

Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference, Inc.



P.O. Box 400440 • Newcomb Hall Station • Charlottesville, VA 22904

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group • Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group
Delmarva Search and Rescue • Mountaineer Area Rescue Group
Maryland Search and Rescue • Potomac Valley Rescue Group
Search and Rescue Ohio • Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group

Memorandum

Date: 11 October 2014

To: Board of Directors

From: Michael Hansen, Conference Operations Officer

Subject: Officer's Report

Reporting Period: 31 May 2014 to 11 October 2014

Summary of Missions

The Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) supported the member teams during several search and rescue (SAR) missions in which multiple member teams responded to the same mission. These missions included, but may not be limited to:

- Middle Way, West Virginia – 8 August 2014;
- Grantsville, Maryland – 24 August 2014;
- Deerfield, Virginia – 28 August 2014;
- Middle Way, West Virginia – 2 September 2014; and
- Charlottesville, Virginia – 15 September 2014.

In each case, ASRC dispatch was activated to coordinate the resources from each team responding to the mission. Messages and emails received for each mission during 2014 have been labeled in the Gmail dispatch account. Doing so keeps the inbox clean for the next use. Maintenance of the Gmail account has been performed on a periodic basis by the Conference Operations Officer (COO).

Nine missions have been registered on the ASRC dispatch website to-date, including:

- Port Deposit, Maryland – 21 February 2014;
- Middle Way, West Virginia – 8 August 2014;
- Laurel Caverns, Pennsylvania – 23 August 2014;
- Grantsville, Maryland – 24 August 2014;
- Deerfield, Virginia – 27 August 2014;
- Winchester, Virginia – 30 August 2014;
- Middle Way, West Virginia – 2 September 2014;
- Denton, Maryland – 7 September 2014; and

- Charlottesville, Virginia – 15 September 2014.

Mission of note include Deerfield, Virginia and Charlottesville, Virginia. While each mission presents its unique challenges, these two missions were high-profile with particularly complex incident command structures. In both cases, the member teams of the ASRC supported the Virginia-based teams Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (SMRG) and Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group (BRMRG) by providing additional highly trained personnel and remote support. **The ASRC recognizes the relentless efforts of these two teams during these back-to-back large scale missions.**

Mission Debriefs

The ASRC assists the member teams by providing a forum to review missions in which multiple member teams took part, by conducting debriefs shortly after. Debriefs have been short (i.e. approximately 1 hour) conference calls with those involved and representatives for each member team involved in the mission. The COO has lead each debrief through the use of a guided conversation that in general, reviews the circumstances, confirms the role of each participant/organization, and discusses areas for potential improvement. In many cases, debriefs conducted to-date have centered on the implementation of remote support during that particular mission. Debriefs held to-date include:

- Avonmore, Virginia – 1 June 2013;
- Deerfield, Virginia – 2 September 2014; and
- Charlottesville, Virginia – Planned, to be scheduled.

Participants have provided feedback that these debriefings are valuable and the COO intends to this practice as appropriate. **The COO can be contacted at any time to help a member team conduct a mission debrief regardless of the extent to which the ASRC or ASRC member teams were involved.**

Operations Manual

An update of the Operations Manual is near completion. At the Annual General Meeting (AGM), the COO promised to the Chair delivery of a draft Operations Manual on 11 October 2014. The Draft version will be distributed to representatives of member teams at the meeting and electronically thereafter. A period of review will be established at the 11 October 2014 meeting. Consolidated comments from each member team will be accepted following the review period for response and revision.

Operations Officers Quarterly Conference Call

On 21 August 2014, the first quarterly conference call with the Operations Officers from each member was held. This call was attended by three Operations Officers, the Chair, and the COO. An agenda was not set and the conference call was an opportunity to

discuss topics important to the attendees. The following presents a summary of topics discussed:

- Lack of SAR resources in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia and challenges to responding to that area;
- How can the ASRC assist with getting Virginia resources to out-of-state searches (i.e. to West Virginia); and
- Potential topics for subsequent conference calls.

The next conference call will be set for fourth quarter 2014 and the date/time sent to the Operations Officers of each member team. The next conference call will likely be a discussion centered on the Draft Operations Manual. **Operations Officers are encouraged to proposed dates, times, and topics for the next conference call.**

Virginia Department of Emergency Management Meeting

At the request of Mr. William Chrimes of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), a meeting was held on 6 September 2014 at the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club building in Vienna, Virginia. Though Mr. Weiss, Mr. Chrimes requested the meeting to discuss the implementation of remote support at future searches in Virginia.

The meeting was attended by Mr. Weiss, Mr. Chrimes, Andrew Hower, the COO, and Don Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson provided a brief power point presentation highlighting the capabilities of remote support including the Integrated Geospatial Tool for Search and Rescue (IGT4SAR) software add-in for ESRI's Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The remote support concept was presented as a spectrum of services that VDEM can request with the IGT4SAR GIS software greatly expanding that spectrum but not defining remote support.

The presentation prompted a conversation between the attendees discussing capabilities, logistics for implementation, and success stories. Integration of remote support into the existing VDEM SAR training system was also discussed. Subsequent discussions with Mr. Chrimes and requests for ASRC member teams at missions following this meeting confirms the discussion was successful. A formal summary of the meeting is forthcoming.

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