

Section 8. Handling Information

The ASRC handles information, much of it of a sensitive nature. This section provides guidance on the handling of information and informs members that the mis-handling of information may lead to disciplinary procedures.

Legal Position

The ASRC is subject to various Federal and State statutes that are designed to protect the privacy of individuals. There is an especial interest in the handling of medical data.

ASRC Additional Considerations.

In addition to meeting statutory demands the ASRC expects its members to protect all search subjects and their relatives, members' colleagues, fellow searchers and associates from the consequences of the mis-handling of information. At no time should the ASRC be brought into disrepute.

Valid criticism and the reporting of genuine breaches of ASRC procedure however, are encouraged provided such communication is made through the proper channels mentioned elsewhere (Article 6.1).

Media

This section covers all forms of media including speech, radio, written material, digital communication including email, texting and Information Messaging, web page material and other electronic means of communication. This list is not exhaustive.

Sensitive Material

Particular care should be taken over the handling of sensitive personal data. This includes:

- a) The racial or ethnic origin of the data subject.
- b) The subject's political opinions.
- c) The subject's religious beliefs or beliefs of a similar nature.
- d) The subject's physical or mental health or condition.
- e) The subject's sexual life.
- f) The commission, or alleged commission by the subject of any criminal offence or any proceedings for any alleged offence.

Essential Data

By its very nature, the ASRC will need to handle sensitive data but care must always be taken before promulgating information. In a 'live' situation, members will need to communicate information pertinent to a search to assist with the rapid, and hopefully happy conclusion of the search.

Specific data about the medical condition of a subject can be conveyed to medically qualified personnel or those tasked to assist the subject (such as an evac team) if such data is essential for maintaining or improving the subject's medical condition. The urgency of the situation and the availability of media types would dictate the appropriateness of a particular situation. The law recognizes these facts.

As an example, care should be taken when briefing volunteers at a search. These people may well live in the community and may even know the relatives of the search subject. Long term harm may result from giving too much and unnecessary information. Mis-information could be dangerous to all concerned.

Post search reporting should be circumspect. The use of the information, the prospective audience and the possibility of information leakage to those with no need to know are to be considered. For instance, general post search reports on the web page may give the general location of the search, responding agencies, and search outcome. Search outcome should be limited to status code descriptors (subject was found alive, subject was found dead, subject found and assisted); specific details should be omitted e.g race track owner found subject near interstate.

It is permissible, however, to link to published news articles about the mission even if that article includes personal information. Note the word 'link'. Copying data out of context can be foolhardy.

Breaches

The ASRC will take any proven breach of the privacy of an individual, or the bringing of the organization or any of its constituent groups into disrepute very seriously.

The tests will be:

- a. The veracity of the information imparted.
- b. The method of communication used and its properness to the specific situation.
- c. The circumstances at the time of communication including the urgency required and the 'need to know' of the recipient of the information.

- d. The admitted and perceived intent of the communicator.
- e. The harm occasioned by the communication, to be weighed against any benefit that may have accrued.