
Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference
Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group
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INFORMATION
FOR
PROSPECTIVE
MEMBERS

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Welcome! to the Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference ("ASRC"). We hope that, though it might be hard at times, working with us will be both enjoyable and rewarding.

The Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG) is the Pittsburgh area Group (local chapter) of the ASRC. Our training standards, operational standards, and administrative requirements are all set by the ASRC. Group members wear an ASRC uniform, and when we go out on a mission, all members function under a unified ASRC command. In addition to AMRG, there are currently ASRC Groups in Columbia and College Park, Maryland; in Washington, D.C.; and in Charlottesville, Richmond, Roanoke, and Norfolk, Virginia. The ASRC is the Eastern Region of the Mountain Rescue Association, and AMRG members have full rights to MRA membership and certification. The ASRC is also affiliated with the Eastern Region of the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) and the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR).

If you haven't already read the AMRG Fact Sheet, do, as it describes what we do. ASRC missions occur about once every three weeks, though sometimes we have several close together and then none for a long time, and not all ASRC Groups are called out on each mission. Operations are mostly lost person searches with a few downed aircraft searches and mountain or cave rescues for variety, but the majority of our rescue work is when we look for a lost person or downed aircraft. For some reason, most of our operations seem to occur at three in the morning during freezing rain (so don't say you weren't warned!) There's never any requirement that you go on a particular mission.

If you are interested in joining, come to some of our meetings or training sessions, and get to know the members. After you've had a chance to get to know the members and vice versa, go to Mike Kuga, our Training Officer, and ask to be proposed for Probationary Membership at one of the meetings. If the membership is willing, you'll be voted in as a Probationary Member (that's why you should get to know the members first.)

If all you want to do is come to an occasional training session, there's no need to join. Meetings and training sessions are open to all interested people, although some sessions may require prior training for safety.

Probationary membership is good for up to a year, during which time you are expected to work with the members enough that you will be voted in as a full member. After three months as a Probationary Member, you are eligible to be voted in as an Active Member. Before you can be voted in as an Active Member, though, you must have done the following:

- "completed 32 hours of activity with the ASRC." (This means coming out on several training sessions or missions); and,
- "read the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Training Standards, SAROP, and Operations Manual and signed a statement to that effect." (You will be issued a copy of the Member's Manual, containing all these publications, when you pay your \$25 initiation fee.)

Active Members don't have to do anything but participate in business meetings on a regular basis. For instance, lawyer or CPA's who help out with the Group's administrative work and who attend meetings on a regular basis can be Active Members with full rights of voting and holding office, even if they've never set foot in the woods.

However, since we are a mountain rescue team, most people who join go on to become certified, at one or more levels, for wilderness search and rescue work. We've recently revised our certification levels, so you might still hear people talking about the older levels such as Trainee, Basic, and Rescue. However, here are the new levels that we will be using.

■ **Callout Qualified (CQ).** This means that you're not likely to kill yourself (or someone else) the first time you go into the field. To become CQ, you must:

- complete an ASRC Membership Application;
- attend an ASRC search and rescue orientation class approved by the Group Training Officer; and
- obtain the proper personal equipment:
 1. Appropriate clothing and footwear;
 2. Water bottle of 1 or 2-liter capacity;
 3. 5 large plastic leaf bags;
 4. Headlamp (preferred) or flashlight, and second light source;
 5. Compass (orienteering type preferred);
 6. Waterproof pen/pencil and notebook (keeping your regular notebook and pencil in a zip-lock bag is adequate);
 7. Daypack (knapsack, rucksack, or backpack acceptable);
 8. Food for 48 hours;
 9. Lighter, waterproof matches and candle, or other fire source;
 10. Knife;
 11. Personal first aid kit;
 12. Whistle;
 13. Two pairs of latex or plastic exam gloves.

■ **Communications Specialist** is a tentative certification level for those who can work with radios, primarily at Base Camp. This classification and its standards are still being debated.

■ **Field Team Member (FTM).** FTM's meet the minimum requirements for being competent in the field, at least according to the ASRC's definition. To become FTM certified, you must first meet the CQ standards, participate in 4 training sessions, including one on wilderness survival and one on search theory, get additional personal equipment, and meet a set of technical standards. You must pass a standard written and practical test on these standards, and then, at a Group business meeting, receive a favorable vote for FTM certification. You may find details of the standards in the ASRC Training Standards, which is part of your Member's Manual. The Member's Manual contains several "self-teaching modules" that will help you toward FTM certification. To become a FTM, you must have a current Red Cross Standard First Aid and Personal Safety card, or be able to demonstrate equivalent first aid ability by passing a 27-question true-false test administered by the Training Officer. (If you fail, you will be assigned a bit of reading and then allowed to retake the test.)

The ASRC FTM standards go just a small bit beyond the standards for the Virginia Ground Search and Rescue College (GSAR College) Level I certification level. Attending a Level I GSAR College course is an excellent way to prepare for the FTM test. Although the GSAR College is a Virginia course, we will soon be offering it in Pennsylvania, too.

A member who wants to wear the ASRC uniform must become certified at least to the FTM level.

■ **Field Team Leader (FTL)** certification is a level above FTM, and has stricter and more extensive standards. It goes a bit beyond the Virginia GSAR Level II training.

■ **Rescue Specialist (RS)** standards go beyond the FTL standards in technical mountain rescue, and is the level one must reach to become a Mountain Rescue Association "Rescue" member and to wear the MRA "Rescue" patch (others can wear the MRA support patch, provided they pay \$5/year MRA dues). The RS standards are still being formulated; we're waiting for Virginia to finish its own GSAR Rescue Specialist standards, so ours will be consistent with them. (The Virginia Department of Emergency Services works very closely with the ASRC, so ASRC members may have input into the Virginia RS standards if they wish.)

■ **Incident Staff (IS)** certification requires FTL certification as a prerequisite, and is the basic level of certification for helping to run operations from Base Camp.

■ **Incident Command (IC)** certification is required to be able to run an ASRC operation, and is only rarely conferred by the Board of Directors of the ASRC itself.

When you have passed your FTM test, you will be issued an ASRC patch and official nametag. You should give your name to the Stores Officer as you wish it to appear on the nametag, and you might want to order additional nametags or patches at the same time. You should put together an ASRC uniform as specified in the ASRC Operations Manual, and if you wish, a uniform parka (patches and nametag go in the same place, and no other emblems are to be worn on uniforms or parkas). You should wear your uniform to all official Group activities, including training sessions.

We have an initiation fee of \$25 (to cover the cost of your Member's Manual). Dues are \$15/year, with an extra \$5/year if you want to be listed as member of the Mountain Rescue Association (to wear a MRA patch and receive the MRA newsletter, you must be listed as a MRA member). All are tax-deductible.

Please talk to any Group member if you have any questions. Remember, there is no obligation to become a member; you may come to training sessions as a non-member. Business meetings are the first Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 PM in the Emergency Department conference room at Mercy Hospital. Training sessions are scheduled on a regular basis; call Mike Kuga (phone number on the letterhead) for the current schedule.