
FACTSHEET

March 27, 2017

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Emergency Management BC

Ground Search and Rescue

Ground search and rescue volunteers (GSAR) demonstrate a steadfast commitment to the safety of families and communities. The Province of B.C. will continue to support GSAR organizations and, in turn, the overall safety of British Columbians.

Facts:

- On average, GSAR groups in B.C. respond to over 1,500 incidents per year, British Columbia has 80 active GSAR groups, with approximately 2,500 unpaid volunteers who donate more than 100,000 hours per year training, scouring the trails and forests, rappelling into steep ravines and weathering the worst of the elements to help others.
- GSAR groups in B.C. are run by volunteers and their responses are funded by Emergency Management BC, including aircraft and insurance costs. GSAR groups supplement this by accessing provincial community gaming grants and through local fundraising efforts.
- Primary response agencies such as the police, ambulance service, coast guard, military and fire services have the legislative authority for emergency response. Requests for GSAR volunteer resources can only be initiated by these agencies.
- GSAR groups also provide support to local communities during emergencies by helping distribute information during evacuations and other critical response activities.
- British Columbia is known for its beautiful backcountry and the best way to enjoy it is in a safe and responsible manner. British Columbians are urged to learn more about the necessary outdoor safety tools and techniques that could save a life. Outdoor enthusiasts can help themselves and others by being informed, planning ahead when hiking and staying avalanche safe. More information can be found at these websites:
 - www.AdventureSmart.ca and,
 - www.avalanche.ca
- The Province covers operational costs for training, equipment and all deployments, more than \$9-million in 2015/2016.
 - This includes helicopter contracting and fuelling, mileage and meal costs for volunteers, liability insurance, workers compensation benefits and the administrative costs for the BC Search and Rescue Association (BCSARA).
- In March 2017, the Province announced \$5.5 million in funding to support SAR's critical incident stress management programs and to upgrade technical certifications, as well as fund the continuation of the SAR prevention program, AdventureSmart. It will also support the acquisition, maintenance and upgrading of equipment, including communications and rescue equipment.
- In 2016, the Province provided \$10-million in additional funding to help provide tools to SAR groups across the province.

- The BC Search and Rescue Association (BCSARA) represents all of the EMBC recognized volunteer GSAR groups in British Columbia. For more information on BCSARA's mission, mandate and services, visit: <http://www.bcsara.com>

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