



Basic Search and Rescue

Vermont Dept. Of Public Safety

This course was developed by the Maine Association for Search and Rescue and adapted with their permission and cooperation to meet the requirements of basic SAR training in Vermont.

Welcome to the Vermont Basic Search and Rescue course!

Class Content

- Introduction to SAR
- Statutory & Legal Aspects of SAR
- Searcher Safety and Health
- SAR Clothing
- Ready Pack
- Search Operations & Tactics
- Clue Awareness & Scene Preservation
- Rescue Equipment and Patient Evacuation
- SAR Communications
- Helicopter Operations
- Basic Survival & Overnight Bivy
- Land Navigation/Basics of GPS
- Specialty SAR Resources
- Testing

THE PURPOSE OF THIS COURSE IS TO HELP STUDENTS BECOME SAFE AND EFFECTIVE SEARCHERS

Here are the topics that will be covered by the online portion of this course.

Participant Expectations

- You are to study and complete each module during the online class
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- You must pass the written exam at the end with a 70% or better score.

While it is up to you how much you put into this online class, **we strongly encourage you to study each module thoroughly.**

The basics you learn here will be the foundation for the more advanced skills you will learn as a searcher with your unit.

Course Checklist

- You are strongly encouraged to print out the checklist provided on the website to keep track of your progress.
- When you complete the course evaluation the course administrator can and will verify that you have completed each module.

Make a note on your checklist each time you complete a module, then you will know where to start up when you continue.

We have had several students inadvertently miss modules and have to go back and finish them. This is frustrating to the student and time consuming for the course manager/administrator.

BASAR Certificate of Completion

You will receive BASAR certification of completion if:

- You complete this online course according to the expectations
- You achieve a score of 70% or higher in the final written examination
- You successfully complete the in-person session consisting of:
 - Pack Check
 - Land navigation



What is Search And Rescue (SAR)

?

- **Search** is the effort involved in finding the subject
- **Rescue** is the removal of the subject to safety and delivery to the earliest practical point for licensed EMS care & transport
- **Recovery** is the removal of a deceased search subject



It is important to emphasize here that licensed EMS care means two things:

Care of an injured or sick person should be yielded to the highest trained EMS individual on the scene.

Care must be handed off to a Vermont EMS licensed unit (SAR, fire-rescue, ambulance service, etc.) at the soonest practical point both for legal reasons and for the good of the search subject.

Q. How is it that non-licensed individuals could be involved in emergency care during a search?

A. Most searchers have basic first aid, some may have Wilderness First Aid (WFA) but most do not have further medical training. If they are the first at the scene they will provide first aid within the limits of their training and the equipment they have at hand.

Sadly, there are also times when the subject of the search is deceased. We will talk more about this later in this course but if that happens the scene is considered a crime scene and it becomes a matter for a law enforcement agency. They will instruct you if any further assistance is required. Usually this is limited to answering questions as to how you happened to find them and what you might have seen. This will be discussed more in a later module.

Components of SAR Operations

- Preplanning
- Notification
- Planning/Strategy
- Tactics/Operations
- Suspension
- Critique



These are the **components** of how a SAR operation needs to occur to be effective and efficient and give the search subject the best opportunity of survival:

Pre-planning includes training like this course, unit specific training, performance standards, how teams organize and equip themselves, and how the trained search management officials coordinate resources and other aspects on paper to lead to more effective and efficient operations in the field.

Notification is a three tier aspect. First, how entities with legal SAR responsibility are notified (frequently a 911 call); second, how those responsible agencies notify internal resources and external contacts as required; and third, how each volunteer SAR unit mobilizes its members during a callout.

Planning & Strategy are the broad concepts of what the search “picture” should look like and what resources are likely needed to best develop the overall search plan. This includes interview procedures specific to SAR to obtain the best possible information. Resources will include highly trained SAR organizations who have training in lost person behavior and experience in SAR.

Tactics & Operations is how the strategies develop into an actionable plan by the search managers, as to which units to mobilize and when, what areas to search and with what resources, etc.

Suspension is the efficient demobilization of SAR resources from the field. This may occur after the subject has been found, after it is determined that all reasonable efforts have been exhausted, or after information from the ongoing investigation reveals information indicating it is appropriate.

Critique is the after-operation discussion that seeks to clarify issues and improve future operations. This may occur at the search scene before resources depart, or in a more formal setting at a later time. The latter are often referred to as an “AAR” (After Action Review)

L.A.S.T.

SAR Operations generally break into four phases:

- Locate
- Access
- Stabilize
- Transport



L.A.S.T. applies in the field – during the tactics/operations portion. They are the **basic phases that a search takes** once it gets started (note they are different than the previous slide as they apply to how the SAR is conducted.)

***Locate** the search subject (this usually takes the longest)

***Access** to the subject. They may not necessarily be easy to get to and this should **only be attempted if it is safe for the search team members** to do so.

***Stabilize** the patient within the limits of your training and available equipment if there is a need to do so. They could have a physical injury, a medical condition or simply be suffering from the trauma of being lost.

***Transport** the subject out of the woods. This may be as simple as assisting them in walking out, or if they are not mobile they will need to be moved to safety by carrying on a litter, in a helicopter or by other motorized vehicle (4WD, snowmobile, ATV, etc.).

So...Where do I fit in ?

- Individuals are the key to successful SAR operations

One ineffective individual can negate the planning and management activities of dozens of people and searchers.



SAR is very much reliant on trained individuals like us, some with generalized capacity, others with specialties, each contributing to enhance the SAR effort.

It is crucial that every person involved in Search and Rescue is aware of the damage that can be done by even one participant turning up to the job ill prepared, poorly trained, overtired or maybe mildly intoxicated, while keen to help and feeling like they “need” to be there. While GPS tracking now makes it possible to very accurately determine ‘holes’ in a search area, the only way to ensure the tracked ground is properly covered is for every single searcher to be functioning effectively.

One person that is not performing to their fullest capability may miss a clue that would otherwise have quickly led searchers to the subject.

What does the Incident Commander expect of me ?

- **Organization** – you arrive as part of a unit and work within that unit except as otherwise assigned
- **Discipline**
- **Cooperation**
- **Communications**
- **High Performance Standards**
- **Self Sufficiency**

The search manager is called the Incident Commander (IC), regardless of the Agency.

You will receive more on this structure later and in the two FEMA courses you will need to take (if you haven't already – see links on main course page).

For now, let's end this module with what that person in charge expects of each of us when we commit to respond to the scene.

Organization – while there may be some SAR resources in the form of individuals outside of a group, effective SAR management depends on well-organized and trained groups or teams

Q. What do you think are the risks, if any, caused by persons acting as individuals outside their teams?

A. "Self-deployed" or untrained people, while meaning well, may destroy clues and/or interfere with other teams that are searching an area. They are also a very inefficient use of resources as they are not doing tasks coordinated with other efforts.

What does the Incident Commander expect of me ?

- Organization
- Discipline – You and your team are expected to maintain all your certification standards, training, and equipment in good working order
- Cooperation
- Communications
- High Performance Standards
- Self Sufficiency

Discipline here means ensuring you are ready to deploy to a search armed with the proper training, rest, clothes and equipment. It also means not getting 'creative' by searching where you think the person may be instead of covering your assigned area and sticking to search protocol.

Discipline is in a large part, "active looking" for clues. We will cover this in another module as it can be the difference between finding a subject alive and safe or not. A lack of discipline could cause you to become part of the problem instead of part of the solution and gravely endanger yourself, other searchers or the search subject.

What does the Incident Commander expect of me ?

- Organization
- Discipline
- Cooperation – Search Management takes a lot of work to be effective. Your patience and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.
- Communications
- High Performance Standards
- Self Sufficiency

Cooperation - You are expected to cooperate with the search's command while operating in the field, carrying out your assignments precisely and to the best of your ability. However, no-one expects you to accept a field assignment when the job is beyond your training and capability or if you are impaired by tiredness or illness. **In fact, the expectation is that you will speak up and decline the assignment under such conditions.**

Sometimes there are delays in receiving assignments after arriving on scene and checking in. Your cooperation in trusting that the Incident Commander (IC) is working to develop the best possible plan for the search and being patient is always greatly appreciated. Incident Command must process a large amount of information and generate a plan to cover the highest probability areas first and must avoid giving assignments prematurely.

What does the Incident Commander expect of me ?

- Organization
- Discipline
- Cooperation
- Communications – When you arrive, check in, provide what skills you have, participate in briefs/debriefs and use proper radio etiquette
- High Performance Standards
- Self Sufficiency

Communications –In SAR clear, concise communications are essential. When you are given an assignment, **repeat back what you understand** to ensure you got it right. The search subject's life might very well depend on your understanding your assignment clearly.

When using SAR radios we do not use Law Enforcement 10 codes (like 10-4 to mean ok) as they frequently differ from agency to agency. We use plain English and keep the "chatter" to a minimum. When you communicate with the IC, make it brief and clear; think it out before you key the microphone.

Cell phones frequently do not work in areas we search in but use the same approach if you have to call the IC on your cell phone.

It is important to maintain confidentiality. If you have found the subject or potential clues call the IC by cell phone if possible. It is likely that outsiders will be monitoring with scanners and radios trying to hear what's going on. IC must be the point of contact for the press and family, not what they hear over a radio transmission.

What does the Incident Commander expect of me ?

- Organization
- Discipline
- Cooperation
- Communications
- High Performance Standards – Be prepared to do what your team advertises you can do and do it to the best of your abilities.
- Self Sufficiency

Certifications such as this course, from NASAR (National Association for Search and Rescue) and MRA (Mountain Rescue Association) all help to assure that a minimum threshold of performance will be reached in the field.

Be sure you arrive at the search with all the skills of your certification level and any equipment that goes along with that.

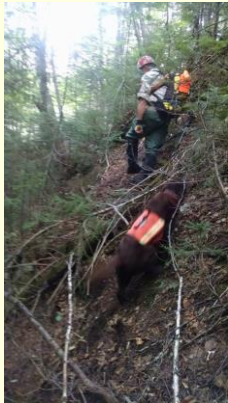
What does the Incident Commander expect of me ?

- Organization
- Discipline
- Cooperation
- Communications
- High Performance Standards
- Self Sufficiency – Always bring a 12 hour and 24 hour pack. Be prepared to take care of yourself at the command post if no support is available.

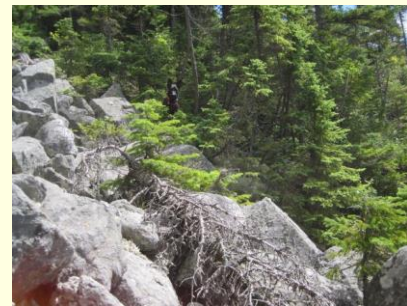
Simply put, the more self-supportive you are, the less others have to spend time focusing on you instead of the mission at hand and the more flexible you are to be used in the most effective manner possible.

When you show up for a search you should always have 12 hour pack and 24 hour pack capabilities with you. The ready pack will be discussed in a future module. It is also a good idea to have some food, water, and a sleeping bag in your car in case the search goes on for another day and you need to rest and eat between assignments. Although this is rare and sometimes food may be provided it is always better to have some with you just in case as some searches are frequently a long way from a town.

Stay Within Your Capabilities



People get lost in the darnedest places and some of the nastiest weather!



When you deploy on a search be sure that you are physically fit enough and have the proper equipment to be safe and cover your area properly. If you have concerns bring them up to your team leader or the person giving you the assignment.

Not every search is for every person so don't get out searching and find out it is beyond your capabilities.

Although most are not as bad as shown here, some do have significant elevation gains, rock scrambles, water hazards, ice, extremely thick brush or just plain cold weather.

WHEN IN DOUBT ASK.

Congratulations, you have finished this module

You may close this window to return to the main course and select another module to complete.

Be sure you keep track on your course checklist so you know which modules you have completed.