



2.12 SEARCH AND RESCUE

2.12.1 GENERAL

Emergency Management BC (EMBC) is responsible for facilitating and coordinating a provincial land and inland water volunteer ground search and rescue (GSAR) capability (as per the *British Columbia Emergency Program Management Regulation*, Schedule II) and providing assistance in the activation and coordination of community-based GSAR volunteer and volunteer GSAR organization responses when requested by approved requesting agencies or local authority. In these roles EMBC 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.
- (2) Provide available search and rescue resources to an approved requesting agency or local authority.
- (3) Conduct or coordinate training in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery to ensure that EMBC staff, EMBC volunteers, municipal authorities and other government emergency personnel have the necessary skills to respond effectively in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Note: This policy outlines the use of SAR Volunteers for GSAR activities only and is not intended to include local authorities utilizing SAR volunteers for activities other than search and rescue, i.e. as emergency service volunteers.

Related Policies:

- 1.02 Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Code of Conduct
- 1.05 Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Registration
- 1.08 Application for Training Task Number
- 2.02 Task Authorization
- 2.06 Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Safety
- 5.01 Task Registration
- 5.02 Expense Reimbursement
- 5.04 Public Safety Lifeline Equipment Repair/Replacement
- 5.06 Volunteer Expense Reimbursement and Allowance Rate
- 5.07 Workers' Compensation Coverage
- 5.08 Liability Coverage

2.12.2 DEFINITIONS

See Terms and Definitions



2.12.3 POLICY STATEMENT

- (1) This policy is intended to provide clarification and guidance on how Search and Rescue Volunteers can be utilized in GSAR activities. This policy provides direction to requesting agencies, EMBC staff, and SAR volunteers.

2.12.4 CONDITIONS/RESPONSIBILITIES

- (1) Search and Rescue within British Columbia falls into three basic categories:
 - a. Air Search and Rescue.
 - b. Marine Search and Rescue.
 - c. Land and Inland Waters Search and Rescue.
- (2) Information from the public regarding missing, injured, or stranded persons must be referred to a responsible government agency which will determine the appropriate response. Such requesting agencies are listed in Table 1: Task Number Eligible GSAR Response Activities.
- (3) The responsible requesting agency (Table 1) must initiate all requests for SAR volunteer resources. The Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) will then provide a task number to the GSAR Group when the request for service or support is within EMBC Policy. This process ensures decision accountability and timely access to valuable volunteer assistance.

REQUESTING AGENCIES

POLICE

The investigation of a missing person(s) and of suspicious occurrences within the province of British Columbia are the responsibility of the police department having jurisdiction. Disoriented, lost, stranded, overdue, and other individuals in distress are also the responsibility of the Police as well as domestic animal rescue for humane or public safety reasons. The Police of Jurisdiction (PoJ) may request GSAR Volunteers to conduct the rescue of persons in distress only when they are without injury. PoJ are responsible for all costs associated with evidence searches and domestic animal rescues. GSAR Volunteer resources can assist police in domestic animal rescue for humane or public safety reasons with approval from the Regional Duty Manager (RDM). Police requests for SAR volunteer resources are made through the ECC for the eligible activities listed in Table 1.

BC Emergency Health Services

The BC Emergency Health Services (BC EHS) is responsible for pre-hospital care and transportation of patients to medical facilities. The BCEHS may only request GSAR Volunteers to conduct task eligible activities in the context of a medical rescue. BC EHS requests for SAR volunteer resources are made through the ECC for the eligible activities listed in Table 1.



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 Joint Rescue Coordination Centre will request GSAR Volunteers on behalf of the Canadian Forces or Canadian Coast Guard through the ECC for the associated eligible activities listed in Table 1.

PARKS CANADA

Land and inland water SAR, within national parks, is the responsibility of Parks Canada. ¹Parks Canada may request GSAR Volunteers to support a Parks Canada lead response in a national Park for persons missing, injured or in distress. Parks Canada requests for GSAR volunteer resources are made through the ECC for the associated eligible activities listed in Table 1.

CORONER SERVICES

The Coroner may request SAR volunteer resources through the ECC for the associated eligible activities listed in Table 1.

FIRE SERVICES

Fire Services may request GSAR Volunteers to apply any GSAR techniques to support a response to an injured or stranded person in distress within Fire Protection Areas only. Fire Service requests for GSAR volunteer resources are made through the ECC for the associated eligible activities listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Task Number Eligible Response Activities

Task Eligible GSAR Response Activities by Requesting Agency.						
GSAR Response Activity ¹	Police of Jurisdiction	BC Emergency Health Services	Canadian Forces or Canadian Coast Guard	Parks Canada	BC Coroner Service	Fire Services
Missing persons	✓			✓		
Persons in distress	✓			✓		✓
Evidence search	✓					
Medical rescue		✓				✓
Downed aircraft/persons or vessel in distress			✓			
Search and recovery of human remains					✓	
Domestic animal rescue ²	✓					

¹ GSAR Groups will conduct response activities in support a Requesting Agency only through the application of appropriate techniques associated with their EMBC recognized skills and capabilities as described in 2.12 Annex.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BC

- (1) Upon activation of a volunteer GSAR Group, EMBC provides workers’ compensation and liability coverage, reimbursement of operational expenses, and repair and/or replacement of equipment as per current EMBC policy.
- (2) Either the EMBC Regional Duty Manager (RDM) or the EMBC Provincial Duty Manager (PDM) will make decisions specific to the commitment of resources in support of an authorized requesting agency. The activities detailed below, in Table 2 have been identified as requiring specialized training and are ineligible for an EMBC task number.
- (3) Response activities that are not specified in Table 1 including, but are not limited to, those listed in Table 2: Task Number Ineligible GSAR Response Activities, are ineligible for an EMBC task number. If a GSAR Group has any doubt about the eligibility of an activity or a request for support, they should contact the RDM for guidance. Should specialized resources or activities that are deemed ineligible be required to complete a task under this policy, the RDM must be consulted for options.

Table 2: Task Number Ineligible Response Activities

Ineligible GSAR Response Activities
Underwater search and recovery involving the use of diving apparatus by volunteers
Hazardous material response and/or cleanup.
Tree rescue (arboreal rescue) unless provided written permission from EMBC for this specific activity.
BC EHS First Responder patient move assists or lifts where the BCAS medical assessment indicates additional First Responder resources are required.
Transporting police or other law enforcement or regulatory agencies involved with search/apprehension of dangerous individuals/ criminal investigations.
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 BC EHS patients to medical care (riding in ambulances, driving ambulances, etc.).

- (4) When deploying GSAR resources in support of a requesting agency, 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 (i.e. the requesting agency should not be asking the SAR Volunteers or the Group to take undue risks or place themselves in a position of liability for which they have no coverage or protection).
- (5) EMBC task numbers provide workers’ compensation and liability coverage only for the following activity, and only when the SAR volunteer or Group 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 workers' compensation and liability.

2.12.5 AUTHORITIES

Emergency Program Act

British Columbia Emergency Program Management Regulation, Schedule II

Good Samaritan Act

Original Signed by

Madeline Maley
Assistant Deputy Minister
Emergency Management BC

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2.12.6 RELATED DOCUMENTS

2.12 Procedures

2.12 Annex

2.12 Q&A