



2.12 SEARCH AND RESCUE PROCEDURES

2.12.1 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 2.12 Search and Rescue
- 2.12 Annex
- 2.12 Questions and Answers

2.12.2 PURPOSE

To ensure a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities in the provision of Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) services in British Columbia among the providers of those services, government and the public, and will form the basis for an agreement entered into by GSAR Groups, BC Search and Rescue Association (BCSARA) and Emergency Management BC (EMBC).

2.12.3 GENERAL

In British Columbia, GSAR Volunteers provide a critical role in locating lost persons and rescuing those injured, stranded, or deceased in support of Requesting Agencies such as Police, Ambulance, Coroners, and Fire Departments. GSAR Volunteers also assist local authorities by completing tasks such as notification and evacuation of citizens and visitors due to fires, floods and other emergencies. GSAR Volunteers are supported by the Province of British Columbia through EMBC and by the BC Search and Rescue Association (BCSARA).

2.12.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW GSAR GROUPS

Historically GSAR Groups have evolved over time, based on a need seen by Requesting Agencies and GSAR Volunteers. It is important that GSAR Groups are located based on where incidents warrant the required investment of time, effort, and funding over the long term. In order to formalize the initiation and recognition of a Volunteer GSAR Group interested in participating in GSAR Responses, any group wishing to form a new GSAR Group must make an application to EMBC in the prescribed form available from EMBC.

2.12.5 APPROVAL OF GSAR GROUP ENGAGEMENT IN TECHNICAL RESCUE CAPABILITY OR DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL SPECIALTY TEAM

Should a GSAR Group see a demonstrated need for additional Technical Rescue expertise in their response area due to the type and frequency of incidents, they may apply to EMBC for approval to become recognized as having that capability. GSAR Groups wishing to be recognized for having a new capability as described in Appendix 'A' are to make an application in the prescribed form available from EMBC.



2.12.6 FORMATION OF REGIONAL SPECIALTY TEAM

1. Approval of Regional Specialty Teams (e.g. rope rescue, swiftwater rescue) will be by application to EMBC for review based on a demonstrated need. Forms are available from EMBC.
2. A written agreement between participating GSAR Groups and EMBC will be established to prescribe how callouts and responses will be conducted, training and recurrency requirements, and details on how funding and reimbursements will be shared between members and participating GSAR Groups etc.
3. A Regional Specialty Team must have members from a minimum of 2 recognized GSAR Groups.

2.12.7 GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. EMBC representing the government of B.C. in emergency coordination and support of volunteers will:
 - 1.1. Provide coordination prior to and during a GSAR response through the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC).
 - 1.2. Provide annual funding for training, through an approved training provider.
 - 1.3. Develop policies, training standards and operational guidelines in consultation with BCSARA.
 - 1.4. Provide workers compensation coverage and general liability insurance coverage for approved training and operational responses.
 - 1.5. Reimburse GSAR Groups for eligible expenses incurred during GSAR responses.
 - 1.6. Co-chair the BCSARA Search and Rescue Volunteer Joint Health and Safety Committee and the BCSARA Provincial Training Committee.
 - 1.7. Work with BCSARA to provide funding for directors and officers liability insurance for the BCSARA board and GSAR Groups.
 - 1.8. Provide legal counsel to registered GSAR Volunteers who face potential legal actions related to responses while under Task Number and within applicable EMBC GSAR policies.
 - 1.9. Maintain a registration process and database of all registered GSAR volunteers.
 - 1.10. Chair the Search and Rescue Liaison Committee comprised of representatives of the requesting agencies.
 - 1.11. Represent British Columbia on the Ground Search and Rescue Council of Canada (GSARCC).



2. BCSARA, as the representative of GSAR Groups recognized by EMBC on all matters related to GSAR, will:
 - 2.1. Act as an advisory board and make recommendations to the provincial government in all matters relating to GSAR.
 - 2.2. Provide recommendations on applications received by EMBC for establishment of new GSAR Groups, the addition of new capabilities, and Regional Speciality Teams.
 - 2.3. Ensure that GSAR Groups are represented in relevant discussions on policies and guidelines.
 - 2.4. Communicate openly with GSAR Groups and requesting agencies on potential changes to policy and guidelines.
 - 2.5. Co-chair the Search and Rescue Joint Health and Safety Committee and the Provincial GSAR Training Committee.
 - 2.6. Represent GSAR Groups nationally as a board member of the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada (SARVAC).
 - 2.7. Facilitate the provision and funding of liability insurance for directors and members of GSAR Groups through the national program organized by SARVAC.
 - 2.8. Actively solicit funding on a provincial basis and distribute those funds equitably and appropriately to recognized BC GSAR Groups.
3. Requesting agencies will:
 - 3.1. Provide timely and adequate information regarding the incident being responded to in order for an acceptable risk assessment to be made.
 - 3.2. Provide a dedicated member of the agency to act as part of unified command with a SAR manager.
 - 3.3. Recognize the contribution of GSAR Volunteers in the response.
 - 3.4. Provide a representative to sit on the BCSARA board.
 - 3.5. Provide a representative to sit on the Search and Rescue Liaison Committee
 - 3.6. Participate in GSAR Reviews when requested.
4. A GSAR Group will (unless through separate agreement with EMBC):
 - 4.1. Be a legal entity, either incorporated as, or supported by, a not for profit society in good standing in British Columbia or organized with a different structure approved by EMBC.
 - 4.2. Ensure all members have completed a criminal record check (every 5 years) and report if a member is arrested, charged, or convicted of any criminal offence.



- 4.3. Follow and abide by established EMBC policies and operational guidelines when operating under approved training or operations.
- 4.4. Provide the appropriate EMBC regional office with an annual up-to-date listing of the membership of the GSAR Group, indicating who are current GSAR volunteers or GSAR resource members.
- 4.5. Provide an annual training plan to the appropriate EMBC Regional Office prior to March 31 each year and hold regular training events for GSAR volunteers.
- 4.6. Maintain a record of the training that members have received (through the JIBC and otherwise) and tasks members have responded to.
- 4.7. Submit task reports and equipment repair and replacement requests in accordance with EMBC requirements.
- 4.8. Advise the appropriate EMBC regional office if the group no longer meets the requirements for any capabilities they were recognized for, as defined in Appendix 'A'.
 - (1) Plans will be developed to rebuild capacity and short term coverage by working with other local GSAR groups or;
 - (2) A review of the status of the specific capabilities within that GSAR group and region.
- 4.9. Participate in surveys from the Province of British Columbia and BCSARA to determine training and other requirements.
- 4.10. Take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure the safety of their members by implementing and maintaining the requirements within the GSAR Safety Program Guide and the Provincial Operating Guidelines.
- 4.11. Promote a harassment free environment and adherence to the Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Code of Conduct by their members.
- 4.12. Maintain sufficient appropriate equipment to perform the capabilities they are approved for in Appendix 'A'.
- 4.13. Endeavour to raise additional funds to acquire equipment and support their members.
- 4.14. Maintain current information in the BCSARA Data Management System (DMS) such as (but not limited to):
 - Membership (contact info, status, availability)
 - Qualifications (current status/expiry)
 - Equipment (description, cost, condition, inspections)



- Incidents (complete description of 'task', including subject behaviour – where applicable)
 - Exercises (complete description of training, including planned exercises)
 - Events (optional)
 - Calendar of exercises/events
- 4.15. Use the GSAR Group membership categories as defined by the BCSARA Society Act template.
5. A GSAR Volunteer will:
- 5.1. Be registered as a PSLV with EMBC.
 - 5.2. Complete a criminal record check (every 5 years) and report if arrested, charged or convicted of any criminal offence.
 - 5.3. Conduct themselves according to the PSLV Code of Conduct during Emergency Response and training task duties.
 - 5.4. Maintain and stay current with all training and certification.
 - 5.5. Abide by all current EMBC PSLV policies and guidelines.
6. Identification of Volunteers:
- 6.1. EMBC ID Cards.
 - 6.2. EMBC may issue ID cards to GSAR Volunteers who have completed the required GSAR training as provided by the JIBC, upon application from the GSAR Group.
 - 6.3. EMBC may issue ID cards to volunteers designated as MIT and Resource Members after successful completion of an introductory GSAR course.
 - 6.4. Members of GSAR Groups responding to an incident will have available their EMBC issued identification.
 - 6.5. EMBC ID cards remain the property of the Province of B.C. and must be renewed every five (5) years. Should a GSAR Volunteer retire, resign or be dismissed, the ID card will be returned to EMBC.
7. EMBC / BC Government Logo Use:
- 7.1. GSAR Groups wishing to utilize the B.C. Government and/or the EMBC logo(s) on their vehicles and personal protective equipment must request authorization through EMBC.
8. GSAR Volunteer Identification:



- 8.1. Where reasonable and practical, GSAR Groups will ensure their members are clearly identified and distinguished from the general public when responding to a GSAR Incident.
9. GSAR Group Response Capabilities:
 - 9.1. GSAR Groups, with the approval of EMBC, may become trained and equipped in various recognized search and rescue techniques (referred to as “capabilities”). Appendix 'A' provides a list of capabilities with the minimum requirements for each.
 - 9.2. GSAR Group members will not engage in any activities associated with a capability unless the GSAR Group has received approval from EMBC and are equipped and trained to the appropriate level.
 - 9.3. If additional technical expertise is required during a GSAR Response, the SAR Manager will request mutual support of a GSAR Group, regional speciality team or other appropriate resource with the required capability through the ECC.
10. Safety:
 - 10.1. All parties to these guidelines agree to uphold their responsibilities for safety as defined in the GSAR Safety Program Guide and the Provincial Operating Guidelines.
 - 10.2. A risk assessment (using the RADeMS tool) must be completed at any point during the operation when/where circumstances change.
11. Training:
 - 11.1. GSAR Volunteers belonging to GSAR Groups will maintain training standards as set down by EMBC in consultation with the BCSARA.
 - 11.2. Members in Training may participate in training and practice skills if under supervision and receiving direction from an instructor or team leader in the specific discipline of the GSAR Group.
 - 11.3. An annual training task number will be obtained by each GSAR Group as per EMBC policy before engaging in training or practicing skills. Training task numbers ensure Workers Compensation coverage and third-party liability only.
 - 11.4. Training Task Number Applications:
 - (1) Group Training - GSAR Groups are required to submit an application for an annual training task number as well as an annual training plan to their respective EMBC regional office. Each GSAR Group will be issued an annual training task number April 1st every year, which will remain in effect a full year (April 1st to March 31st).
 - (2) Regional/Technical training – For training sessions that fall outside the regularly scheduled training sessions, such as multi-group (more than 1 GSAR group) regional training sessions involving technical skills, helicopter flights etc., GSAR



Groups are required to complete and submit the Training Task Number Application form and submit to the appropriate EMBC Regional Office.

- (3) Training records will be maintained by each GSAR Group and will include, as a minimum;
- the members name,
 - the date and duration (e.g. hours) of training or practice,
 - the date for any re-certification or hours required through the POG.,
 - a description of the training received where the training is not a JIBC course;
 - who supplied the training, and;
 - For formalized or contracted training (e.g. Swiftwater) an indication whether the members did or did not successfully complete the training provided.

12. Operations:

- 12.1. All GSAR Groups will adhere to EMBC Policies, GSAR Safety Program Guide, GSAR Safety Program, Provincial Operating Guidelines, and the Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Code of Conduct.
- 12.2. GSAR Groups may develop other policies and guidelines to address risks and/or issues specific to their area of response provided these guidelines do not conflict with or supersede EMBC policies and guidelines.
- 12.3. Members in training may be allowed to participate in GSAR Responses appropriate to their level of training only while under the direct supervision of a GSAR Leader.
- 12.4. GSAR Groups involved in a GSAR Response will participate in the GSAR Response Review process when a formal or informal review is held.
- 12.5. Convergent Volunteers may only be used on a GSAR Response under supervision of a GSAR leader if:
- they register on a Convergent Volunteer Sign-in sheet;
 - show approved government issued photo ID;
 - are dressed and equipped appropriately for the environment;
 - are over 19 years of age;
 - and receive a safety briefing outlining any existing or potential hazards.
- 12.6. Resource Members may be used on response under supervision of a GSAR Leader if:
- they register on an EMBC Task Sign-in sheet;
 - have completed training noted in Section 3;



- and are only used for tasks within their level of training.

13. GSAR Operational Phases:

- 13.1. Advisory - The notice of an ongoing or impending GSAR incident that may require a GSAR Response. This can be characterized as the early dialogue or information exchange pertaining to an incident before it is determined that a GSAR response is necessary. Advisories may be issued to GSAR Groups of operations occurring adjacent to their response areas or to inform of potentially dangerous conditions which could increase the likelihood of a response (e.g. Flood, Fire, Weather Bulletins/Warnings and Avalanche Bulletins and/or Special Advisories).
- 13.2. Callout – The initiation of a GSAR Incident. This includes the initial notification of the GSAR Resources and may involve the movement of personnel and equipment to a staging area.
- 13.3. Response – The setup of command or initiation of on-site GSAR response operations.
- 13.4. Demobilization – The notice of release of a GSAR Volunteer and GSAR resources from assignments and preparation to return to point of departure/point of origin.
- 13.5. Return to Readiness – The process to return a GSAR Group to pre-advisory state of readiness. Personnel and equipment are ready for response to a future incident.
- 13.6. Review – The process of reviewing a GSAR response to provide a chronological timeline of activities and to discover operational opportunities which will allow more effective and efficient future responses.

14. Conflict Resolution:

- 14.1. GSAR Groups are responsible for the actions of their members. As such, they will have a process for managing issues that may arise with a member or members through their Society Bylaws and can use the EMBC Code of Conduct as a guide, and will document any such issues for reference, should further actions be required.
- 14.2. Should the executive of a GSAR Group feel the actions of a member or members make it necessary to remove them from the GSAR Group, the appropriate EMBC regional office will be advised and the member's or members' registration as a GSAR volunteer may be revoked.
- 14.3. Should EMBC become aware of inappropriate behaviour of a GSAR Volunteer during a response or training, the Volunteer's GSAR Group executive and the Requesting Agency may be contacted by EMBC and the appropriate action discussed. EMBC retains the right to revoke any GSAR Volunteer's registration should EMBC deem it necessary.



- 14.4. GSAR groups involved in a conflict can discuss with their BCSARA regional director and/or their EMBC regional manager for potential supports through the EMBC & BCSARA review process.
15. Dispute resolution:
 - 15.1. It is expected that any matter that should arise between the parties to this agreement will be resolved through discussion between the primary contacts listed below. If no resolution is agreed upon, the parties may request the assistance of a facilitator:
 - BCSARA Regional Director
 - EMBC Regional Manager
 - EMBC – BCSARA Management Committee
 - EMBC – BCSARA Partnership Committee