

## 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage

---

### 2.11.1 General

#### Related Policies:

- 2.02 Task Authorization
- 2.06 Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Safety
- 2.08 Avalanche Search and Rescue
- 2.10 Class D Helicopter Rescue
- 2.12 Search and Rescue
- 2.13 Search and Rescue Night Vision Imaging Systems
- 5.02 Expense Reimbursement

---

### 2.11.2 Definitions

See Terms and Definitions

---

### 2.11.3 Policy Statement

- (1) Emergency Management and Climate Readiness BC (EMCR) may authorize the use of a commercial helicopter in support of search and rescue operations.
- (2) All Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) volunteers engaged in helicopter operations must be trained and/or briefed in safe work procedures in and around helicopters:
  - a) GSAR volunteers must successfully complete the relevant modules of the EMCR approved Helicopter Operations Training Program (Awareness, Hover Entry/Exit) prior to engaging in helicopter operations.
- (3) Only helicopter companies, helicopters, and pilots meeting the minimum requirements as set out in Policy 2.11 Annex: Mandatory Approvals and Certification Requirements shall be utilized in support of search and rescue operations.

---

### 2.11.4 Conditions/Responsibilities

The use of a helicopter for search and rescue operations may be authorized under these conditions:

- (1) The helicopter and company utilized is the most economical yet capable of performing the task. Aircraft availability, appropriately qualified personnel for aircraft type, and approved equipment must be considered.
- (2) Flights will occur during daytime Visual Flight Rule Conditions only, except for GSAR groups approved by EMCR for SAR Night Vision Imaging Systems (NVIS Policy 2.13)

- (3) A minimum of one (1) GSAR volunteer is to be on board the helicopter for inflight duties (spotting, ferrying equipment). Operational field deployments for GSAR using a helicopter will be a minimum of two (2) GSAR volunteers.

### **Responsibilities of requesting agencies:**

- (1) Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), or the police force having jurisdiction, is responsible for all aspects of land and inland water GSAR involving lost, missing, or stranded (uninjured) persons. RCMP helicopters, when reasonably available and appropriate for the assignment, must be used to search by air. Some RCMP helicopters are equipped with Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) capability and should be utilized when available. The operational coordination of such missions is the responsibility of the RCMP through RCMP Air Services.
- (2) BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) is responsible for patient transport when a helicopter can land and shut down (rotors stopped) close enough to a patient that ambulance crews, through normal training techniques, can load the patient into the helicopter for transport. The operational coordination of such missions is the responsibility of BCEHS through the Patient Transfer Coordination Centre.

### **Responsibilities of search and rescue group:**

- (1) The SAR Manager is required to obtain an Air Services Emergency (ASE) number for all helicopter flights.
- (2) If the GSAR group has an approved Helicopter Usage Preplan registered at the applicable EMCR regional office (updated annually), a SAR Manager may utilize up to three (3) hours of commercial helicopter usage for helicopter operations (Policy 2.11), Class D operations (Policy 2.10), and SAR NVIS (Policy 2.13) without first obtaining EMCR Regional Duty Manager (RDM) approval in the following situations:
  - a) Where the subject has entered a fast-moving river or large body of water;
  - b) Weather conditions are likely to cause severe hypothermia;
  - c) Subject is located in potential avalanche terrain (see Policy 2.08 Avalanche Search and Rescue); or
  - d) GSAR volunteers are requested to perform a rescue in a known or reported off-road/wilderness incident requiring specialized rescue skills to affect the safe and expeditious rescue of a subject (see Policy 2.12 Task Eligible GSAR response activities by Requesting Agency. (Table 1)

**NOTE: Helicopter usage in excess of 3 hours under Helicopter Usage Preplan or requested by a GSAR group without an approved Preplan requires approval by the EMCR RDM.**

- (3) A SAR Manager may request helicopter usage with authorization by an EMCR RDM at the time of the task to:
- a) Conduct reconnaissance of potential search areas to determine risks and actions to be taken;
  - b) Conduct an initial search by air (provided an RCMP helicopter is not reasonably available or appropriate for the assignment); and
  - c) Deploy or retrieve GSAR teams and GSAR equipment.

- (4) The EMCR RDM must approve any procedure not expressly listed above.

**Any helicopter hired without the authorization provided within this policy or by an EMCR RDM will not be paid for by EMCR and will be the responsibility of the requesting individual and/or agency.**

---

## 2.11.5 Authorities

N/A

---

### *Original signed by*

---

Madeline L. Maley  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Response Division  
Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness

---

## 2.11.6 Related Documents

- Policy 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage Procedures
- Policy 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage Annex: Mandatory Approvals and Certification Requirements
- Policy 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage FAQs
- Policy 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage Preplan and Worksheet
- Provincial Search and Rescue Operating Guidelines
- EMCR Helicopter Operations Training Program