



Nelson County Emergency Services Council
Nelson County, Virginia

| <i>Nelson County Emergency Services Council Standard Operating Guideline</i> | |
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| Subject: | Search and Rescue |
| Reference Number: | OPS 02-014 |
| Effective Date: | 1-May-16 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Signature of Approval | David Graves, President |

Purpose:

To have uniform procedures for responding to and preparing to initiate a search for a missing person.

The Police Department and/or Sheriff's Office have ultimate control of searches for missing persons.

Policy:

In the event of a search, a command post and staging area shall be established immediately by Incident Command (IC). **Only** key personnel and the IC will occupy the command post. The IC shall specify a staging area for field searchers immediately.

All field searchers will proceed non-emergency to the staging area or fire/rescue station and wait for assignments. All searchers are expected to come prepared for the terrain, weather conditions, and be self-sufficient for 24 hours in the field. The individual must obey all directives of the IC that are concerned with safety issues.

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) may be requested for any search and rescue by having the Virginia EOC notified through our local dispatch center. This resource will come with manpower, radio cache, and a communications officer from VDEM. The following information should be relayed to the Virginia EOC via IC or law enforcement:

- The incident description and urgency (low, medium, high)
- Any specific needs
- Specific directions to the incident
- The IC's name and title
- The IC's contact number for future communications
- SAR Radio frequency being used for incident

Select one of the following radio frequencies to operate on when conducting a search and rescue operation:

- SAR (155.160 MHz)
- EMSTAC3 (155.205 MHz)
- EMS1UVA (155.340 MHz)
- HEAR3 (155.400 MHz)

The IC will confer with the Police Officer/Deputy conducting the investigation. Appropriate information will be released to the search teams as they gather at the staging area. All teams will be assigned a name, a task and an operational frequency prior to leaving the staging area. The staging officer will maintain an accountability system to include scheduled “radio checks.” No team should leave the staging area without a walkie. Only the team leader shall communicate with the staging officer or IC.

No search shall be terminated without direct order of IC. A search shall not be fully terminated until all personnel have returned and been accounted for.

When working near roads, especially near high-speed thoroughfares, SAR personnel should wear high visibility vests or clothing. At night, someone should be positioned by the road to flag down traffic. When possible, law enforcement officials should control traffic.

At all incidents, the IC must assess the risks before deploying any search teams. These risks include, but are not limited to, the terrain, the weather, the mental and physical condition of the SAR personnel, and the mental condition of the subject.