



## West Michigan Search and Rescue

# Standard Operating Guidelines

Version 1.0

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**I. Purpose:**

A. The purpose of these Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG's) is to provide a set of guidelines for field operations of WEST MICHIGAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (WMSAR). These guidelines are intended to address the Five standard components of search and rescue operations: 1) Preplanning 2) Notification 3) Planning and Strategy 4) Tactics and Operations 5) Suspension and Critique.

B. The SOG's are designed with safety as the highest priority. Members wishing to maintain membership in WMSAR must abide by These guidelines. At any time, members may be dismissed from the scene by a WMSAR officer should he/she compromise the safety of operations.

C. Any changes to these SOG's will be brought to the attention of all members of the WMSAR.

**II. Preplanning**

A. In advance preparation for SAR operation members should:

1. Thoroughly understand the guidelines listed herein
2. Possess and maintain at all times a 24 hour ready pack with the items described in the *WMSAR Equipment List*
3. Understand the rudiments of the INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS)
4. All members should study, train, and prepare for SAR operations. Use the *WMSAR SAR Technician III Objectives*, as based on the National Association for Search and Rescues suggestion for national standards of SAR personnel as guidelines.

**III. Notification and Dispatch for an Emergency Response Request:**

**A. Receipt of Notification:**

1. WMSAR maintains an emergency pager network for receipt of emergency callout requests.

All WMSAR members expecting to respond to calls should acquire a Team pager, or provide a personal cell or pager number as the pager network is the primary method employed to dispatch the team. Currently, all pagers are linked to a single Number Thus, when a callout is requested, every member's pager will be set off.

2. Upon receipt of a page, a return call must be placed to the Box determine the nature of the call and the requesting agency. WMSAR will only respond to an incident when requested to do so by a recognized authority involved in disaster and/or emergency management. Such authorities include the Michigan department of natural resources, the Michigan State Police, fire, medical, or law enforcement agencies. As well as all participating members of VESA. Under certain conditions a private individual may request the presents of WMSAR at that point WMSAR command should be notified and special arrangements will be made. A return call should be made by all personal intending to respond to the mission. The return call should be made to the WMSAR box or to the number listed on the page as a call back number.
3. Information regarding the callout request must be collected. A form to aid in the collection has been developed (**SEE OFFICER APPENDIX**). At a minimum the following information should be Collected:
  - a) Name of organization initiating emergency request
  - b) Phone number(s) to reach said organization
  - c) Nature of dispatch (number of people needed)
  - d) When and where the team is wanted (**DIRECTIONS** with signs or markers are desired)
  - e) When, where, and to whom should the team leader report to on arrival
  - f) Possible location for WMSAR Staging Area
  - G) Any special details or circumstances
  - h) Call off procedures

#### **B. Member Notification and Dispatch:**

1. Member Notification:
  - a. Members will be notified via the team pager system. The pager code appropriate to the situation (e.g., callout, standby, etc...) will be sent. Member pagers are available from WMSAR. These are not personal pagers as they will service a single number that will page all member pagers Members interested in the purchase of such a pager should contact an officer. Note: Donations of any/all pagers to the team are appreciated. Also a personal cell phone may be setup on the same paging network for use as a means of call out.
  - b. Information regarding the page may be posted to the team via email, but **WILL** be to the WMSAR team call box answering machine. If unable to access email, or the answering machine attempt to contact an officer for details.

c. Active WMSAR members will be given the following information upon notification of a call out:

- 1) Intended team departure time
  - 2) Meeting place (e.g., local or distant assembly area)
  - 3) Directions to intended WMSAR Staging Area\* including 5X5  
\*"Staging area" and "Distant Assembly Area" are used interchangeably in these SOG's
- d. See SOG Appendices for list of Pager Codes
- e. Note that a phone tree and email are not primary mechanisms for notification of a callout request. If time and the situation permits, an attempt to use the phone tree and email *may* be added as backup methods.

#### **IV. Departure to scene and training:**

##### **A. The Reminder Checklist**

1. A *WMSAR Reminder Checklist*, which summarizes the necessary gear for a callout, has been prepared to help members double check their inventory immediately before they respond to a call. All personal responding or planning to respond to either a mission or training should bring all approved gear for field operations in all weather conditions. I.e. rain, snow, water, and cold weather.

##### **B. Local Assembly Area:**

1. The WMSAR local assembly area will be the rear parking lot of the Fillmore complex unless specified differently. All members responding to the scene must have an approved 24 hour pack (see WMSAR Equipment List) including food and water.

2. The members forming the initial response comprise the "Alpha Team" and they will depart at the designated time.

3. Note that the local assembly area will be used only if specified. (That is to say that in an urgent callout, the team will respond directly to the scene or staging area without first meeting at the local assembly area.)

### **C. Driving To Scene:**

1. In addition to the essential gear listed on the WMSAR Equipment List, drivers are expected to carry road maps of Michigan in their vehicle.
2. The WMSAR does not condone or accept from its members driving outside the limits of the law including but not limited to regulations applying to:
  - a. speeding
  - b. driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs
3. Members must get to the emergency in a safe and responsible manner.
4. Members must drive, if possible, to the WMSAR Staging Area directly.
5. Emergency lights/strobes of any color are NOT to be used and strictly prohibited on route or return from a callout. Use of such lights will result in automatic suspension and possible termination from the team.

### **V. On Scene Arrival:**

#### **A. Alpha Team Arrival On Scene at Distant Assembly Area:**

1. Naming the Team Commander:
  - a. The first party to arrive on scene (Alpha Team) should include a designated Team Leader.
  - b. All members must immediately sign WMSAR Arrival Log.
  - c. The TL should report to the proper authority.

#### **ONLY THE TEAM LEADER SHOULD APPROACH THE COMMAND POST OR INCIDENT COMMANDER!**

- d. The TL or the WMSAR member of highest authority or seniority is in charge of setting up the Incident Command System (ICS). The squad leader system should be employed as the primary source of ICS management.

#### **B. Signing In On Scene:**

1. All members must sign the Arrival Logs as soon as they arrive at the Staging Area. This will include name date call sign and vehicle license plate number.

2. Any members leaving the Staging Area **must remain in teams of two or more**. Before leaving, members need to complete a Mission Board entry including:

- a. name
- b. mission
- c. time, estimated time of mission
- d. person authorizing mission

3. Any member returning to the Staging Area must complete the Mission Board entry by:

- a. signing return time

4. A separate Mission Board entry must be completed any time any member leaves or returns to the Staging Area.

5. WMSAR members arriving separate from the alpha team must remain at the staging area until given directions to do otherwise by an appropriate authority.

## **VI. On Scene Behavior:**

### **A. Professionalism:**

1. Behavior of all members of WMSAR must display a professional attitude.
2. This is dictated by common sense, the standard of technical skill level to which each member is trained, and a regard for personal safety above all other issues.

### **B. Continuum of Command:**

1. On scene changes in the command structure, including position exchanges must be clearly communicated to all involved.
  - a. Both members, the one giving up the position, and the one undertaking the position must be together and present and aware of the exchange.
  - b. All others in the Team's chain of command must be notified. As well as the ICS board should be updated to reflect the change.

## VII. Planning, Strategy, Tactics and Operations

### A. The Chain of Command

1. The overall planning and operational authority of a field response belong to the requesting agency. On the occasion that WMSAR provides the initial response, members need to be familiar with overall search and rescue management. Members are referred to *WMSAR SAR Technician III Objectives* for an elaboration of the level of suggested familiarity.
2. The overall incident will be run under the Incident Command System (ICS). WMSAR members need to be familiar with the form and vocabulary of ICS in order to function smoothly with other agencies. Members are referred to *WMSAR SAR Technician Objectives* for further clarification. In addition, the WMSAR SAR Basics handout, *Glossary of ICS Terms*, is both recommended reading and a useful reference. [Know that the Team Commander is in charge of all team operations and the Safety Officer is allowed and dictated to stop any unsafe behavior.]

### B. Knowledge and Skills of SAR

In general, members need to be familiar with and are responsible for working to meet the objectives listed in the *WMSAR Training Objectives*, and should refer to that document for a more comprehensive coverage of the skills and knowledge used in the planning and execution phases of search operations. All members are required to meet a minimum of 12 hours of training in a one year period for non probation members. Probationary members will be required to have a minimum of 24 training hours in a one year time period to be considered for full member status.

All members should, at a minimum, be familiar with:

1. Personal safety
2. Land navigation (e.g., map, compass and GPS operations )
3. Basic Search Techniques (e.g., Types I-III, confinement operations, concepts of active and passive search)
4. Basic patient packaging and transport techniques (e.g., Stokes Litter)
5. Basic CPR and First Aid.

### **C. Communicating with the Media**

It is the policy of WMSAR to not communicate with the news media during field operations. Refer all questions to the Command Post, Public Relations Officer or the Team Leader.

### **D. Safety**

Personal and team safety are of the highest priority in all phases of search and rescue operations. Any member uncomfortable with a particular duty or situation due to safety concerns should relay the circumstances via the appropriate chain of command. (The default is the Team Safety Officer, Squad Leader or the Team Leader)

### **E. Providing Medical Care in the Field**

Team members are expected to perform 1: to their level of training and 2: within the limits of the relevant laws and regulations when providing medical care while on SAR operations. WMSAR does **NOT** hold a current medical license and personal may not provide medical care beyond that or outside the scope of the red cross basic first aid program.

### **F. Personal Preparation**

It is the responsibility of the WMSAR individual team member to be appropriately prepared for SAR operations. Any unprepared member may be required to end their participation in field operations, and possibly depart the scene. This means all personal are required to bring all appropriate gear for current or forecast weather conditions. **This includes training.**

### **G. Attitude**

Members on a response represent WMSAR. As representatives they are expected to behave professionally at all times. Any behavior counterproductive to the team's efforts and or function within the ICS will not be tolerated. Unessential comment critiques and dissent have no place during the course of field operations, and they should be reserved until such operations have ended. Strict adherence to the chain of Command is absolutely necessary in the field.

## H. Dismissal

Any WMSAR Officer can dismiss someone from the field at any time without discussion, and that person must be prepared to leave as ordered. **This is only done when necessary to protect the group and maintain the safety of its members.** It is a condition of membership that members understand and accept this situation.

## VIII. Upon Completion of an Emergency

### A. Leaving the Scene

1. The Team leader must verify by the Arrival Logs that all members have departed the scene before they may leave.

### B. Debriefing Report

1. It is the responsibility of the highest ranking officer present on the call to collect all relevant information for post incident review.

### C. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

1. Members of WMSAR are encouraged to use available resources after any incident that may have been psychologically trying. There are local critical incident stress debriefing teams composed of people trained to help others recover from the psychological trauma that often accompanies emergency work. Telephone numbers for local agencies can be accessed upon request.

## IX Personal Responsibility/Liability

WMSAR does **NOT** provide any type of insurance coverage. All members must realize that the activities of WMSAR may be hazardous and that there is the possibility of death, disability, and/or loss of property and that the individual recognizes and accepts these risks, **releasing WMSAR of any and all Liability.**

Members of WMSAR are expected to carry adequate personal health and auto insurance on their own.

Members of WMSAR should not expect the organization to provide official assistance to members involved in case of accident, illness, and auto accident, or lawsuits arising out of his/her membership with the organization. Again, individual participants in WMSAR functions assume all responsibilities and consequences of all actions/events.

Members are expected to behave responsibly and professionally at all times. Adequate dedication to WMSAR activities, including meetings, training sessions, and official call-outs is required. It is understood and accepted by all that members may not be able to attend all WMSAR functions, but an obvious laxity in dedication is not acceptable and constitutes grounds for dismissal.

Do not count on WMSAR to feed, clothe, equip, transport, or train its members free of charge. Members should be prepared to participate in fund raising activities of the organization. WMSAR's budget is open to examination, and proper reporting of the use of funds is mandatory. Note that members are expected to cover all individual expenses out of pocket, including, but not limited to: gear, food, training, transportation, and personal insurance.

Members are also individually responsible for understanding and complying with all federal, state, and local laws or regulations that may apply to the individual, the organization, or its activities.



# SOG APPEINDEX COMMUNICATIONS v1.0

## A. WMSAR Communications Net

1. WMSAR is currently working to develop a communications net in cooperation from OCEC.
2. WMSAR members are expected to be familiar with the communications procedures outlined below.
3. If communications are provided by another agency, record the frequencies used, and if possible, also record a phone number for contact with the Command Post.
4. All WMSAR members are encouraged to have a current amateur radio license or obtain one within 12 months of becoming a team member.

## B. Communication Procedures in General

1. Always test radios on each mission prior to departure from the staging area. (All radio units in the field should be compatible with the equipment at the Command Post.)
2. Tactical call signs will be assigned to all TEAMS and each TEAM will have one assigned radio operator who is the only person that should communicate with command this cuts down on radio confusion.
3. If message is unclear or complicated, receiver should repeat message content to the transmitter.
4. No unit should assume that any message was received by any other unit.
5. Security over the radio is essential.
  - a. Try not to use any names and NEVER state the subject's name, instead always use "subject(s)".
  - b. If the subject is found, immediately switch to the alternate frequency (if possible) and inform the Command Post.
  - c. If the subject is deceased, NEVER state that over the radio, simply repeat "the subject has been found".
  - d. Radio messages should be kept short and direct.

- e. Do not interrupt others using the same frequency.
- f. When referencing time, use the 24 hour clock system.
- g. Commutations between team members should be accomplished using (FRS) family radio system keeping in mind that no comm.'s is secure.

### **C. Concerning the use of Portable Radios**

1. Press the transmission button for one second before speaking, and release it one second after finishing. Speaking immediately after pressing the mike can truncate the initial part of the message.
2. Hold the antenna vertically.
3. Speak slowly and clearly
4. Do not shout or talk too softly.
5. Troubleshooting contact problems:
  - a. Move the radio around, sometimes even a foot can make a difference.
  - b. Touch the metal of the antenna to a pack frame or even your face to improve ground.
  - c. Check the battery.

### **D. Whistles and Sirens**

Whistles are a great backup device and can carry up to a mile.  
The standard whistle signals are:

**ONE BLAST** - I'm OK; I'm here, Move forward, or as a signal for the subject

**TWO BLASTS** - STOP! & await further instructions.

**THREE BLASTS** - EMERGENCY!

**FOUR BLASTS** - Found something, require assistance, and stop.

**FIVE BLASTS** - Assemble .

**SIX BLASTS** - Return to base camp.

## Conclusion

The guideline's listed above are that guidelines and may be amended or omitted as the command structure sees. Any disciplinary action by any persons may be presented to the command officer board for review and possible omission if the board see's fit. All guidelines listed above apply to real live call out missions as well as training. Any questions or clarification of these guidelines my be brought to the officer core and all members are encouraged to do so. Thank you for your continued support.

**These things we do  
that  
Others may live...**

