

Provincial Emergency Program

**VOLUNTEER POLICY &
PROCEDURES**

Interim Policy Effective September 8, 2008

Utilization of SAR Volunteers for SAR Activities Policy

The following replaces Policy 2.17 Search and Rescue.

REASON FOR CHANGE:

The Provincial Emergency Program is undertaking a review of all current policies and policy bulletins. This review and the subsequent restructuring and rewriting of PEP policy will require some time. In order to add Fire Services as a tasking agency, it was felt that a rewrite of the Policy 2.17 Search and Rescue should be undertaken.

This change is being made to assist Fire Services within their area of responsibility to effect rescues where SAR volunteer resources can utilize their techniques as approved in PEP policy.

GENERAL

The Provincial Emergency Program is responsible for facilitating and coordinating a provincial land and inland-water volunteer SAR capability¹ and providing assistance in the activation and coordination of community based SAR volunteer and volunteer SAR organization responses when requested by local authorities, provincial agencies and/or federal departments. Additionally the Provincial Emergency Program will:

1. Coordinate and commit, or recommend the commitment of resources that may be necessary during the response and recovery phases of a major emergency or disaster; and
2. provide available search and rescue resources to requesting local authority, agency and/or department; and

¹ British Columbia Emergency Program Management Regulation, Schedule II

3. conduct or coordinate training in emergency preparedness, response and recovery to ensure that PEP staff, PEP volunteers, municipal authorities and other government emergency personnel has the necessary skills to effectively respond in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Note: This policy outlines the use of SAR Volunteers for SAR activities only and is not intended to include local authorities utilizing SAR volunteers for activities other than search and rescue, ie. as emergency service volunteers. Please see Policy 00.07 Emergency Service Volunteers for more information.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

This policy is intended to provide clarification and guidance on how Search and Rescue Volunteers can be utilized in SAR activities. This policy provides direction to: requesting agencies, PEP staff and SAR volunteers.

DEFINITIONS

The British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS)	A comprehensive management framework that ensures a coordinated and organized provincial response and recovery to all emergency incidents. The broad spectrum of components of BCERMS includes operations and control management, qualifications, technology, training and publications.
Fire Protection Area	The physical boundary, established by a local government, that the Fire Services will provide coverage within. Permission by local authority is required to go outside the fire protection area to provide services.
Incident Commander	The individual responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site. The term 'Incident Commander' includes Unified Command. During SAR operations in British Columbia the role of the Incident Commander is filled by a representative of the police, BC Ambulance Service, Fire Services, Coroner or Parks Canada.
Incident	An occurrence, either human caused or by natural phenomena, that requires action by response personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and the environment to reduce economic and social losses.

Incident Command System	Is recognized as an effective system for managing emergencies. The Province of BC has adopted ICS as the standard for emergency site management as part of its BC Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS).
Licensed Medical Service Providers	BC College of Physicians and Surgeons Emergency Medical Assistant Licensing Board Register Midwives Association of BC
Public Safety Lifeline (PSL) Discipline	A group of PEP or local authority registered* volunteers in one of the following disciplines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Search and Rescue (SAR) - Emergency Social Services (ESS) - Emergency Radio Communications - PEP Air - Road Rescue *registration provides for third party liability and Workers Compensation Coverage.
Public Safety Lifeline Organization	A PEP-recognized provincial, federal or community based society, or unincorporated group established to support volunteers engaged in preparing for and responding to emergencies, and/or providing advice to government.
Requesting Agency	The agency with the jurisdiction/responsibility for a search and/or rescue.
Search And Rescue	The combined activities involved in searching for, rescuing or recovering any persons who become lost, stranded or injured, generally while in the out-of-doors.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Search and Rescue within British Columbia falls into three basic categories:

- Air Search and Rescue
- Marine Search and Rescue
- Land and Inland Waters Search and Rescue

Information from the general public regarding missing, injured or stranded persons must be referred to a responsible government agency and/or department. That agency will determine the appropriate response – agencies include: Police, BC Ambulance Service, Canadian Forces & Canadian Coast Guard, Parks Canada, Coroner and Fire Services.

All requests for SAR volunteer resources must be initiated by the responsible provincial government ministry/agency or Federal government department. The PEP Emergency Coordination Centre will then provide a task number to the SAR team when the request for service or support is within PEP Policy. This process ensures decision accountability and timely access to valuable volunteer assistance.

Provincial Emergency Program

Upon activation of a volunteer SAR team, PEP provides third party liability and workers compensation coverage, reimbursement of operational expenses, and repair and/or replacement of equipment in accordance with current PEP policy.

Decisions specific to the commitment of resources in support of an authorized requesting agency will be made by either the PEP Regional Manager or the PEP Duty Manager. The activities detailed in the following table have been identified as requiring specialized training.

Activities which are not specifically listed as “Eligible” under this Policy statement should be considered as “Ineligible” under PEP task. If a SAR Team has any doubt about the eligibility of an activity or a request for support, they should contact the PEP Regional Manager for guidance. Should specialized resources or activities which are deemed “Ineligible” be required to complete a task under this policy, the PEP Regional Manager must be consulted for options.

When deploying SAR resources in support of a requesting agency, it is assumed that the requesting agency has responsibility for ensuring appropriate use of volunteers, and that safety practices and standard Incident Command System resource deployment handover protocols are followed (ie the requesting agency should not be asking the SAR Volunteers or the Team to take undue risks or place themselves in a position of liability for which they have no coverage or protection).

TASK ELIGIBLE Search Activities (for appropriate requesting agencies)

- wilderness search
- urban search
- surface searching on water
- equine search
- dog search
- evidence search²
- air search

² Workers compensation and liability coverage only. No expense reimbursement by PEP.

TASK ELIGIBLE Rescue Activities (for appropriate requesting agencies)

- avalanche rescue
- swift water rescue
- medical rescue³
- cave rescue
- rope rescue
- helicopter rescue
- mountain rescue
- domestic animal rescue⁴

INELIGIBLE SAR Activities:

PEP task numbers do not support the following activities, even when a valid task number is otherwise in place:

- underwater search and recovery involving the use of diving apparatus by volunteers.⁵
- hazardous material response and/or cleanup
- tree rescue (arboreal rescue)⁶
- fire suppression (structural or wild land)
- searching for potentially dangerous individuals (people who may be armed with weapons, people who may be violent, people engaged in criminal activities, people fleeing from the police, etc)
- transporting BCAS patients to medical care (riding in ambulances, driving ambulances, etc)
- BCAS First Responder patient move assists or lifts.⁷
- Transporting police or other law enforcement or regulatory agencies involved with search/apprehension of dangerous individuals/ criminal investigations
- Transporting fire department crews engaged in fire response activities

PEP task numbers provide only WCB coverage for the following activity, and only when the SAR volunteer or team is engaged in a task eligible activity (liability coverage is provided under the Good Samaritan Act for persons providing services as a licensed medical service provider in BC)

- provision of any licensed medical services

NOTE: The provision of “first aid” by a trained SAR Volunteer is covered for both WCB and Liability Insurance under PEP’s volunteer insurance program.

³ The rescue & transportation of an injured person to BCAS care)

⁴ Workers compensation and liability coverage only. No expense reimbursement by PEP.

⁵ The use of Side Scan Sonar require permission from Pep for this activity.

⁶ Unless provided written permission from PEP for this specific activity.

⁷ Where the BCAS medical assessment indicates additional First Responder resources are required.

Police

The investigation of a missing person(s) and of suspicious occurrences within the province of British Columbia is the responsibility of the police department having jurisdiction. Disoriented, lost, stranded, overdue and other individuals in distress are also the responsibility of the Police. Domestic animal rescue for humane or public safety reasons are also the responsibility of the Police. The Police may request SAR volunteer resources through the PEP Emergency Coordination Centre for the following eligible activities.

Eligible Land and Inland Water Search

- for missing persons - are initiated by the Police Department of the jurisdiction.
- for persons in distress (without injury) - are initiated by the Police Department of the jurisdiction.
- SAR Volunteer resources can assist police in searching for and gathering evidence related to criminal or investigative evidence searches. Police services are responsible for reimbursement of all expenses related to evidence searches.

Ineligible SAR Volunteer Activities

- searching for potentially dangerous individuals
- pre-hospital medical rescue beyond first aid stabilization to ensure minimal injury while en route to BCAS.
- Searching for and recovery of human remains
- Ineligible volunteer activities as listed

BC Ambulance Service

The BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) is responsible for pre-hospital care and transportation of patients to medical facilities. The BCAS may request SAR volunteer resources through the PEP Emergency Coordination Centre for the following activities.

Eligible Land and Inland Water Medical Rescue

- Land and inland water medical rescues.

Ineligible SAR Volunteer Activities

- searching for missing persons
- non-medical rescue
- patient lifts, medical response calls (First Responder) and/or transport of subject(s) where BCAS personnel can access the subject(s) as per BCAS policy
- domestic animal rescue
- Ineligible volunteer activities as listed

Canadian Forces & Canadian Coast Guard

Air Search and Rescue is the responsibility of the Canadian Forces. Marine Search and Rescue is the responsibility of the Canadian Coast Guard. Air and Marine SAR is initiated and coordinated by the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC). The JRCC may request SAR volunteer resources through the PEP Emergency Coordination Centre.

Eligible Air and Marine Search and Rescue

- Application of any of the SAR techniques in support of response to a downed aircraft or persons or vessels in distress.

Ineligible SAR Volunteer Activities

- evidence search
- domestic animal rescue
- Ineligible volunteer activities as listed

Parks Canada

Land and inland water SAR, within national parks, is the responsibility of Parks Canada. Parks Canada may request SAR volunteer resources through the PEP Emergency Coordination Centre for the following activities.

Eligible Land and Inland Water Search & Rescue

- for missing, Injured and persons in distress, within national parks are initiated by Parks Canada.

Ineligible SAR Volunteer Activities

- land and inland water search & rescue outside of jurisdiction.
- evidence search
- domestic animal rescue
- Ineligible volunteer activities as listed

Coroner Services

The Coroner may request SAR volunteer resources through the PEP Emergency Coordination Centre for the following activities.

Eligible Search and Recovery of Human Remains

- Searching for and recovery of human remains, under the direction of the Coroner, by SAR volunteers utilizing approved search and rescue techniques.

Ineligible SAR Volunteer Activities

- domestic animal rescue
- Ineligible volunteer activities as listed

Fire Services

Fire Services may request the assistance of SAR volunteer resources to effect rescues where the SAR volunteers can utilize techniques approved in PEP policy.

Eligible Land and Inland Water Rescue

- may be initiated by Fire Services within Fire Protection Areas
- application of any of the SAR skills in support of response to an injured or stranded person in distress.

Ineligible SAR Volunteer Activities

- land and inland water SAR outside of Fire Protection Area.
- domestic animal rescue
- searching
- Ineligible volunteer activities as listed