



Search & Rescue Operations

Quick Operations Guide

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Developed for use by the Utah Chapter of Oathkeepers.

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Instructional Level 0-2

- This training is required for all UTOK member Level 0 (public), Level 1 – Novice, Level 2 – Intermediate, and up.

Why Do I Need This Training?

- All members should be experienced at all related Search and Rescue processes and functions. This will aid you in organizing and executing a Search & Rescue operation in varied conditions, as a leader, or a participant.

Where Can I Use This Training?

- During situations that require an organized response to a lost or injured person.



Goals

1. Create an organized S&R response, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
2. Execute this response rapidly.
3. Ensure no additional personnel are lost or injured.
4. Conduct parallel operations to fulfil the mission.

Personal Safety

YOUR safety is YOUR first priority

- If you are injured, you cannot help others
- Help others only when it's safe to do so
- If the situation changes or becomes unsafe:
 - ✓ Stop
 - ✓ Move to safety
 - ✓ If you can, take the victim with you

Recommendations

- Wear gloves if you can
- If you get blood on you, be sure to clean any part of your body that the blood has touched
- Tell a health care provider that you got blood on you, and follow his or her direction

Introduction

Search and Rescue operations can be required in an emergency situation, and often include lost, injured, or potentially injured persons. This could include the following type of scenarios;

- A child wanders away from a location such as a camping site, and becomes lost.
- A hiker becomes overdue for return, due to an injury.
- Two hunters get separated after one falls off a steep embankment, the other goes for help, not knowing the exact location, or condition of the victim.
- A light airplane crashes in the wilderness and requires locating, and rescue operations.

Experience from previous disasters has shown that immediately after almost every disaster, the first response to trapped victims is by spontaneous, untrained, and well-intentioned persons who rush to the site of a collapse in an attempt to free the victims.

More often than not, these spontaneous rescue efforts result in serious injuries and compounded problems. However well-meaning, rescue efforts can be planned and practiced in advance.

The decision to attempt a rescue should be based on two factors:

- The risks involved to the rescuer.



- The overall goal of doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

In some cases, a formal response will be initiated by the local authorities, and you may be called upon to assist. In other cases, you may be the only resources available and you are called upon to conduct the Search & Rescue operations. The following outline will assist you in responding to these situations, either as an organizer, or a participant.

Operations

Search and Rescue Operations, are activities, and processes, required to locate individuals which are in distress, and in which their locations are unknown. Many of the steps outlined here also apply to Rescue operations, in which the victim's location is known, and are required to be recovered, attended to medically, and evacuated. This document deals primarily with "Light Search and Rescue Operations" which are operations that do not require heavy or specialized equipment.

A search and rescue operations 3 key phases;

1. Organization Phase
2. Search Phase
3. Rescue Phase

A Search and Rescue Operation may include many, or few members, depending on the personnel that are available and willing to help. The items below can be accomplished with only a few members if required, however the more members the large the search area can be covered. Members may have multiple "roles" in order to complete the operation.

The phases break down to the following key steps

- **ORAST**

- o Organization Coordinators, teams, Intel, plans.
- o Resources Identification, select teams & inventory
- o Advanced scouting Narrow search area
- o Search & Security Planned and effective operations
- o Triage & Transport Stabilization and medical evacuation

A. *Organize: (5-15 minutes)*

- o Identify and assign key leaders
- o Gather added intel (from witnesses, maps, forecasts, campers, ...)
- o Briefing: Communicate roles, plan, and safety items.

B. *Resources*

- o Leaders Identify and assign teams, based on skills if available.



- Inventory of skills, equipment, vehicles, comm's, etc.

C. Advanced Scouting:

- Send out a preliminary "Scout" team, if possible, to narrow search area.
- May require a security element based on related risks.

D. Search, security & support

- Establish team members
- Conduct safety brief
- Develop a search grid/pattern/plan
- Provide security, if required. (From violence, animals, structures, natural disasters ...)
- May require further securing a vehicle or structure from added damage.
- Establish a base camp (with Comms, Triage, Supplies, Control)
- Provide food, water, supplies, and equipment to the teams as necessary.

E. Triage and Transport

- Identify First Responders available, contact & coordinate
- Setup Base camp (with Comms, Triage, Supplies, Control)
- Identify Evacuation sites & routes (Helicopter)

F. Closure

- Ensure all members accounted for, are healthy, fed and secure.
- Gather and return all kit and equipment.
- Document actions, observations, timings, contact info – for later use.
- Ensure no additional actions are necessary (no added victims are unaccounted for)
- Plan for disassembly of base camp and teams.

Safety:

Don't become a casualty. Ensure all members follow these basic safety rules.

1. Never work alone. Travel in buddy teams to prevent further accidents, or lost personnel.
2. Always communicate. Let your buddy, coordinator, or others know where you are and what you are doing.
3. Don't take un-necessary risks. If advanced skills are required, wait for those skilled (rappelling, etc). If you MUST take action, ensure precautions are taken.
4. Hydrate, rest and recover, as necessary.
5. Follow the plan. If the plan is not working, discuss and communicate adjustments.



1. Organization Phase:

This phase is critical to ensure the operations are effective, without additional casualties. Often in situations with untrained personnel, rash action will be initiated, without communication, coordination, or safety measures considered, and these often lead to added casualties due to persons getting lost, becoming dehydrated, or becoming injured.

It is CRITICAL that the persons attempting to conduct the operations (“team”) stop and think before acting. You will find that taking some time to organize before executing a search and rescue, will actually save considerable time, and provide much more superior search and rescue functions.

The Organization phase includes the following;

- a. **Stop and gather** as much information as possible from any witnesses. This includes;
 - Who – Who is the potential victim(s)
 - What - Were they doing when they were lost or injured?
 - Where – was their last observed/known location?
 - When – How long ago was this?
 - Why – do you think they are lost or injured? Why do you think they need assistance?
 - How – Where they lost or injured?
 -
- b. **Identify coordinators.** This is critical to start effective parallel operations. Often some persons in your group will have specialized training that identifies them for a key position. CERT (Community Emergency Response Team certification is an important skill/certification that will help identify key coordinators.

The key coordinator roles include;

- **Incident commander:** This role is responsible for coordination of all personnel, through the specific function coordinators. They also run the **base camp**, and ensure communications are established with first responders, medical, police, etc. Try to find a person who is skilled at leadership, if possible. The first to step up may not be the best person for this role.
- **Search Coordinator:** This role is responsible for identification of search teams and resources, planning search plans and patterns, Conducting the coordinated and planned search patterns, communicating with base camp. Additional activities may include:
 - i. identifying and outfitting “Security” personnel, in the case of added danger posed by animals or individuals. This is normally conducted by Law Enforcement personnel, but may be considered in an emergency, based on available resources.
 - ii. Assisting in the recovery and transport of the victim(s).
- **Rescue Coordinator:** This role is responsible to identification of medical personnel/teams, and available resources, conducting initial medical assessments,

- application of medical aid, transport of the victim(s) to emergency response personnel or added temporary aid stations (base camp), or further transport to medical facilities.
- i. Often search personnel transition to rescue support personnel, depending on the situation.
 - ii. The Rescue and Search coordinator roles can be combined if required (often are combined)
- *Support Coordinator*: This role is responsible for identification of any and all support equipment, vehicles, personnel, and supplies. This includes;
- i. Searches of available equipment for gear used in locating, transporting, and providing medical attention to victims and personnel.
 - ii. Identification of vehicles for transport of teams, equipment, support resources, and victims.
 - iii. Identification of access and landing locations, road/accessways for first responder and emergency personnel.
 - iv. Setup and maintenance of the Base camp and operations.
- *Comms Coordinator*: This role is responsible for identification of any and all communications gear, and capabilities. This includes;
- i. Radio's, telephones, establishing runners, etc.
 - ii. Communications with search, medical, and support teams.
 - iii. Communications with first responders and emergency services.
- c. *Identify available resources*: Quickly inventory what resources you have available. These may include items you are not immediately aware of, such as medical kits in cars. The priority resources are communications and vehicles. Once these are identified an advanced team (scouts) should be sent to investigate, and hopefully narrow down the search area.
- *Resource categories include*;
- i. Communications
 - ii. Medical
 - iii. Transport
 - iv. Lighting
 - v. Specialty equipment such as ropes, harnesses, drones, etc.
- d. *Planning*: In order to be effective a basic plan is required. At this point you are hoping to narrow the search area down, but until the Advanced team reports in, you have to plan for a full area search. Your plan should start with;
- A starting position
 - A search party formation. Often this will be a line formation, where all search personnel stand in a line, about 5-10 yds apart, and walk forward over a designated area to an intermediate point. When all personnel reach that intermediate point, they can continue as planned.



- Search pattern: The basic format the search party will cover to search an area. This can include a straight line, a circle (starting and a center point and expanding out in concentric circles), or a parallel pattern (starting at a point, going 100 yds, then turning around and returning, each time moving out the width of the search party. Intermediate points should be in place to ensure all search teams are accounted for, especially in the dark, or hilly areas.
- Security: If a security element is required, their movement must be planned as well. Normally they will be in front of a search party, in order to secure an area for searching. Often the security element will “clear” an area of about 100 yds forward and hold at the intermediate search position, wait for the search part to conduct the search to their position, and move up to the next intermediate position.

2. Search Phase:

Once all the planning is completed, which should take only 5-10 minutes, the search is initiated. If the advance team has identified evidence to narrow down the search area, the Search & Rescue teams will move to that position and initiate the search. If no evidence is located, the search coordinator will choose a location to initiate searches based on available information.

Key Search and Rescue teams.

Search and rescue teams includes the following, and are most often comprised of groups of paired individuals. **NOTE: It is important to create paired “buddy” teams to reduce the likelihood of additional casualties caused by persons becoming lost, disoriented, dehydrated, or injured.**

Teams include;

- *Advanced Team (scout)*: This team will travel as soon as possible following organization to scout the general area and hopefully narrow down the search area. They may be working with a minimum of information and equipment, but are intended as only a preliminary activity.
 - o Equipment:
 - Communications: Phone, radio, flares
 - Transport: Automobile, motorcycle, UTV/ATV, bicycle, etc. (if available)
 - Other: Hydration, flashlights, weapons (if required), knife, etc.
- *Search Teams*: This includes pairs and teams of individuals who will plan search patterns, work together to conduct searches, and communicate results. Once the victim(s) is identified, they will communicate and secure the location, stabilize the victim, extract and transport the victim to secondary aid and Triage locations.



Search team generally includes;

- *Buddy teams, who work together to identify and search areas. These teams ALWAYS keep in contact with each other, as well as other buddy teams, to ensure they are safe and able to conduct operations.*
- *Medical teams, or personnel, who will conduct emergency first aid, and medical stabilization for transport*
- *All personnel work together to secure the accident site, if required to ensure no added danger exists for the victim and/or rescue teams.*
- *Security personnel. These personnel are tasked with providing ARMED security, if necessary, from violent offenders and/or dangerous animals. The safety and security of the search team personnel is paramount.*
- *Medical Personnel:*
 - *Will provide immediate first aid, and stabilization services.*
 - *Will coordinate transport*
 - *Will communicate medical situations and requirements to base camp.*
 - *Normally will NOT participate in search operations. Will standby to quickly move to accident site once detected.*
 - *Will conduct triage operations, if required at base camp prior to further transport.*
- *Transport Personnel:*
 - *Will transport search teams to search locations.*
 - *May provide transport of added equipment and supplies.*
 - *Will standby with medical teams to conduct emergency transport as required.*
 - *Will ensure transport equipment, vehicles, routes and communications*

3. Rescue Phase:

Once the victims and accident site are identified, the Rescue Phase of the operation begins. During this phase the search teams attempt to reach the accident site, and stabilize the site for further operations. This may include, securing ropes to vehicles to stabilize against further damage, clearing location of debris for access to victim(s), rappelling to a lower location, establishing lift lines, and any other such activity.

Once stable, medical personnel conduct immediate medical identification and treatment of injuries, and stabilize the victim(s) for transport. They oversee the evacuation from the site and transport to the Triage area or emergency transport. In cases that emergency personnel are available, may assist with transport and medical actions.

Security teams may be required if the accident area has addition dangers caused by violent personnel or animals. These personnel are armed as appropriate and available, and are responsible for the immediate safety and protection of the victim(s) and search personnel.



In some cases, security teams may move in advance of the search and medical teams, secure an area, and then allow search and medical operations to proceed. They may also cover rear movement of the other teams to ensure they are not in danger during transport operations.

4. Closure:

Once the victim(s) are evacuated and no longer a factor to the S&R teams, concluding activities are conducted. These are almost as important as the actual rescue as they can provide critical information to emergency services for further care, support legal and law enforcement investigations, provide critical safety learnings, and ensure security of the accident site.

Also, following a S&R operation, personnel will need to be rested, fed and comforted, debriefed and added contact information gathered. If teams are tired, it is imperative that rest and comfort is provided prior to release, in order to ensure they travel home safely.



Inventory Considerations:

You may be called upon to participate or lead a search and rescue operation, and often this occurs when you are unprepared. You may be camping, traveling, visiting relatives, hiking, dirt bike riding, or enjoying a day out at the beach. Emergencies occur at any time and without warning. When faced with a situation it is imperative that you take stock of the situation before reacting.

One of the first considerations should be a general inventory of what resources are available to you at the time. Often you have more available than you realize. Assign someone to check your and other vehicles, facilities and surroundings for items that can be useful.

Inventory categories:

- Information Maps, websites, witness info, etc.
- Personnel and skills Immediate and emergency personnel. Skills inventory
- Vehicles Cars, trucks, aircraft, drones, UTV, motorcycles, bicycles, etc.
- Communications Phones, radios, CB, Ham, signal mirrors, smoke campfires.
- Personal items knives, guns, rope, flashlights, pepper spray, etc.
- Medical items Ipad, med kits, wipes, splints, portable litters, etc.
- Food and supplies water, snacks, salt, blankets, tents,
- Clothing Jackets, boots, hats, gloves, pocket heaters, etc.
- Other items. Rope, chains, axe, prybars, tools, chainsaw, winch, etc.

Some key items you should maintain include:

- Vehicle
 - o Extra fuel
 - o Longer range communications (Ham radio, CB, Phone)
 - o Larger medical kit (trauma kit)
 - o Ropes, Tow chains, block and tackle
 - o Bug out bag
 - o Emergency water filtration
 - o Emergency security (weapon, knife, pepper spray)
 - o Flashlights, headlights and batteries.
 - o Tool kit
 - o Blankets, emergency candle, heaters
- On Person
 - o Tourniquet (at least 1)
 - o Pressure bandage
 - o Methods of communication
 - o knife