive information. This is useful when transmitting status 2 or status 3 data in order to protect the family or the scene.

7.13 Cave Incidents

7.13.1 The Council FORs shall use ICS as the standard management system when conducting Cave SAR field operations.

7.13.2 Cave SAR incidents are normally coordinated with the NCRC.

7.14 Missing Aircraft Incidents

7.14.1 Missing Aircraft or ELT incidents are normally coordinated by the Virginia Wing of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP).

7.14.2 When the CAP is conducting Air Operations, all non-CAP aircraft should be coordinated through the CAP Mission Coordinator.

7.14.3 If non-CAP aircraft are not coordinated through the CAP Mission Coordinator, CAP aircraft may be withdrawn from the incident.

#### 7.15 Water SAR Incidents

7.15.1 Any incident in navigable waters is the jurisdiction of the United States Coast Guard.

#### 7.16 Other Types of Incidents

7.16.1 When possible, the Council shall use ICS as the standard management system when participating in other emergency incidents.

7.16.2 For disasters, see Title 44 of the Code of Virginia

### 8 Incident Resolution

#### 8.1 Incident Closing

##### 8.1.1 Successful Incidents

The patient(s) status and the time of the incident closing will be communicated to the SARDO within a reasonable time delay after successfully concluding the incident.

##### 8.1.2 Unsuccessful Incidents

Suspension without a find will be made after consultation between the IC, the SCO, the SARDO, and the RA. The IC will advise the RA of other appropriate techniques (e.g. passive search techniques) useful for continued efforts.

#### 8.2 Demobilization

The IC will call the Virginia EOC when all teams have left the site. Agency dispatch officers will call the EOC when all their FORs have safely returned to home quarters. The Council IC must account for all on-scene personnel that the IC directed.

#### 8.3 Documentation

The IC will submit a standard incident report to the Department of Emergency Services no later than seven days after suspending an incident.

**9 SOP Review**

These SOP's should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed.

**10 Glossary**

The following terms were used in this document:

- AR** Agency Representative--the leader of all FORs from a single SAR Council Agency.
- EOC** Emergency Operations Center--the VDES communications and coordination center located in Virginia.
- FOR** Field Operational Resources--those resources that each agency sends to an incident that are primarily intended to operate in the field. This excludes the SCO.
- ICS** Incident Command System--a management system used for emergency incidents that includes the functions of: command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance.
- IC** Incident Commander--the individual who is in charge of all Council agency field operational resources on the scene.
- RA** Responsible Agent--the legal authority that is responsible for the SAR incident.
- SAR** Search and Rescue
- SARDO** VDES SAR Duty Officer
- SCO** State Coordinating Officer--the person who represents VDES at the incident scene, usually a First Sergeant from the Virginia State Police. The SCO's function is to help coordinate state and local resources and to serve as the liaison between the state and local governments.
- SNP** Shenandoah National Park
- SOP** Standard Operating Procedure--standards used by SAR Council agencies when conducting field operations in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- VDES** Virginia Department of Emergency Services--the state agency working for the Governor charged with coordinating emergency operations in the Commonwealth of Virginia.