

Tidewater Search and Rescue (TSAR) New Member Information



So That Others May Live

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“The Golden Rule” test

The number 1 rule in TSAR is to respond back to emails and texts!

If you receive an email or text, it is of **extreme importance** to respond back as soon as possible (ASAP).

Unless it specifically states **No Response Needed**, an answer is **required**.

There are a few reasons why this is so important:

1. Our group relies on a flawless working communication system. Every piece of information that goes out to the group, whether it's for searches, trainings, or meetings, passes through this system. But as with most computer and cell systems, there are limitations and constant glitches. **When the group has no response back from its members, we are unsure whether the message was not received or is being ignored.** So a response back is a must! Many times a simple YES or NO will do. That will at least confirm receipt of the message and that our system is working properly.
2. Trainings and events don't just happen overnight. They take weeks, if not months of prep work. Having a firm head count of participation is a must to accurately prepare the training scenario or plan the event. This ensures that there is enough material and space for the right number of members attending.
3. **“It's just unprofessional”** In today's world of smart phones, Facebook, and the ever growing fast pace of the electronic information highway, no one is more than 48 hours away from some sort of computer access. We are a volunteer group, so no one is going to think any less of you if you can't make an event. We just need to know it. That's how we know our system is working correctly. If we have **NO** reply back to an E-mail, but you're on Facebook describing your day, you are either not receiving our messages, which means our system is failing or you're ignoring it. Regardless, there is a problem that needs to be fixed either way.

Active/Non-Active Status

Now that you are a member of TSAR, you will receive a personal identification number (PIN); this PIN is generated and issued by the Group Commander usually when you become Call Out Qualified (COQ). But there is still a little work to do before you can actually be called out on a search mission.

First you have to get to an active status within the group and then maintain that active status. How do you do that? It's very simple; most of you are already on your way to achieving it.

- You must complete the 5 online NIMS courses, which most of you probably have already done.
- Must be certified in CPR and Basic First Aid and maintain that certification always. It is your responsibility to ensure that the Documentation Unit Leader (DUL) has a copy of your current CPR and Basic First Aid (BFA) cards.
- You must hold one of the basic field grade levels either COQ or Search Team Member (STM). COQ is not a state certification, but a group certification. There will be more details about COQ in the next section. STM is the beginning of the state certifications and allows the member to respond to searches unaccompanied by another member. It is the foundation that all other state certifications are built from.

📌 Important Note- A copy of all certifications must be sent to The Group Commander, the Documentation Unit Leader, and to The Training Unit Leader!!!

Once an active status is obtained, you must maintain that status. If any of the following lapses, you are placed in a probation status and are only allowed to respond to search missions if an active member is responding. There must be a one to one ratio of probation member to active status member.

Following is a list of requirements for active status:

- Must have current and valid CPR and BFA certifications
- Must have current and valid field grade certifications (COQ or STM)
- Must attend two primary trainings a quarter and four General Membership Meetings (GMM) a year
- Must have paid membership dues for the year (Membership dues are due by October 1st each year)

State certifications expire three years after date received. Each member must keep an up to date "Task Book" to be used for recertification of each field grade state certifications they hold. The Task Book is discussed more in a later section.

Call Out Qualified (COQ)

Definition

COQ is a group level certification (as opposed to state managed) and is intended to be a short term qualification. It enables the new member to attain a very basic level of understanding of the principles and process of search and rescue missions, and provides a base level of medical training. It is highly desirable that the resource move beyond this level as quickly as is possible.

The intent of this requirement is for the leadership of TSAR to evaluate the candidate's ability to properly function as a safe, reliable, and viable member of a team while on task, in potentially dangerous, exhausting, or mentally intense situations. This will be a very subjective judgment on the part of the leadership and will largely be based on instinct driven by experience in SAR operations. This requirement directly relates to the final requirement listed in this section, pertaining to "vetting" the candidate.

Requirements

Prior to responding to a mission, you must attain the qualification of COQ. To attain the level of COQ, you must achieve the following, in no specific order.

- The candidate must be at least 15 years of age. If the candidate is under 16 years of age, a parent or guardian must also join the Group.
- Attend a COQ class, sponsored by TSAR.
- After the COQ class, attend at least 1 TSAR sponsored or approved "Field Exercise" type of training. "Field exercise" means that there is some sort of search operation being conducted in the field. This is in opposition to a "table-top" type of training which is discussion based, or other trainings which do not include search tactics. The Training Unit Leader (TUL) will make a judgment call on whether or not a particular training event qualifies.
- Pass a "Pack Check" of the "10 Essentials", as inspected by either the COQ class instructor or the TSAR Training Unit Leader (TUL) or TSAR Plans Section Chief (PSC). We refer to the gear requirements as "10 essentials" due to old standards, but there are more than 10. They are listed below as "Gear Requirements".
- Complete the required NIMS courses, presented by FEMA, and taken as on-line self-study programs. The specific courses are documented below. These courses do not expire. Proof of passing the class must be provided.
- Achieve and hold a current certification in Basic First Aid (BFA) or higher, from the American Red Cross, within the first year after joining the group, but not specifically before becoming COQ qualified. This has a 2 or 3 year recertification period.
- Achieve and hold a current certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or higher, from the American Red Cross (CPR/AED for the Professional Rescuer) or the American Heart Association (CPR for Health Care Providers) or equivalent, within the first year after joining the group, but not specifically before becoming COQ qualified. The class must include Adult, Child and Infant CPR and the use of an AED. These have a 2 year re-certification period. If the candidate has another CPR certification that falls short of the above requirements, it will be accepted under the provision that when the certification expires, the candidate will upgrade to the above.
- Upon completion of all other objective requirements, the candidate will be vetted subjectively by the Board of Directors. The BOD will determine if the candidate needs further training, counseling, etc. in order to be a reasonably safe and competent team member prior to gaining their STM certification. This includes search skills, team dynamics, legal aspects of SAR, and others. If any member of the BOD objects to the candidate receiving the COQ certification, a clear statement of the reasoning, and a path forward for resolution, will be provided to them.

Call Out Qualified

Requirements Notes

Upon completion of the above, a resource will be awarded the certification of “COQ” and will be able to respond to missions under the guidelines set forth by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) which states that the resource must be accompanied by an STM or higher resource from the same organization. That is, a TSAR COQ must be accompanied on all tasks by a TSAR STM or higher, in a ratio of 1 COQ to 1 STM or higher.

The COQ certification can be by-passed by earning the STM certification.

The COQ certification will expire after 1 year. It can be renewed if the candidate goes thru the entire process again. Refer to the section on recertification.

The associated NIMS courses have no expiration and are valid in perpetuity.

The certification may also expire if either the BFA or CPR certifications expire. The certification will be automatically reinstated once the BFA or CPR certifications are renewed, and assuming all other requirements are fulfilled.

A COQ resource will not be automatically notified of missions via our standard alert system. However, when missions arise, and other TSAR resources above STM respond, the dispatcher on duty will make every attempt to match a COQ to another resource such that the COQ resource can respond to the mission. There is no guarantee that this will happen successfully in all cases. The dispatcher’s first priority is to manage the resources above COQ.

Gear Essentials:

- Backpack large enough for daypack use
- Appropriate clothing and footwear for both fair and foul weather
- One quart minimum canteen or water bottle
- Two day supply of quick energy food (VDEM states 1)
- Whistle (prefer nonmetallic and non “pea” style – both freeze in winter)
- Compass (Silva or Brunton preferred)
- Headlamp with a set of spare batteries and bulb.
- One other alternate (**handheld**) source of light with spare batteries & bulb
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Minimum 2 pair of Nitrile examination gloves
- At least 5 large (30 gal), heavy duty leaf bags (VDEM states 1)
- Waterproof matches or disposable lighter and candle protected from moisture (VDEM omits the candle)
- Storm Shelter (can be items already in pack such as garbage bag)
- A good knife (but not a large “Rambo” knife) (not a VDEM Req)
- Pen, Pencil and paper (not a VDEM Req)
- Delorme Street Atlas of Virginia (to be carried in your car, not your backpack)
- Yellow safety vest w/ 3M Reflective Tape

Call Out Qualified

Additional Personal Items (suggested, but not required)

- Handheld radio
- Toilet paper
- Zip-lock bags
- Moleskin
- Gaitors
- Sunscreen
- Signal mirror
- Parachute cord
- Small notebook & pen (required for COQ by TSAR, but suggested for STM by VDEM)
- Insect repellent
- Water purification tablets or filter system
- GPS Unit – Know how to use this and have it set up properly before putting it in your pack!
- Safety Glasses – polycarbonate lens rated to ANSI standard Z87.1
- Gloves with leather palms
- Pruning shears (for cutting yourself out of the briars and brambles)

Recertification

COQ is intended to be a short term intermediary step prior to achieving the STM certification within the first year of membership in TSAR. Also, it is the member's responsibility to recertify for STM or STL in a timely manner once they reach their expiration period.

A candidate may only recertify for COQ with the approval of the BOD, which will take unique circumstances into consideration, such as the ability or inability of a member to attend recent or future GSARs, or the State's ability to conduct GSARs in a timely manner, in order to recertify for STM or STL.

Approval by the BOD to recertify for COQ is not guaranteed. If approved, recertification is identical to the initial certification process. There will be no short-cuts or waived requirements.

If the BOD disallows a member from recertifying due to a lack of extenuating circumstances, they may continue to work towards recertifying for either their STM or STL. But, their membership status will be moved to "Inactive" and they will not be able to respond to any missions until such time as those higher certifications are fulfilled.

Acronyms/Glossary

Acronyms/Glossary

As you are probably realizing by now there are a lot of acronyms and terms used in search and rescue. In most meetings, trainings, or events it is not uncommon to hear a number of these in just a few minutes. To help you understand more clearly, a few of these acronyms and terms are listed below.

Acronym	Meaning
Air Scent Canine	A search dog that will detect airborne human scent.
AHJ	Agency Having Jurisdiction
Alert	Term used for physical signs a canine or horse gives when they are interested in something. Canines may alert by barking, horses may alert by placing their ears forward, distending their nostrils, focusing their eyes, stopping forward movement, etc.
Bastard Search	A search in which, for one reason or another and unknown to the searchers, there is no subject, as the subject is elsewhere rather than lost and in the search area.
BFA	Basic First Aid
BOD	Board of Directors
BUD DUB	There are two specific rotations for all rope handlers. BUD - Belay, Uphill, Downhill DUB - Downhill, Uphill, Belay
CAP	Civil Air Patrol
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
COQ	Call Out Qualified
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
DUL	Documentation Leader
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ESF	Emergency Support Functions
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FTS	Field Team Signcutter
GARD	Greater Atlantic Rescue Dogs (our sister group)
GSAR	Ground Search and Rescue College
IC	Incident Commander
ICG	Incident Commander for Ground Search Operations
ICS	Incident Command Systems
LE	Law Enforcement
LKP	Last Known Point
MLSO	Managing Land Search Operations

Acronyms/Glossary

Acronym	Meaning
MRF	Multiple Response Functions
NASAR	National Association for Search and Rescue
NIMS	National Incident Management System
PIO	Public Information Officer
PLS	Point Last Seen
POA	Probability of Area
POD	Probability of Detection
PSC	Plans Section Chief
PSO	Practical Search Operations
RA	Responsible Agent – Persons with legal authority over search operation
ROC	Rescue On-scene Coordinator
SAR	Search and Rescue
STL	Search Team Leader – same as the old FTL or Field Team Leader
STM	Search Team Member – same as the old FTM or Field Team Member
TAF	Task Assignment Form
That Others May Live	Motto of Search and Rescue Community
TSAR	Tidewater Search and Rescue
TUL	Training Unit Leader
VDEM	Virginia Department of Emergency Management
VASARCO	Virginia Search and Rescue Council
WFA	Widlerness First Aid

Command Structure

Group Commander

The Group Commander (GC) is ultimately responsible for the daily administration and conduct of the group. The GC controls the group's correspondence and supervise the activities of the Section Chiefs.

Operations

The Operations Section Chief functions as second in command and is responsible for the dispatch and alert functions for the group, fundraising, and any other duties which may be assigned.

Planning

The Planning Section Chief is responsible for supervising or performing the following functions:

- Training
- Documentation - including administrative correspondence, newsletter, and rosters
- And primarily responsible for the future needs and plans for the group.

Logistics

The Logistics Section Chief is responsible for controlling, tracking, and maintaining all of TSAR's equipment and for developing a system by which the current status and location of all TSAR equipment is known at any time. The Logistics Section Chief also supervises the positions of Medical Officer and Communications Officer.

Safety

The Safety Officer is responsible for group safety while training, responding to and returning from missions, and for member safety if present during missions. The Safety Officer coordinates with the Group Commander, Planning Section Chief, and Medical Officer on all issues concerning safety.

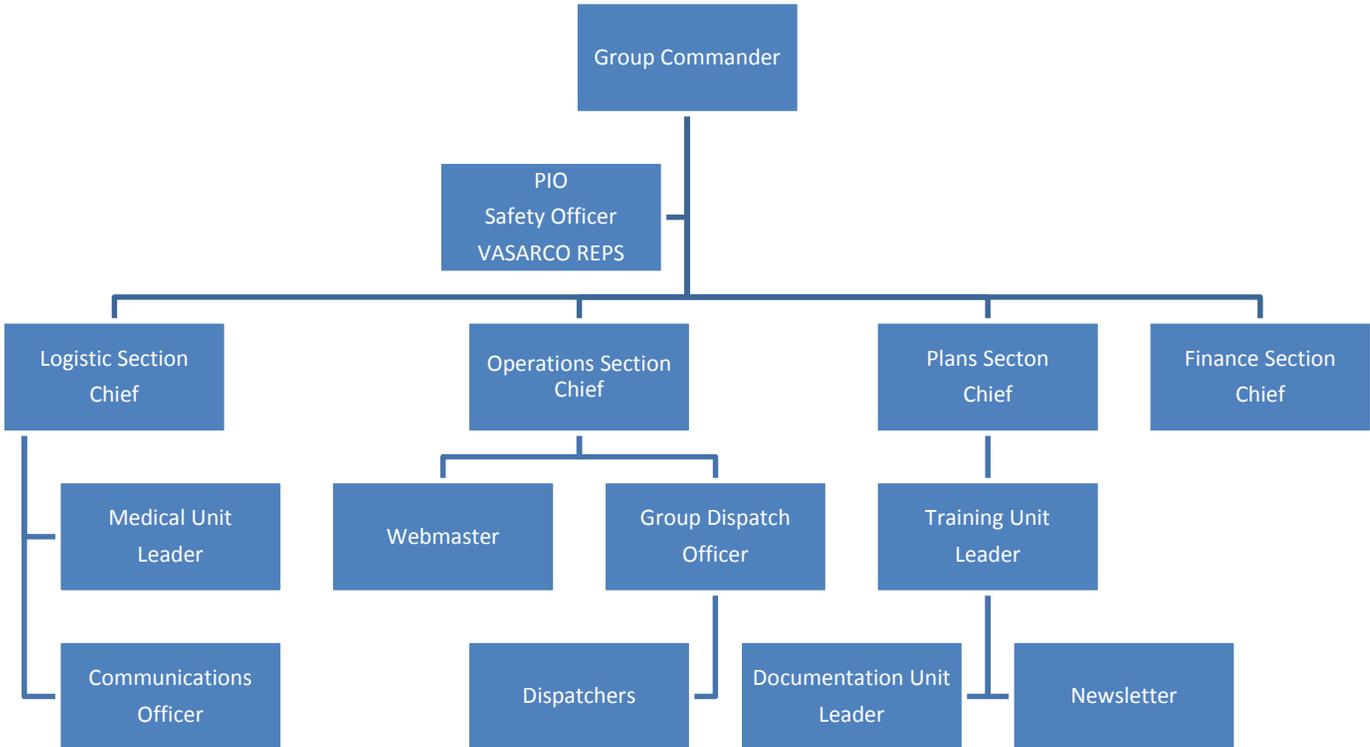
Public Relations

The Public Information Officer interfaces with the Group Commander and Section Chiefs to ensure TSAR's commitment to Search and Rescue is appropriately conveyed to the general public, local and state governments, civic groups, and organizations.

Finance

The Finance Officer is responsible for all the financial dealings for the group from membership dues, budget balancing, accounting, the entire purchase request for the group, maintains financial records and documentation for state and federal fees.

Command Structure



Tidewater Search and Rescue (TSAR) Group Uniform Policy

Purpose

This policy was developed to define the uniform requirements necessary to promote a professional and functional appearance of TSAR members in the general environment.

General

TSAR uniform configurations are described in the table below.

Outerwear for extreme, adverse conditions is up to the individual's discretion.

The uniform shall be clean and smoothed to present a neat appearance.

Uniform Type	Consists of:	When you would wear it:
Alpha	BDU Shirt BDU Pants	Searches.
Bravo	BDU Pants TSAR T-shirt	To be worn around base and at trainings, but not in the field
Charlie	BDU Pants TSAR Polo shirt	Public appearances, attending council/conference meetings, training classes.

Headgear

The following headgear may be worn with the uniform.

1. Cap (baseball style), royal blue in color.
2. Field hat, up to the individual's discretion.
3. Helmet (hard hat, construction workers), royal blue in color, UIAA rated.
4. Helmet (technical, rescue), royal blue in color.

Note: A helmet is a STL requirement. It is the individual's discretion as to the type of helmet.

BDU Shirt

The shirt shall be the two pocket style (without the bottom pockets) **long sleeve** and khaki in color. The shirt shall be of a rip-stop blend of 65/35 cotton and nylon or polyester. The shirt is worn inside the waistband of the pants. For environmental extremes, the shirt may be removed or worn outside the waistband.

BDU Pants

The pants shall be the same color and fabric as the BDU shirt.

Uniform Policy

Belt

The belt is the individual's discretion. It is recommended that the belt be khaki in color, either the military style web belt or the rescue belt.

Footwear

The footwear is the individual's discretion. Waterproof is highly recommended and should have a puncture resistant lug style sole.

T-shirt

The undershirt shall be the TSAR royal blue T-shirt, may be long or short sleeved. During cold weather, thermal underwear (non cotton) is authorized.

Polo shirt

The polo shirt shall be royal blue in color, may be long or short sleeved.

Jacket

The jacket is a three season jacket that is royal blue in color. A three season jacket consists of a nylon shell, body polar fleece lined, and the sleeves fiber filled insulated.

Identification Markings

Cap

- Royal blue in color
- Tidewater Search and Rescue shall be embroidered on the front in Gold.
- Last name or office position may be embroidered in khaki, centered on the back.

Helmet (Construction Worker's)

- Tidewater Search and Rescue reflective tape rockers of black lettering on white background shall be placed on both sides.
- Last name only, printed in black letters on white background shall be centered on the back.

Helmet (Technical, Rescue)

- Tidewater Search and Rescue reflective tape rockers of black lettering on white background shall be placed on both sides.
- Last name only, printed in black letters on white background shall be centered on the back.

BDU Shirt

- A fabric strip, khaki in color, containing the wearer's surname embroidered in black shall be sewn ¼" above the top of the wearer's right shirt pocket.
- A Virginia patch shall be sewn ¼" above and centered with the top of the wearer's left shirt pocket.
- A large TSAR patch shall be sewn on the wearer's left sleeve, centered, 1" from the top.
- A Wilderness First Aid patch may be sewn on wearers right sleeve, centered, 1" from top
- Field grade rocker of STM, STL or FTS may be sewn under TSAR patch on left sleeve, if qualification is held

Uniform Policy

T-shirt

- The T-shirt shall have in yellow, the TSAR logo on the left chest and SEARCH AND RESCUE centered on the back.

Polo Shirt

- The text “Tidewater Search and Rescue” logo shall be embroidered on the left chest.
- Those that hold an office may have their position embroidered just below the logo.

Jacket

- A fabric strip, Navy blue in color, containing the wearer’s surname embroidered in yellow shall be sewn on the wearer’s upper right chest.
- A small TSAR patch shall be sewn on the wearer’s upper left chest.
- Any alterations or additions to an exterior garment meant to shed or repel water may be done so without sewing as written above.

The Uniform Policy is a lot of information of the proper uniform requirements and the correct placement of items, but you are probably wondering where you get these items.

While some items have to be purchased at local stores, TSAR’s Logistics Officer is constantly working to stock everything that a member needs for their uniform. The Logistic Officer or their assistant are the ones to see for all uniform needs such as shirts, hats, patches, etc... Usually they have the items available to purchase at meetings, trainings, and events or you can contact them by e-mail to discuss your needs.

Dispatch

This section and the next section go hand in hand. There will be certain points repeated in both. Although this section is on Dispatch; it is in no way a substitute for the Dispatch class. This is just for each new member to understand the basics of, and the importance of TSAR's Dispatch system.

It is highly recommended that all new members attend the Dispatch Training regardless if you choose to become a dispatcher or not. It will give you an understanding of what happens behind the scenes of a Group Call Out and the importance of communicating with the dispatcher on duty!!!

What exactly is Dispatch?

Dispatch is the life line of the group. There is a dispatcher on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year regardless of holidays, work schedules, or family get-togethers. Within TSAR, there are a few members that have volunteered to be a dispatcher, but we are always in need of more. This allows for a good rotation between the dispatchers in the group.

Once a member is on dispatch they cannot respond to a search!!

How does Dispatch work?

As mentioned in the first section of this packet, TSAR works on what we hope is a flawless communication system. Why is that so important? The quicker we have members on scene means a greater percentage of survival for the subject.

Once the State decides to activate us, the dispatcher on duty receives an alert from VDEM (Virginia Department of Emergency Management). At that time, the dispatcher will alert the group's Active list via text message. With a proper working communication system, the response time is much more rapid, which equals more resources on scene quicker.

Once the dispatcher activates the group, they are the life line between TSAR and VDEM. Every movement that a member responding to a search makes needs to go through the dispatcher until they are safely back home. Staying in communication with the dispatcher is a must regardless of the time of day or night. If you fail to notify the dispatcher, it is their job to locate you and confirm your safety, even if it means calling all your family at 3:00 in the morning to find you. So please keep in touch with the dispatcher!

Responding to Searches

This section is a continuation of the dispatch section. In this section, we will cover the process of responding to a search and what you should do and should not do. Once again, this is a basic overview. The Dispatch Class should be taken for more details.

Here is a breakdown of how a search call out might be, what you would see from the dispatcher, and how you would respond back. In some cases, there might be some old pager codes used. They are only used to save space in text message limits and if possible are not to be used. In the Dispatch Class they are discussed in more detail.

1. VDEM alerts dispatcher on duty. Once the dispatcher takes the alert, a detailed time log is started. Every action taken in TSAR from that point on is recorded.
2. Dispatcher on duty alerts the team through text and email.
3. Once you receive the alert, notify the dispatcher of your availability. You can text, e-mail or call.

📌 It is a must that you include your name in the message.

Once the dispatcher sends out the alert, the next two hours are extremely busy! There is no time to look up numbers to see whose text just came through so that's why you need to include your name in the message. Keep your responses short and to the point if you call. The dispatcher has little time to sit and gab.

4. At this time, you would get your gear loaded and prepare to get on the road. A number of messages may continue to come though while you are getting ready.
5. Once you are ready to leave for the search let the dispatcher know.
6. Once the dispatcher has a number of members responding, they notify VDEM of how many and estimated arrival times and their certifications. Each dispatcher has a good idea of the time it would take to get to pretty much anywhere in the state, so don't be surprised if you are called or texted to check your status.
7. After arriving at base send a message or call dispatch. This confirms you have arrived safe and sound and the dispatcher can let VDEM know you are on scene.
8. At this time check in at base, and then do a personal assessment. If you are tired from the drive, let base know you need to rest.
9. If there is a find, the group would get a message that looks like this:
10. If you need to leave the search for any reason whether you have to go to work, are just burned out, a find was made etc... you first sign out at base and then do another personal assessment. If you are sleepy and decide to sleep a couple of hours or you are fine and ready to leave, notify dispatch and keep them informed of what you're doing.
11. After you are on the road, the dispatcher might call just to hear your voice to see if you sound tired or groggy and may suggest that you pull over to get some rest.
12. When you get back home, let dispatch know that you arrived.
13. Once all members are home safe and sound, the dispatcher will inform VDEM that all the team is home and accounted for and then they will close dispatch.

Following are examples of text messages you would receive and send:

Dispatcher: 333 full callout Bedford County, Missing 18yo white male missing since 1800. Respond back with availability.

Member: Can respond, will notify when leaving house. Joe Smith-54

Dispatcher: VA033-12 base address 1111 Broad St. Take 64W to 460W to Rt. 43 go N for 2 miles. Turn right in Fire station, go to back.

Dispatcher: RA is Capt. Crunch phone # 804-555-5555

Responding to Searches

Dispatcher: Weather for Bedford clear and cool high in the 50, No chance of rain

Member: Joe leaving house 2200, will notify when arrive at base.

Dispatcher: Drive safe will notify if any changes

Member: Joe at base 0100.

Dispatcher: VA-33-12 Bedford County Status 2, stand down.

Member: Joe leaving base 0530

Or

Member: Joe signed out of base going to take a nap before leaving. Will notify when leaving.

Dispatch response might be:

Dispatch: Message received please drive safe, notify if need to stop

Or

Dispatch: Message received; get plenty of rest before getting on the road Let me know when leaving.

Member: Joe home safe and sound 0800.

Dispatch: Thank you for your response, sleep tight.

Dispatcher: VA033-12 888 dispatch is now closed thanks to all that responded.

At that time dispatch will officially be closed.

After Action Report (AAR)

After Action Report (AAR)

After you return from a search, it is your responsibility to fill out an AAR. The AAR is a final, detailed report comprised from field notes and activities relating to your involvement with a search. It is the official report that you turn in to the group that documents your activity from the time of being called out to the time you returned home.

 **Until the report is turned in, you don't officially get credit for responding.**

The report should be completed as soon as possible while the details are still fresh in your mind. In the report, be as detailed as possible. Add in all maps, pictures, forms and lessons learned in addition to the details of your activity on a task team. But remember, just include the facts. Do not add personal feelings or opinions in the report, just what you did from start to finish, remember it's a possibility this document could used in court some point in time.

The AAR is a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that works as a question and answer form. It has the important questions already on the sheet and you just have to answer the questions. Make sure to follow the correct procedure for each cell. Some are case sensitive and have to be entered in a specific format, especially dates. Your hours and mileage totals are automatically calculated for you as long as the data is entered correctly.

An example of an After Action Report (AAR):

TSAR After-Action Report Page 1 of 2

The after-action report has been submitted. Click on the print button to print a copy for your records or close this window to complete.

Tidewater Search and Rescue

PERSONAL AFTER-ACTION REPORT

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GENERAL AAR INFORMATION:

Member Name: Kevin Brewer Date AAR Written: Aug-22-2011

Activity Type:

INCIDENT INFORMATION:

Search Dates: Aug-20-2011 Mission # VA049-11
through
Aug-20-2011

Location of Search: Caroline Co, VA Notified by: VDEM

Search IC: Search result: Status 1

IC Contact #

SUBJECT INFORMATION:

Name: Age: 2

Subject Description: Missing 2 y/o child

ACTIVITIES/FUNCTIONS PERFORMED AT SEARCH:

While enroute to training event in SW VA, I was made aware of missing child search spooling up in Caroline Co. As our route was taking us just south of the location I contact mark E at VDEM and asked if TSAR could be activated for search and we would divert our travel to mission base. Mark stated consider yourselves activated and we started the clock. 5 miles later we were notified by Mark E that the child was found safe and sound and we were stood down.

TRAVEL INFORMATION:

Left from home: Aug-20-2011 08:45	Time at search (hours): 0.5
Arrived at search: Aug-20-2011 09:15	Time on scene (hours): 0
Left from search: Aug-20-2011 09:15	Number of Tasks: 0
Arrived back at home: Aug-20-2011 09:15	Travel time (hours): 0.5
	Total miles (round trip): 5

LESSONS LEARNED:

Always have your gear with you because you never know when a search may spool up.

Log Book/Mileage Book

There are 3 types of books that need to be kept in TSAR. Two are a recommendation and the third is a requirement.

1. Log Book
2. Mileage Book
3. State Task Book

Log Book

Although TSAR is an all-volunteer group, we are still considered to be professionals and must always represent TSAR in that manner. A log book helps you represent yourself in just that way. A personal Log Book is just that, personal. It is your book, and you organize it and maintain it as you wish.

It is a detailed description of your personal involvement in missions, trainings, and SAR events. The importance of maintaining a log book is to provide creditability in the rare chance you are summoned to court. Yes that's right, I said court. It is proof that you not only participated in SAR related events, but have kept detailed records of the event.

It lists topics such as what you did, lessons learned, techniques used, objectives that were met, etc... It shows a consistency of continuing to progress and perfect the training and professionalism that you possess.

If you have to provide proof in court that you follow certain standards, you will be able to show a timeline of training to those standards over months and years. Your Log Book does not necessarily have to be a physical book. Like I said, it is yours. It can be an electronic book kept on your computer.

Some points to consider though. If it's an actual notebook, make sure it is loose leaf style so that in the event of going to court you can give them just the section they need instead of the whole book, and they will take the whole book!

If it's done on the computer, make sure it is backed up on a thumb drive. Once again you can print the section they need or copy the entire book to another thumb drive and give that to them.

Regardless of which way you choose, be consistent on the way you fill it out. It can be in the form of a journal or in a questionnaire where you fill in the answers, but maintain the format.

Some of the items you might add in a log book besides the typical who, what, when and where are:

- Copy of field Notes
- Copy of Maps
- Copy of Task Forms (TAFs)
- Copy of AAR
- Copies of any paperwork given to you, and so on...

You can get as detailed as you wish with whatever information you chose to add. Just remember the more detailed and professionally organized log you have, gives an attorney less ammunition against you in court to disprove your creditability.

Log Book/Mileage Book

Mileage Book

The next book that is a recommendation to keep is a mileage book. Once again it can be an actual book or a computer file. Why is this important? Well for one you can claim the mileage you travel on your taxes. You're a volunteer and every mile you travel for trainings or searches is a deduction. But you don't just calculate miles in the book; you log all activity and expenses from miles, to gas, hours, gear cost etc... A columned pad is ideal for a mileage book, but once again it is your book. Design it as you wish. A typical mileage book might look like this:

March 2011

Date	Event	Miles R/T	Gas	Hotels	Training	Equipment	Hours
12	Land/Nav FLSP	36	\$20.00				6
19	VA-44-11	398	\$160.00	\$55.00			31
23	Crime scene presentation	223	\$110.00	\$60.00	\$40.00	\$20.00 book	16

At the end of each month, you can total you columns, and at the end of the year you can total your months. This gives you a running account of the money spent, hours that were dedicated and of course the miles you drove for the entire year, and eventually your entire career with TSAR, as the years go by.

Task Book

The state Task Book is a **REQUIREMENT!**

It must be kept and continually updated to allow for easier recertification of your state qualifications. You are required to keep a book for every state certification you hold.

The Task Book is actually not a book, but more of a form that you document your trainings and searches on. It will be signed by an official in the group every time you attend training proving that you are training to the states standards. It is an important document that you will have to keep tabs on for 3 years, the average recertification time for state. You will get the Task Book once you achieve a State Certification.

Gear

It seems no matter where you go, different searches, trainings, special SAR events, etc... there are always discussions about gear. Wherever there are search and rescue persons around, eventually the topic of the newest, latest, greatest gadget and gizmo will come up.

Bottom line - you are required to have what is known as the 10 essentials that were listed in the COQ section. (They will be listed again at the end of this section.)

As you progress through the State certifications, the 10 essentials list is added to and then that is what you are required to have to be certified at that level. Now with that being said, you can add to your gear anything that makes your job easy and allows you to be more proficient at it.

It has been mentioned before; your personal gear is yours. You have to carry it and you have to use it, so use what works for you and don't worry about what the next person has. You want your gear comfortable and easily organized. You will be carrying it for long periods of time. You don't want to be fighting an uncomfortable backpack all night or fumbling around for spare batteries at 3:00 am standing in a swamp.

You, like so many before you, will go through a list of numerous types of gear trying to find what works for you the best and what does not. And unfortunately, the list never ends because they keep making new stuff to try. The best advice would be to keep it simple and light. Only carry what you feel you absolutely have to have. Carry items that can be used for multi-purpose uses, or that use the same battery size, anything that can lighten the load, but doesn't hinder your ability to be a functional member on a task team.

Before spending a lot of hard earned money on items that don't work just to have them sit in a closet, do yourself a favor and talk to the veterans. Talk to the ones that have been around awhile. Chances are they have already put what you're thinking of buying to the test, and will be able to stop you from wasting your time and money.

Don't get caught up in glitter and glitz; stay with quality and field proven items. We, as Wilderness Search and Rescue personnel, go places and do things that most people try to avoid. While most would try to walk around even the smallest briar patch, we are expected to go in places that would shred most of what is called extreme outfitter gear.

You will find yourself with a couple of different packs and tubs of gear that you will swap out as the seasons change.

The number one piece of equipment that you should work on getting, regardless of the cost, is a good quality pair of boots. We do a lot of walking in Search and Rescue, over various terrain conditions, so it is an absolute must to have a comfortable, well-fitting pair of boots. The last thing you want to become is a liability to your task team. Boots that produce blisters or are heavy and tire your legs, turns you into just that, a liability. You will not be of any use to help your team or the subject at that point.

Gear Essentials

- Backpack large enough for daypack use
- Appropriate clothing and footwear for both fair and foul weather
- One quart minimum canteen or water bottle
- Two day supply of quick energy food (VDEM states 1)
- Whistle (prefer nonmetallic and non "pea" style – both freeze in winter)
- Compass (Silva or Brunton preferred)
- Headlamp with a set of spare batteries and bulb.
- One other alternate source of light with spare batteries & bulb
- Personal First Aid Kit

Gear

- Minimum 2 pair of Nitrile examination gloves
- At least 5 large (30 gal), heavy duty leaf bags (VDEM states 1)
- Waterproof matches or disposable lighter and candle protected from moisture (VDEM omits the candle)
- Storm Shelter (can be items already in pack such as garbage bag)
- A good knife (but not a large “Rambo” knife) (not a VDEM Requirement)
- Pen, Pencil and paper (not a VDEM Requirement)
- Delorme Street Atlas of Virginia (to be carried in your car, not your backpack)
- Yellow safety vest w/ 3M Reflective Tape

Additional Personal Items (Suggested, but not Required)

- Handheld radio
- Toilet paper
- Zip-lock bags
- Moleskin
- Gaitors
- Sunscreen
- Signal mirror
- Parachute cord
- Small notebook & pen (required for COQ by TSAR, but suggested for STM by VDEM)
- Insect repellent
- Water purification tablets or filter system
- GPS Unit – Know how to use this and have it set up properly before putting it in your pack!
- Safety Glasses – polycarbonate lens rated to ANSI standard Z87.1
- Gloves with leather palms
- **Pruning shears (for cutting yourself out of the briars and brambles)**

Getting Involved with the Group

You made the decision to join TSAR for one reason or another. Maybe it was to help others or it was just a way to get outdoors. For whatever reason, at one time it was important enough for you to choose to dedicate your time to do it.

And if it was that important, then why wouldn't you want to be involved? Some folks join and have very little involvement with the group. Some just want to be able to say they're with search and rescue, while some even complain about having to do things with the group.

There is only one word for that- "Why".

TSAR is an all-volunteer group. Nobody forced you to join and nobody is forcing you to stay. So why wouldn't you want to be actively involved with a group that you chose to be a member of?

TSAR is, if nothing else, an opportunity group. There are a vast number of trainings, events, fundraisers, social gatherings and of course searches and you should try and be a part of as many of them as you can.

Getting involved with the group just makes being a member that much better.

Meetings

The General Membership Meeting (GMM) is the main information session for the group. Anything that is going on within the group and the SAR world outside the group gets passed during the GMM. The GMM is on the third Thursday of each month with the exception of December when no meeting is held since December is a busy month. Go ahead and mark these Thursdays on your calendar for the rest of the year to help remind you.

Trainings

There are probably more training opportunities within TSAR than with any other group in the state!

The amount of trainings and the knowledge from the instructors providing those trainings, is just one of the factors that keeps TSAR recognized as a leader in the SAR community.

TSAR offers a wide variety of trainings from Land Navigation to running Base Operations and everything in between. The opportunity to train is only hindered by your willingness to participate.

But why should you attend training on running base if you don't want to work at base? That question is asked all the time, and the answer is always the same "to be a better searcher". How is that you ask? It's simple. TSAR members are offered trainings to allow them to be multi-functional at a search. That way you are utilized to do what is best for the search and the subject. Even if you have no desire to work at base, knowing how base operates gives you a better understanding of why you are being tasked to do what you are doing. This in turn makes you a better searcher.

Also, there is always the chance when you arrive on scene that you might just be the most experienced person there at the time. So try and take advantage of every training offered, if nothing else it is knowledge that is nice to have when needed.

Fundraisers

TSAR is an all-volunteer non-profit organization. That means that our financial survival relies solely on membership dues, donations, and fundraisers.

All the equipment that TSAR owns, from the response trailer to the gear inside it, was obtained either by donations or from money raised through fundraisers or dues.

TSAR does a number of fundraisers throughout the year. We have our annual car parking in October and then a number of beer pouring events at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront.

They are an extremely fun time for all, even though they're a lot of work. Getting involved with the group also means volunteering to help out at these events. The more members that attend to help, the easier it is for all. Each event requires a certain number of participants and in turn a donation is made to the group.

Another form of fundraising that you can participate in, is getting involved with the groups Grant writing team. The Grant writing team is members of the group, which process the special skills needed to research and write grants. They dedicate a few hours a week trying to locate and apply for grants that are available for non-profit groups.

Events

Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR)

One acronym that you will hear over and over is GSAR (Ground Search and Rescue). A GSAR is a State sponsored training event where you can attend classes to achieve a State certification. These classes are mandatory 50 hour events that are divided over two weekends, and are necessary to achieve the certification of STL/STM/FTS.

Black Diamond SAR Invitational

Have you ever heard of the “Swamp Bunny”?

When members talk about the Swamp Bunny, they are referring to TSAR’s competition team. What competition you ask? The Black Diamond Competition; Every year Black Diamond Search and Rescue holds an annual SAR competition at Hungry Mother State Park. The competition consists of teams from around the state coming together to compete in a series of stages of Search and Rescue events. The stages are set up to test the team’s skills in Land Navigation, Clue Awareness, Tracking, Semi-Tech, Team Building, and Fire Starting.

TSAR’s Annual Overnight Bivouac

Another annual event is TSAR’s overnight bivouac which is always a fantastic time for all that attend. It is the time where you can really see what gear works and what does not. It is a practice on surviving strictly with what is in your pack, and to hone your skills in field craft.

It teaches how to be adaptable and make do handling the changing conditions of day to night and back to day including, temperature, rain, bugs, and animals. And by morning most are glad that it was for only one night. The glow from the neon lights from the IHOP sign the next morning is as much a warming sight as is their coffee. The bivouac always happen about the same time each year, around the end of March, and with the weather in Virginia you’re not sure what to expect, so make sure you plan your schedule to be there.

Virginia Search and Rescue Council Conference (VASARCO)

VASARCO is a weekend event usually in April and held near Appomattox, VA. During the weekend you have the option of attending many different, informative classes. There are even classes for children so that you can make the weekend a family affair. Following are some examples of classes:

- Initial Response Actions
- Critical Incident Stress Management for SAR
- Autism and Alzheimer’s Searches
- Patient Packaging
- Semi-Tech Rescue Operations
- Wilderness Medical Care
- Crime Scene Preservation, Basic Instruction
- Helicopter SAR Capabilities w/LZ Safety
- Street Smarts for the Forest Traveler
- MAP-Tech Workshop
- Snakes of Virginia
- Multiple Tracking sessions
- K-9 sessions—Trailing; Human Remains; Scent Theory

**This we do...
So That Others may Live**



**Thank you for volunteering your time
and for making a difference!**