

UPDATE

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES • JULY 1990

Missing Aircraft Triggered Local Responsibility Questions

The missing aircraft found in Spotsylvania County on May 17, 1990, brought up several questions concerning local responsibility for a search for a missing aircraft. ("Missing aircraft" in this context means private, civilian aircraft).

Searches for missing aircraft usually begin with a call from a friend or family member reporting the aircraft missing or overdue. The Federal Aviation Administration then contacts the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) - the national search and rescue coordination center at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.

The AFRCC contacts VDES and hands over all responsibility for search and rescue efforts in Virginia to VDES.

VDES uses organizations such as the Civil Air Patrol and the Appalachian Search & Rescue Conference to organize or assist with the air and ground search operations.

Simultaneously, the VDES search and rescue duty officer sends VCIN messages from the Virginia EOC notifying all law enforcement and emergency services coordinators in the affected area about the incident.

Jurisdictions in the area of the projected flight path are asked to physically check all airports in their jurisdictions to determine whether or not the aircraft has landed.

This is where local responsibility and involvement ends.

In situations involving missing aircraft, the possible search area usually covers a large part of the state with ground and air crews searching several areas simultaneously. Consequently, the search area is almost never isolated to any one jurisdiction.

For example, in this particular search, the search areas included Winchester, Dumfries, Lake Anna, the mountain ranges of the northwestern portion of the state

and the Tidewater area, especially around Fort Eustis. The total area searched from the air, alone, covered 31,000 square miles.

The aircraft in this case was not pinpointed to be in Spotsylvania County until it was actually found, and at that point, it became the primary responsibility of the Virginia State Police and the National Transportation Safety Board.

Typically, if an aircraft search becomes isolated to a particular jurisdiction, every effort will be made to keep the local emergency services coordinator informed as a courtesy. However, local authorities are generally not asked to assist with the mission unless the search coordinator specifically needs local assistance in some way. In this way, each level of government can do the job it's tasked to do in cooperation with every other level.

New Consulting Team to Help Establish NCCEM Standards

A new consulting team has been hired to assist with establishing a final set of professional standards and to help work out the details involved in setting up a program to certify emergency managers as professionally competent.

CMB & Associates from Glen Ellyn, Illinois will be instrumental in Phase II of the NCCEM professional standards project. They will provide advice and input in the areas of investigating, training,

certification procedures, educational and work experience requirements, use of examinations and portfolio reviews and legal implications.

Mary Webster, CMB's president and Joan Wackerman, an educational specialist from Northern Virginia, will be guided in their work on Phase II by a panel of 20 emergency experts who were selected by the project's Advisory Council at its' May meeting.

FEMA Deputy Director Appointed

President Bush appointed Jerry D. Jennings, formerly deputy director of the U.S. Selective Service System since 1986, to fill the vacant deputy director's position in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The U.S. Senate confirmed Jennings' appointment on May 25, 1990.

As FEMA's deputy director, Jennings will assist in overseeing all agency operations including the programs of its three directorates, two administrations and national training center.