

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group

Administrative Policies

And

Standard Operating Guidelines



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Department of Emergency Medicine
UMPC Mercy Hospital
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

May be reproduced as needed by AMRG members.

Introduction

This document is a compilation of the rules and policies that govern the function of the Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group. As such, it is a living document that will evolve and change as the practices of the Group do.

Members are expected to adhere to the policies in this document. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Sections of this manual are taken from the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation of the Group and are included here as a matter of convenience for the membership. The Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation of the Group will take precedence over this document in those cases where there is a conflict.

This document may be revised as necessary by the Team Commander and Executive Director, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors.

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1. Organization

1.1 Mission Statement

The purpose of AMRG is:

To provide a wilderness search and rescue capability and special technical rescue capability to the southwest part of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, contiguous areas, and other regions as necessary;

To conduct training programs in subjects related to wilderness search and rescue and special technical rescue;

To conduct and sponsor training programs in subjects related to wilderness safety and survival; and

To support public safety agencies, outdoors organizations, and educational institutions with the Group's special capabilities.

1.2 History

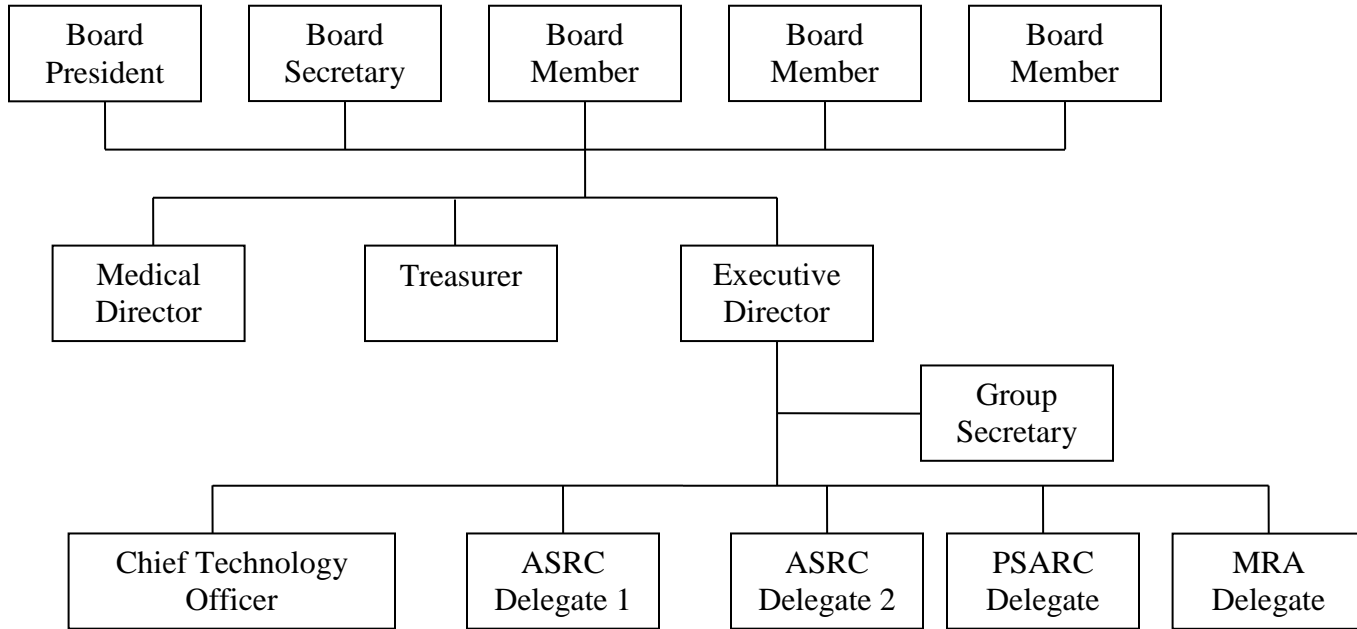
AMRG was founded in 1985 by Dr. Keith Conover. Dr. Conover was previously a founding member of the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group (1972), the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (1972), and Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (1980). AMRG has been a member team of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) and Mountain Rescue Association (MRA) since its founding. In 1985, the ASRC was also the Eastern Region of MRA. AMRG has re-accredited with the MRA every five years since its founding. The Eastern Region of the MRA was transformed into the Appalachian Region in 1991. AMRG remains the only active team continuously accredited by the MRA since the establishment of the Eastern Region.

Until 2006, AMRG maintained a membership club based structure, with an elected Chairman/Chairwoman and no board of directors. In 2006, a major reorganization of the bylaws and operational policies established the current emergency services based organization, with a strong board of directors, with an appointed Executive Director and elected Team Commander.

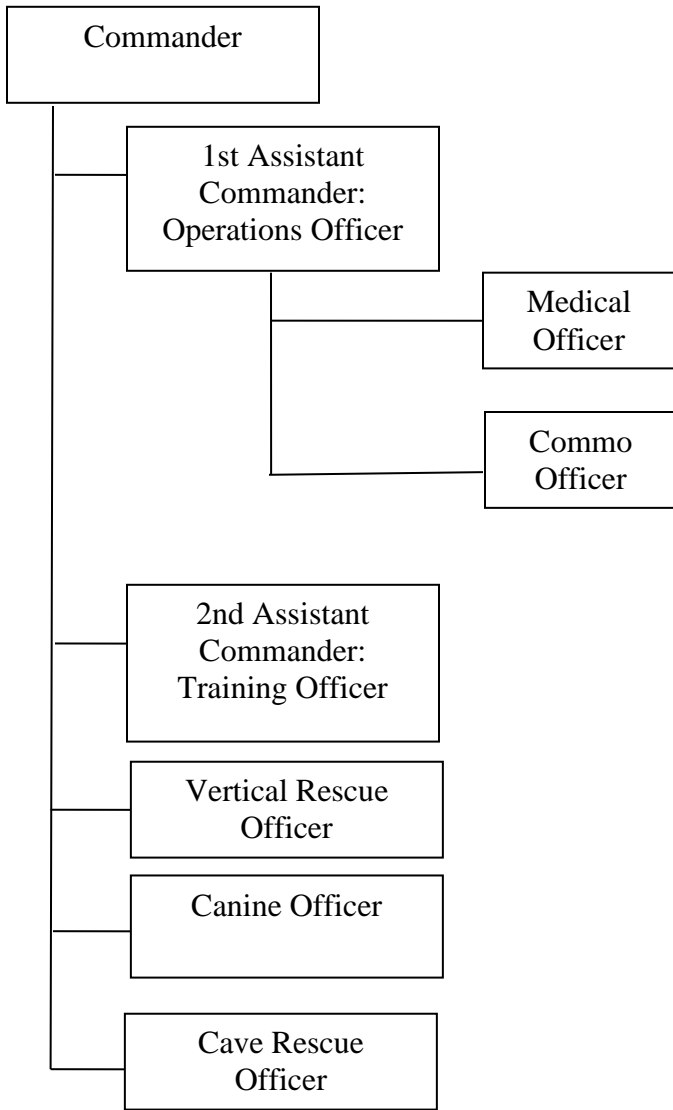
In 2012, AMRG became a PA Dept. of Health Quick Response EMS Service, which the team chose not to renew in 2015.

1.3 Organization Chart

Board of Directors and Civil Officers:



Line Officers:



1.4 Group Affiliations

AMRG is a member of the following organizations:

Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC)
Mountain Rescue Association (MRA)
Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council (PSARC)

AMRG also maintains close contact with the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) and provides dispatch and operational coordination for the NCRC in Western PA.

1.5 Chain of Command

A line chain of command shall be used by all members while participating in an incident or training. ICS/NIMS will be followed during all multi-agency incidents.

Line Chain of Command during Incident:

- Commander
- Operations Leader/Search Manager I
- Operations Leader/Search Manager II
- Operations Leader/Search Manager III
- Operations Leader/Search Manager IV
- Rescue Members
- Operational Members
- 1st member on scene

Line Chain of Command during Trainings:

- Commander
- Training Officer/Team Leader (for specialty trainings)
- Lead Instructor for Training
- Instructor for Training
- Operations Leader/Search Manager I
- Operations Leader/Search Manager II
- Operations Leader/Search Manager III
- Operations Leader/Search Manager IV
- Rescue Members
- Operational Members
- Callout Qualified Members
- Not Callout Qualified Members

For any training event that turns in to a “for real” incident, the chain of command will immediately revert from Training to Incident.

1.6 Officers

The management and affairs of the Group shall be at all times under the direction of a Board of Directors, whose operations in governing the corporation shall be defined by statute and by the Group's Bylaws. Directors are elected in accordance with procedures detailed in the Group's Bylaws.

Section 1: Civil Officers

The Board of Directors shall appoint on an annual basis the following officers to run the day-to-day business of the Group:

Executive Director – The Executive Director has day-to-day responsibilities for the Group, including carrying out the Group's goals and policies and controlling all Group correspondence and public relations efforts. The Executive Director shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Group in all civil matters and shall enforce the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Group. The Executive Director shall be the civil spokesman of the Group, shall attend all Board meetings, and report on the progress of the organization from time to time to the membership. The Executive Director will call and conduct meetings of the Membership in accordance with the provisions of Article V. The Executive Director may appoint staff and assistances as necessary to ensure the success of the Group and may from time to time establish rules or policies as part of the Group's Administrative Policies and Standard Operational Policies document, Sections 1 and 2. In order to avoid conflicts of interests, an individual serving as Executive Director may not also serve as Treasurer or President of the Board.

Treasurer – The Treasurer shall be the Financial Officer of the Group and shall receive all moneys and pay all bills as authorized by the Board. The treasurer shall keep an accurate accounting of all Group funds. The Board by majority vote shall select recognized banking institutions to be used as depositories. The Treasurer shall serve as a financial advisor to the Board and shall report the state of finances to the membership at each regular meeting of the Department. The Treasurer shall submit all accounts and records to the Board when called upon to do so. He/she shall present all records, books and materials pertaining to his/her office to his/her successor or to the President of the Board at the end of his/her term or upon resignation or expulsion. In order to avoid conflicts of interests, an individual serving as Treasurer may not also serve as Executive Director or President of the Board.

Medical Director – The Medical Director is a licensed physician meeting the current Emergency Medical Service Institute (EMSI) requirements to serve as a Quick Response Service (QRS) Medical Director. The Medical Director will provide medical guidance to the organization, including:

- Reviewing the Statewide BLS medical protocols and the EMS regional transfer and medical treatment protocols, and ensuring that members are familiar with them and amendments and revisions thereto.

- Providing guidance with respect to the ordering, stocking and replacement of drugs, and compliance with laws and regulations impacting upon the service's acquisition, storage and use of those drugs.
 - Granting, denying or restricting medical command authorization to members who require this authorization, and participating in appeals from decisions to deny or restrict medical command authorization,
 - Performing medical audits of patient care provided by members.
- The Medical Director may delegate selected duties to the Medical Officer or other members but retains overall authority and responsibility.

The following officers are appointed by the Executive Director on an annual basis, or as needed should a vacancy arise:

Group Secretary – The Group Secretary shall record the proceedings of general Membership Meetings and maintain the meeting records and correspondence of the Group.

Chief Technology Officer – The Chief Technology Officer shall maintain the Group's website, e-mail distribution lists and provide technical support to the Group, as necessary.

The following officers are elected by the Certified Membership at the annual meeting and report to the Executive Director. Should the elected representative be unable to attend any meeting and have not provided a valid proxy to another member to attend in their place, the Executive Director may appoint an interim replacement to ensure that the group is properly represented. Should these positions become vacant between Group meetings, the Executive Director shall appoint an interim replacement until the next regularly scheduled Group meeting, at which time the Group will vote on a permanent replacement to fill the remainder of the term:

Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) Delegates (two) – The two Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference delegates shall represent the Group's interests at Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference meetings and report to the Group the activities and issues of concern to the ASRC.

Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council Representative – The Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Conference delegate shall represent the Group's interests at Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Conference meetings and report to the Group the activities and issues of concern to PSARC.

Mountain Rescue Association Representative – The Mountain Rescue Association delegate shall represent the Group's interests at Mountain Rescue Association meetings and report to the Group the activities and issues of concern to the MRA.

Section 2: Line Officers, Elected

The Certified Membership shall elect at the annual meeting the following officers to oversee the operational activities of the Group. No member may hold more than one of the following positions at the same time:

Commander – The Team Commander shall take full, total, and exclusive command of Group equipment and personnel during search or emergency operations and incidents, during drills, trainings, simulations, and evaluations, and at inspections, public functions, or other events within the context of ICS/NIMS. The Commander shall designate the duties of, and oversee, all line officers and may from time to time establish rules or policies as part of the Group's Administrative Policies and Standard Operational Guidelines document, Sections 3, 4, and 5. The Commander may suspend any member for just cause in accord with the section 2.9 of the Group's Administrative Policies and Standard Operational Guidelines document. The Commander shall serve as sole spokesman of the Group during emergency operations, or appoint an individual to serve in this role. To be eligible to serve as Commander an individual must be certified to minimum of AMRG Rescue Member and must have served at least one full term as either Operations Officer or Training Officer. Should this position become vacant mid-term, the Certified Membership will elect a replacement to serve the remainder of the term at the next regularly scheduled business meeting.

1st Assistant Commander, Operations Officer – The responsibilities of the Operations Officer shall be to maintain and evaluate the Group's operational readiness, supervise the maintenance and storage of Group equipment and equipment policies, maintain the Group's mission records, and maintain the Group's alerting systems. The Operations Officer shall maintain Group personnel records, with, at minimum, the following information for each member: name, kind of membership, date membership was conferred, mailing address, e-mail address, telephone numbers, and additional pertinent operational information. To be eligible to serve as Operations Officer an individual must be a Certified Member of the Group in good standing. The Operations Officer will serve as the Group's representative on the Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council and Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference's Operations Committees. Should this position become vacant mid-term, the Commander will appoint a replacement to serve the remainder of the term.

2nd Assistant Commander, Training Officer – It is the responsibility of the Training Officer to enforce the procedures, standards, and requirements of the Group and ASRC Training Standards and to evaluate applicants and members for compliance with those standards. The Training Officer shall propose to the Group for a vote all applicants for Certified Membership, maintain individual and group training records, schedule and advertise regular group trainings. To be eligible to serve as Training Officer an individual must be certified to minimum of Rescue Members and ASRC Field Team Leader. The Training Officer will serve as the Group's representative on the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference's Training Committee. Should this position become vacant mid-term, the Commander will appoint a replacement to serve the remainder of the term.

Section 2: Line Officers, Appointed.

Officers may delegate specific duties for which they are responsible to other members, who will report to the appointing officer. Established appointed positions are listed below. Line Officers may appoint additional assistants as necessary.

Appointed by Commander:

Vertical Rescue Officer – The Vertical Rescue Officer shall oversee technical rescue operations, trainings, and standards.

Canine Officer – The responsibilities of the Canine Officer shall be to enforce the procedures, standards, and requirements of the Group and ASRC Training Standards regarding dog handlers and their canine partners; to evaluate applicants and members for compliance with dog standards and requirements of the Group and ASRC Training Standards; maintain individual and Group canine training records; and schedule and advertise regular Group canine trainings;

Cave Rescue Officer – The Cave Rescue Officer shall oversee technical rescue operations, trainings, and standards; to maintain relations with the National Cave Rescue Commission and other local cave rescue responders.

Appointed by 1st Assistant Commander, Operations Officer:

Medical Officer – The responsibilities of the Medical Officer shall be to oversee Group medical trainings and standards, to review any medical care provided by the Group and ensure that all applicable standards and protocols are being followed. The Medical Officer shall serve as the Group's representative to the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference's Medical Committee.

Communications Officer – The responsibilities of the Group Communications Officer shall be the acquisition of the Group's communications equipment, maintenance of the Group's communications equipment, and to oversee operational use of the Group's communications equipment, as necessary. The Communications Officer shall serve as the Group's representative to the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference's Communications Committee.

1.7 Elections

Per the AMRG Bylaws, during March of each year, nominations for the elected officers shall be accepted from the membership. At the annual

meeting in April, the membership shall elect new officers. The new officers shall take office immediately.

2. Administration

2.1 Membership

Those wishing to become members of the Group can secure applications and guidance from the Executive Director or the Executive Director's designate. Applicants must be proposed for a vote at a regular Group meeting by the Executive Director or the Executive Director's, after the Executive Director or the Executive Director's has explained the rights, duties, and responsibilities of membership. The Training Officer is responsible for monitoring and certifying membership levels and training certifications. All membership dues are collected on December 1st and membership is valid for one year.

The classes of membership shall be as follows:

a. Probationary Members

Probationary Membership may be offered to applicants who wish to become Certified Members, but who have not yet met the requirements for Certified Membership. Probationary Membership shall be granted to any applicant who secures a simple majority of the votes cast in a scheduled membership meeting of the Group. Probationary Members may not respond to a group mission. Probationary Members will not be included on the roster sent to any organization of which the Group is a member that charges a fee or dues based on the number of Group members. A Probationary Member shall not be younger than 18 years of age. Annual membership fee is \$40.00, which includes one year of dues, FTM manual, and background check fees.

b. Certified Members

Certified Membership may be conferred upon those applicants who are certified by the Group Training Officer to have satisfied the Group's Callout Qualified requirements, have no history of a felony conviction, as determined by a criminal background check process as defined by the group, and who have secured a simple majority of the votes cast in a regularly scheduled membership meeting of the Group. Certified Membership is required in order to be able to respond to Group missions. Certified Members will have the right to vote in Group elections and on Group business. A Certified Member shall not be younger than 18 years of age. Annual membership fee is \$40.00, which includes one year of dues, FTM manual, and background check fees. Failure to continue to meet the Group's Callout Qualified requirements or other requirements for Certified Members will result in loss of Certified Member status and will result in the individual becoming a Sustaining Member.

c. Sustaining Members

Sustaining Membership may be offered to those individuals who wish to contribute monetary, material, or moral support to the Group. Sustaining

Members may not respond to a group mission. Sustaining Members will not be included on the roster sent to any organization of which the Group is a member that charges a fee or dues based on the number of Group members. Sustaining members will be included in all Group communications and may participate in non-mission group activities. Minimum annual dues for Sustaining Members are \$40.00. Background checks are not required of Sustaining Members, but Sustaining Members may request the team run a background check for them so that they can participate in non-mission activities such as PR events, school visits, and Hug-a-Tree instruction.

2.2 Nondiscriminatory Statement

AMRG shall not discriminate against or in favor of anyone on the basis of race, religion, color, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, or veteran status. AMRG will not tolerate any harassment or discrimination on the part of any member.

2.3 Drug Free Organization

Alcohol, drugs, and paraphernalia are prohibited at all AMRG missions and trainings. Members under the influence, or who appear to be under the influence, of alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicating substances will be relieved of duty and may face disciplinary measures.

Alcohol is permissible at team social functions that do not involve any operational or training events. Under no circumstances shall a member consume alcohol, drugs, or other intoxication substances, or be under the influence of such substances while on duty.

2.4 Background Checks

Membership with AMRG is contingent on successfully passing a criminal background check as defined by the group, which includes Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearances, and an FBI check for those who have not resided in Pennsylvania continuously for the last 10 years..

Renewal of Clearances

The clearances must be renewed and a new Disclosure Statement must be signed every 36 months. The Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance and Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check will be rerun for this 36 month renewal. The FBI fingerprint background check is not required for the 36 month renewal if the member has been a resident of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten-year period.

Failure by any Certified member to maintain the needed clearances will result in immediate loss of Callout Qualified status and the member's status will be changed from Certified Member to Sustaining Member.

Reporting Criminal Offenses

If a member is arrested for or convicted of an offense that would constitute grounds for denying participation in AMRG under the Child Protective Services Law as listed in the Disclosure Statement or is named as perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, the member must inform the AMRG Executive Director and Commander in writing within 72 hours after the arrest, conviction or notification that they have been listed as a perpetrator in the Statewide database.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

All AMRG members are required to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child. Emergency medical service provider certified by the Department of Health and members of rescue squads are considered mandatory reporters under state law.

If you have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect, report it immediately to both the State and to AMRG using the following procedure:

1. If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 or contact law enforcement if they are already on scene at the incident.
2. Report the suspect abuse to the Pennsylvania ChildLine (1-800-932-0313) or through the Child Welfare Portal:
<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis>
3. Contact AMRG's Commander to report the suspected abuse. If you become aware of the abuse during an active search, also inform the Search Manager in charge of the incident.

All AMRG members must complete an approved course on Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and the course must be retaken every 3 year. The standard class for AMRG is: <https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu>

2.5 Vaccinations

All AMRG members are strongly encouraged to receive Hepatitis B and Tetanus vaccinations. Due to the wilderness activities undertaken by members of AMRG, Tetanus boosters are recommended at 5 year intervals, rather than the standard 10 year intervals. Members who choose not to be vaccinated do so at their own risk and may be excluded from some group activities/calls as a result.

2.6 E-mail Lists

AMRG maintains several e-mail lists to manage communications with members and other interested parties. The main e-mail lists include:

AMRG members list – This list is limited to AMRG members only and is the main forum for official announcements and member communication. Messages posted to this list should be relevant to the AMRG business, general member interest, or general SAR topics. Off topic messages are not permitted. The Chief Technology Officer is responsible for moderating the members list to ensure that messages are appropriate and on topic.

AMRG officers list – This list is limited to AMRG elected and appointed officers and is the main forum for discussion of group officer business.

Callout list – This is used for emergency callouts and dispatching only. It includes Certified Members cell phone and pager addresses for emergency contact purposes. Only AMRG Alert Officers and Dispatchers are to post to this list.

AMRG Supplemental list – the supplemental list is for prospective members and other emergency services personnel who wish to be kept informed of upcoming trainings and events. Access to this list is restricted, only official AMRG announcements are to be sent to this list.

2.7 Uniform Requirements

The following guidelines will apply for all AMRG functions:

- The AMRG uniform t-shirt will be worn at all missions and field trainings. The AMRG golf shirt may be worn for base tasks during missions. The AMRG non-logo t-shirt, hoodie, AMRG or MRA logo golf shirts are permitted for non-mission related activities, such as PR events and trainings
- AMRG members should maintain a neat and professional appearance while in uniform. Remember, you represent the group by your appearance and behavior.
- Navy blue or khaki pants are recommended to be worn with the uniform shirt while on mission or at a field training. For formal dress occasions, black or dark blue dress slacks and dress shoes should be worn.

- When responding out of state in support of other ASRC teams, wearing the ASRC uniform shirt is permissible. For the ASRC uniform shirt:
 - AMRG members may wear one patch above the left breast pocket. This patch may be either the small DCNR patch or the MRA patch. All AMRG members may wear the small DCNR patch above the left breast pocket. Certified members of the AMRG MRA team may wear the MRA patch above the left breast pocket.
 - The name tag may be a blue or black military style sewn name tag.
 - The full official ASRC uniform is specified in the ASRC Administration Manual, Appendix E, available at <http://www.asrc.net>

2.8 Firearms and Weapons Policy

The possession, use, wearing, carrying, or display firearms or weapons of any type is prohibited at all AMRG missions, trainings, functions, and events. This policy does not apply to sworn law enforcement officers. Violation of this policy will result in the member being relieved of duty and possible disciplinary measures.

2.9 Complaints/Disciplinary policy

AMRG requires all members and officers to practice high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As representatives of AMRG, we must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the informal counseling of an AMRG member by a supervisor in reference to minor infractions of policy or procedure which will not result in disciplinary action being taken.

Reporting Responsibility

This Discipline Policy is intended to encourage and enable members and others to raise serious concerns internally so that AMRG can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of all board members, officers, and members to report concerns about violations of AMRG's code of ethics, policies, or suspected violations of law or regulations that govern AMRG's operations.

Reporting Procedure

AMRG has an open door policy and suggests that members share their questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints with an officer or board director. Complaints or knowledge of policy, legal, or ethical violations, must be reported to the AMRG Commander. If the complaint is related to the

actions of the Commander, or if you are not comfortable speaking with the Commander, you may report the violation to the Operations Officer or Executive Director.

Violations that occur during an incident should be reported to the ranking AMRG member on scene, per the chain of command. The ranking AMRG member must inform the accused individual of the charge, discuss the charge with the accused person if possible, decide if further investigation is warranted, and render a decision. The Commander or Operations Officer may be contacted, if available for, for consultation before rendering a decision. The ranking AMRG member may dismiss the individual from an incident per standard Incident Command System (ICS) protocol. A follow-up report placed in the unit log will be forwarded to the AMRG Commander as soon as practical and within 48 hours. The Commander will be responsible for any follow-up action.

Acting in Good Faith

Anyone filing a written complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

Confidentiality

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

Handling of Reported Violations

The Commander is responsible for investigating reports of violations. The Commander may appoint another person as investigator. The investigation will be conducted according to the following guidelines. These guidelines can be adapted as a situation warrants. All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

1. Notify person who submitted a complaint and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation.
2. Gather facts surrounding the reported violation or suspected violation.
3. Determine the merits of the reported violation or suspected violation.
4. Conduct an investigation surrounding allegations of violation.
 - a. Interview complainant, witnesses, and alleged violator.
5. Make a ruling if a violation has occurred and impose a disciplinary action.
6. Report results of investigation to the Board of Directors, Complainant, and violator.

Disciplinary action is taken to promote the efficiency of team operations. In exercising discipline, the AMRG will give due regard to each member's rights and will ensure that disciplinary actions are based on objective considerations without regard to age, color, disability, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Where violations are reoccurring, the standard steps shall be followed. In cases requiring severe measures, one or more steps may be omitted.

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to:

- Warning Notice (verbal)
- Written Warning
- Suspension and Final Warning
- Termination of membership

There will be three (3) classes of discipline. They are as follows:

Class I: Immediate termination of membership.

Class II: Written warning, suspension, termination

Class III: Oral warning, written warning, suspension, termination

Examples of Class I causes:

- Illegal activity.
- Theft of department property or another employee's property.
- Intentional destruction of department property.
- Falsifying reports.
- Gross insubordination such as refusal to follow directions or safety instructions
- Threatening, abusing or striking another member or other individual.
- Harassing another member or other individual
- Lying or willfully omitting critical information on an application.

Examples of Class II causes:

- Use or under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on duty.
- Reckless driving or disobeying traffic laws when responding to a call.
- Negligent or careless use of team equipment.
- Failure to comply with team rules or procedures.

Examples of Class III causes:

- Foul and/or abusive language
- Inefficient, incompetent or negligent performance of work.
- Failure to follow sign in/sign out procedures.
- Inability or failure to maintain satisfactory relations with other members or members of the public

All warnings, oral and written, shall be documented. Copies of these warnings shall be given to the member, with a copy being kept in their personnel file.

Appeal of Disciplinary Action

Members subjected to disciplinary action may appeal the decision to the Board of Directors.

1. The Board of Directors will review the merits of the appeal and determine if they will hear an appeal or not.
2. If the Board of Directors accepts the appeal, they may conduct a further investigation, appoint a new investigator, and/or schedule a hearing
3. After reviewing the merits of the case, the Board of Directors will render a decision, which may include upholding the disciplinary action, vacating the disciplinary action, or imposing a different sanction.
4. All decisions by the Board of Directors are final and may not be appealed.

Direct Action by the Board of Directors

In all cases, AMRG and its Board of Directors reserve the right to manage team membership and individual performance issues for the good of the organization. This includes denying or terminating membership in the group and denying participation in any or all group events and functions. The Board of Directors may take direct action to address performance and behavior issues at any time. All decisions by the Board of Directors are final and may not be appealed.

Accounting and Auditing Matters

AMRG's Commander shall immediately notify the Board of Directors of any concerns or complaint regarding corporate accounting practices, internal controls or auditing and work with the Board of Directors until the matter is resolved.

No Retaliation and Whistleblower Protection

It is contrary to the values of AMRG for anyone to retaliate against any board member, officer, or member who in good faith reports an ethics violation, or a suspected violation of law, such as a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or suspected fraud, or suspected violation of any policy or regulation governing the operations of AMRG. A member who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of membership.

AMRG's Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring that all complaints about retaliation for previously making a complaint. If you have previously made a complaint to the Commander or another officer and feel that you are being targeted for unfair treatment by an AMRG officer as a result of the complaint, contact the Compliance Officer to report the violation. The Compliance Officer will be responsible for investigating complaints of retaliation and will advise the Board of Directors of the validity of such complaints. The Board of Directors is responsible for taking action for addressing retaliation.

Compliance Officer: * {Note: The Compliance Officer may be a board member, an officer, or a member. The Compliance Officer may not be the Executive Director, Commander, or Board President}.

2.10 Media Contact/ Interdepartmental Communications

AMRG encourages its members to proactively promote the group to the general public and other emergency service personnel in order to increase recruitment and callouts. However, any communications, interviews, press releases, letters, or invitations on behalf of AMRG must have the prior approval of the Executive Director or the Team Commander.

2.11 Group Roster/Mailing lists

The Operations Officer maintains a group roster with contact information for all current members. AMRG provides a copy of the group roster to the ASRC and the MRA on a regular basis, in accordance with our membership in these organizations.

AMRG may provide a copy of the group roster containing only member names and mailing addresses to select companies for the purposes of securing pro deals and other group discounts. Members may request to be removed from these distributions, with the understanding that this may remove their eligibility for participating in some pro deals or other group discounts.

2.12 Pro Deals/Member Benefits

AMRG has secured special pricing deals for its members from a number of companies. These pro deals offer considerable savings to our members (often in the 40% to 50% range). In exchange, these companies want to make sure that their support is going to SAR efforts only.

Purchases must be for AMRG Certified Members only. You can not buy things for friends or family. Any items bought through a purchase program that need to be returned must be returned through the pro purchase program -- any other way is unacceptable. You cannot return items to a local merchant. You can't go to a local merchant and tell them that you can get a better deal through the pro purchase and that you are only in to try stuff on for size. If any of these things happen AMRG will lose its pro deal and the bargains are gone. Don't abuse the generosity of these companies.

All current Pro Deals are listed in the member only portion of the website.

2.13 Meetings (Location, Parking, Reserving rooms/equipment)

Regular monthly trainings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 1830 hours at UPMC Mercy Hospital, room 2190. The room is automatically reserved for use each month. Mercy Hospital Security may need to be contacted to unlock the room.

In order to reserve a classroom for a different day/time for special meeting or trainings, or to request AV equipment (projectors, TV's, VCR's, etc) contact Patty Ross at UPMC Mercy. 412-232-7591 or pross@upmc.edu.

Parking in the Mercy Hospital garage is free for AMRG members, provided you get your parking tickets validated. The UPMC Mercy Hospital Security office will validate parking tickets on an individual basis.

2.14 Mailbox

The AMRG mailbox is located in the Department of Emergency Medicine at UPMC Mercy Hospital. The mailing address is:

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group
Department of Emergency Medicine
UPMC Mercy Hospital
1400 Locust Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

The mailbox is suitable for standard US mail only. Oversized packages, boxes, or items that require a signature upon delivery should not be sent to the mailbox. The mail box should be checked regularly, at a minimum once per month.

2.15 Locker

The Group locker is located in the facilities maintenance area of UPMC Mercy hospital. The locker is used for storing gear and records that don't fit in the trailer and generally are not used on missions. The Operations Officer is responsible for the organization and maintenance of the team gear and the locker. All valuables stored at the locker must be locked cabinet, or otherwise secured. Access to the locker is limited to team members that are responsible for transporting team gear to missions and trainings.

2.16 Equipment Trailer

The trailer is the primary storage location for all of the team's operational equipment. Access to the trailer is limited to team members that are responsible for transporting team gear to missions and trainings. Prior authorization from the Commander or Operations Officer is required before members can access the trailer or the equipment stored in it.

Members must receive prior authorization from the Commander or Operations Officer before towing the equipment trailer. In order to tow the trailer, the member must have a vehicle capable of safely towing the trailer, that has a current inspection and registration, and is properly insured. The operator is fully responsible for the safe connection and operation of the trailer. Prior to moving the trailer, the operator will complete the National Highway traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) trailer pre-departure safety checklist. A copy of the NHTSA trailer towing guide ([Towing A Trailer: Being](#)

[Equipped For Safety](#)), which includes the pre-departure safety checklist, is stored in the trailer. Operators will be familiar with the safety guidelines contained in this guide before moving or operating the trailer.

The operator will obey all traffic laws while towing the trailer. No passengers are permitted to ride in or on the trailer. No one is permitted to operator or tow the trailer while under the influence of alcohol, narcotics, or any other substance which inhibits the operator's ability to safely operation the trailer.

- **Trailer Pre-Departure Safety Checklist**

Before driving, make sure your vehicle maintenance and trailer maintenance are current. This is very important because towing puts additional stress on the tow vehicle. (Review the next section of the brochure for an overview of maintenance requirements.)

- Check and correct tire pressure on the tow vehicle and trailer.
- Make sure the wheel lug nuts/bolts on the tow vehicle and trailer are tightened to the correct torque.
- Be sure the hitch, coupler, draw bar, and other equipment that connect the trailer and the tow vehicle are properly secured and adjusted.
- Check that the wiring is properly connected— not touching the road, but loose enough to make turns without disconnecting or damaging the wires.
- Make sure all running lights, brake lights, turn signals, and hazard lights are working.
- Verify that the brakes on the tow vehicle and trailer are operating correctly.
- Check that all items are securely fastened on and in the trailer.
- Be sure the trailer jack, tongue support, and any attached stabilizers are raised and locked in place.
- Check load distribution to make sure the tow vehicle and trailer are properly balanced front to back and side to side.
- Check side- and rear-view mirrors to make sure you have good visibility.
- Check routes and restrictions on bridges and tunnels.
- Make sure you have wheel chocks and jack stands.

2.17 Equipment Policies

Team equipment is only for use at team trainings and during missions. Personal use of team equipment is prohibited. All team equipment is to be stored at the Group locker or in the equipment trailer. Exceptions can be made with the prior authorization of the group Commander or Operations Officer. This is limited to equipment that has be assigned to individual members, who are then responsible for the maintenance of the equipment and to ensure that the equipment is available for all missions.

Any equipment removed from the equipment trailer must be signed out on the equipment log posted at the locker and/or trailer. The use of any technical rescue equipment is to be documented in the equipment logs. Equipment is to be inspected before and after each use. Any damage or excessive wear should be reported to the Operations Officer for repair or replacement.

The Operations Officer is responsible for doing an annual inventory of the team's equipment to ensure that all of the equipment is accounted for and in working condition. The results of the inventory will be documented in the Operations Officer's team records. As a minimal standard, the equipment cache must meet the group equipment requirements as stated in the ASRC Operations Manual.

All AMRG equipment should be clearly marked with either the name of the team or the designated team colors, Orange-Green-Orange, or both.

2.18 Budgeting

The group Executive Director will submit a proposed annual budget to the membership at the December business meeting. A one month comment period will follow and the final budget will be voted on by the membership at the January business meeting.

The budget may be modified by the Board of Directors or group vote during the course of the year at a meeting, as defined in the group Bylaws.

2.19 Procurement and purchasing

The group Executive Director and Treasurer are authorized to solicit funding, accept bids, and make procurement and purchasing within the confines of the approved annual budget.

Procurement and purchasing that are outside the scope of the approved annual budget must receive the prior approval of the Board of Directors or the group vote at a meeting, as defined in the group Bylaws. An exception is made for emergency purchases needed to ensure the operational capability of the organization. Emergency purchases may not be in excess of \$500.00 and must be authorized by the Team Commander or the on scene incident commander, if the purchase is made during the course of an on-going mission. Emergency purchases must be reported and justified at the next business meeting.

The Executive Director and Treasurer will ensure that the lowest price possible is paid for all purchases more than \$200.00. It is the policy of the group to solicit at least three bids for all purchases and to purchase from the lowest bidder. Exemptions to the policy will be made under the following circumstances:

- Sole source items where competitive bidding is not possible.

- Procurements made through government managed purchasing programs where the purchase price is fixed at the government procurement price. It is assumed that the best pricing due diligence has been provided by the government agency administering the program.
- Pre-existing long-term relationships with a specific vendor, provided that best pricing due diligence was performed prior to the establishment of the relationship.
- Emergency purchases needed to ensure the operational capability of the organization.

2.20 Expense Reimbursements

The preferred method of payment for all purchases is an invoice sent to the AMRG treasurer so that payment can be made directly to the vendor. When this is not possible, the Treasurer will reimburse members for purchases made on behalf of the group. In order to receive reimbursement, the Treasurer must receive a request for reimbursement that includes all receipts for the purchase. The purchase must have been approved by the Board of Directors, either through an approved annual budget or through the procurement and purchasing policy as defined in section 2.19.

Under no circumstances will a cash advance be made to members for future purchases.

2.21 Reporting injuries/accidents

Any injuries or accidents occurring at AMRG trainings, missions, or other functions must be reported to the medical officer as soon as possible.

2.22 Insurance

AMRG maintains general liability insurance in order to offer *some* financial protection to the group and its members. This insurance also provides very basic personal injury insurance to members taking part in office group activities. For more information about the AMRG insurance policy and for insurance beneficiary forms please see the Executive Director.

AMRG also maintains property insurance for the group's operational equipment. Any loss or damage to the group's equipment should be reported to the Operations Officer as soon as possible.

2.23 Community Outreach/Hug-a-Tree

Community outreach and education is a vital part of AMRG's mission. AMRG conducts educational seminars for the general public at no cost. In particular, AMRG offers Hug-a-Tree programs to schools and other youth groups within our primary service area. Hug-a-Tree is an international program that teaches children how to avoid getting lost and what to do if they do ever get lost in the

woods. Hug-a-Tree presenters must attend an instructor's course and successfully pass a State Police criminal background check. All presentations should be coordinated with the group so that they are properly recorded in the group training logs. If you are interested in becoming a Hug-a-Tree presenter, please see the Hug-a-Tree coordinator.

2.24 STAT

STAT MedEvac provides dispatching services for AMRG and can also provide contact information for PSARC teams across the state. They can be used as a resource to page the group when other means of communication are lacking, for referral support, and to arrange helicopters for searching and for transportation. Emergency contact number: 1-800-633-7828 or 412-647-7828.

2.25 Patch Trading

AMRG patches and logos are for Group use only. Patches will not be traded or sold. This policy is also applicable to Mountain Rescue Association (MRA), Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC), Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council (PSARC), and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) patches.

2.26 Multi-Agency Membership

Members belonging to any other volunteer search and rescue organization must inform the Team Commander of this membership prior to engaging in any AMRG related function. In the case of joint memberships, AMRG is to be considered the individual's primary team, except in cases where a waiver is granted by the Team Commander. When responding to a mission that AMRG has been dispatched to, all AMRG members must comply with the policies and procedures in this document, unless they are responding as a member of a police, fire, EMS in their local response area, government disaster response agency, or as a condition of their normal employment, in which case they will be considered to be responding under the auspice of that organization. In such cases, the member must inform the Team Commander or ranking team member at the incident.

3. Training

3.1 Training Standards/Certification Levels.

AMRG maintains a training program in accordance with the MRA training standards, as detailed in MRA policy 105.1. The goal of the training program is to progress Certified Members through the various level of MRA and AMRG certification. This program also prepares members for other external certifications such as ASRC FTM and FTL, DCNR FTM and FTL, and the NASAR SARTECH certifications. The training program is coordinated by the Training Officer. The AMRG certifications levels includes:

- Callout Qualified (CQ)
- Operational Member
- Rescue Member
- Dog Team Type I-IV
- Canine Management Liaison
- Alert Officer (AO)
- Operations Leader/Search Manager level I-IV

The Training Officer and/or Canine Officer will maintain checkoff sheets or position task books (PTBs) detailing the requirements for certification level and to track individuals progress toward achieving the certification.

Additionally, AMRG conducts additional specialized training for canine search teams, technical rescue, cave rescue, and light urban search and rescue.

In order to meet the requirements for Callout Qualified status members must:

- Successfully pass the AMRG member background check process
- Successfully complete the AMRG SAR 101 training course
- Successfully complete the following classes and provide copies of the certifications to the Training Officer:
 - NIMS 100 (Available at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslst.asp>)
 - NIMS 700 (Available at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslst.asp>)
- Return to the Training Officer the signed Acknowledgement of Receipt for the AMRG Standard Operating Procedures document
- Meet the qualifications for AMRG CQ status, as judged by the Training Officer

All members are expected to reach Operational Member within one year of becoming a Probationary Member. AMRG is required by our outside certifications from PSARC to have a certain number and percentage of our members at the FTM or higher level. Members staying at the Callout Qualified level for more than one year may impact the group's ability to retain these outside certifications and/or to accept new members into the group.

For members who have not reached the Operational certification level after one year, renewal of Callout Qualified status will be contingent upon approval of the Training Officer and Commander and meet the following participation requirements:

- Attend a minimum of 6 field trainings training sessions per year.
- Failure to attend at least 1 field training in any 6 month period.

All members at the Operational Member level and higher must have successfully completed the following standard certification and have provided copies of the certifications to the Training Officer:

- Hold valid outside ground SAR certification from one of following organizations:
 - ASRC Field Team Member or higher
 - NASAR SARTech II or higher
 - DCNR FTM or higher
- Current First Aid or higher and CPR
- HazMat Awareness (Available online at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS5.asp>)
- Combination Helicopter/Airplane Safety modules A101, A105, A106, A108 and A113 (Available online at <https://www.iat.gov/Training/pages/online.asp>)

Additionally, all members at the Rescue Member level and higher must have successfully completed the following standard certification and have provided copies of the certifications to the Training Officer:

- Hold valid outside ground SAR certification from one of following organizations:
 - ASRC Field Team Leader or higher
 - NASAR SARTech I or higher
 - DCNR FTL or higher
- NIMS 200 (Available Online at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp>)
- NIMS 800 (Available Online at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp>)

All Certified Members at the Operational Member level and higher are expected to both maintain their certification and remain active operational members of the team. Any member who fails to attend at least 1 field training in any 6 month period will lose their Callout Qualified status.

Individuals who have lost their Certified Member status due to failure to meet on going requirement may have their Certified Member status reinstated, within 6 months, if they proper fulfill all of the missing requirements and have the Commander and Training Officer verify that they once again in compliance with all requirements. Any member who has gone more than 6 months since losing their Callout Qualified status, who resigned their membership in the group, or who lost their certification status due to letting their certifications expire, must follow the normal full certification process, including the required membership votes.

3.2 Testing and Training Records

AMRG certification testing, conducted in accord with MRA policy, is held as necessary by the Training Officer. AMRG maintains records of training attendance and participation, however, it is the responsibility of each member to ensure that their training records are maintained correctly. Members should bring their training check off sheets to all trainings and missions. The Operational and Recue Member skill check off sheets are intended to keep track of skills that are successfully demonstrated and allow for some testing to be distributed throughout the training year. When a new skill is successfully demonstrated, the member should make sure that a Rescue Member signs off on the sheet and that the completed documentation is given to the Training Officer to be entered in the AMRG training database. Successfully demonstrating a skill means performing the function correctly and safely without any guidance or assistance. Certification testing will be offered by the Training Officer when a member completes all of the skills on their check off sheet. Any skills that have been checked off more than one year prior must be successfully re-performed prior to or as part of the testing process. Certification testing includes a standard written test and practical testing, which may require re-demonstration of skills on the check off sheets, as determined by the Training Officer. In addition to the internal checkoffs and testing, members must also successfully complete one of the approved external certifications.

Members must also be sure to sign-in at all trainings so that there is an attendance record.

Members are also encouraged to maintain a personal callout log and to document the tasks and roles completed during each mission. The search manager, an officer, or your field team leader can sign the mission log to certify the tasks were completed. This is can be key information when the member attempts to reach the higher levels of certification.

Canine testing and training is coordinated by the Canine Officer. Vertical rope rescue testing and training is coordinated by the Vertical Rescue Ofiicer. Cave Rescue testing and training is coordinated by the Cave Rescue Officer.

3.3 Recommend External Training/Certification

AMRG maintains an extensive training program, but there are numerous external trainings and certifications that AMRG members are encouraged to pursue.

Operational Member:

- Orientation to Cave Rescue, NCRC
- Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder
- Water Rescue & Emergency Response, PA Fish and Boat Commission

- HAM radio operator

Rescue Member:

- EMT or Wilderness EMT
- Advanced Line Systems Rescue, PA Fish and Boat Commission
- Cave Rescue Level I, NCRC

3.4 Sign-in and Mileage

All members and guests attending AMRG trainings must sign-in so that there is an attendance record. This information is used not only for training records but also to document man hours spent training and miles driven, information which is used in the annual report and in grant applications.

3.5 Inter-organizational/Community Exercises

AMRG actively encourages training exercises with other emergency services organizations. All inter-organizational trainings must be arranged through the Commander or Training Officer.

4. Emergency Operations

4.1 Dispatch/Callout information

AMRG Callout List

The AMRG missions alerts are sent through an application called Active 911. This system is used for both notifying members of the details of the incident, as well as for individual members to communicate if they are available and responding to a search or not. Callout messages can be sent through Active 911 to cell phones, alpha/numeric pagers, regular e-mail addresses, and the regular AMRG e-mail distribution list. Members who elect to not to use the Active 911 will not be notified of a search except by email to the group which could be delayed by many hours. Members must keep the operations officer informed of any changes to their contact information in order to ensure that the Callout roster and Active 911 is always up to date.

If you are planning on being out of contact for a significant period of time, such as while on vacation, you should inform the Group that you will be out of service during this time. This will save the dispatch officer from trying to track you down when you do not respond to a page. You can also mark yourself as out of service in Active 911 which will temporarily stop notifications to your phone during this period so that you are not interrupted during your vacation.

Callout Standing Operational Guidelines (SOG's) and flow

1. A Responsible Authority (Police, Fire, DCNR, other SAR group, etc) calls STATMedEvac dispatch or the county 911 center and requests an AMRG response. The dispatcher will get the details of the request from the caller and inform them that an AMRG Alert Officer will call them back. The information taken will generally include:
 - a. Name, department, and call back number of the caller.
 - b. General nature of the incident.
 - c. General location of the incident.
2. The dispatcher will then send an alert to AMRG via Active 911 requesting an Alert Officer contact them to get the information about the search.
3. This initial alert will go to the whole team, but only an Alert Offer should respond by calling the dispatcher back to acknowledge the alert was received and to get further details of the call. If the dispatcher does not receive a response they will attempt to page the group a 2nd time. If they still do not receive a response the pager system may not be functioning and they will begin calling individual AO's until they reach one. The AO's for AMRG are Rescue Members's and higher and are trained to interface with the requesting agency and determine the needed response and to make suggestions about what to due until AMRG personnel arrive. Only AO's are permitted to respond to an initial alert and determine if the team will respond or not.. If you are not an AO, you should update your availability in the Active911 app and begin to prepare to respond to a possible mission.

4. After an AO has called and received the details for the search, they will send a message through Active 911 to let the other AO's know that the call has been handled and prevents multiple people from calling dispatch for the same callout. This message may be a very simple: "Handled"
5. The AO will then contact the requesting agency and discuss the search and a possible AMRG response. Based on this conversation, the AO will then send out a message explaining the response requested. The message will be as detailed as possible and will include a phone number for you to call, if appropriate. See the section below for an explanation of the possible pages.
6. If there is a full callout, the Active 911 will provide you with details and instructions. You should update your availability to respond through Active 911. It is important that you update your status even if you are not available, as it is the only way we have to know that you received the notification. If you have any questions about the search or need more details, you can call the dispatch phone number provided.. However, be aware that the AO officer is very busy at this moment. The AO is working with the RA, putting together directions to the search, contacting other search teams for additional resources, and trying to get ready to leave for the search themself.
7. After updating your availability in Active 911 you should prepare to respond to the search. This can include getting your gear together, arranging time off of work, and rearranging schedules.
8. When you are ready to for the search you must updated Active 911 again to show that you are driving so that we know who is actually on the road responding. You may also share your location through Active 911 so that AMRG Dispatch and other responding team members can see your location as you drive to the scene.
9. Once you are on the road to the search you should inform dispatch of any changes that will significantly delay or prevent your arrival on scene. When you arrive on scene you need to update Active 911 with this information. Should the search end while you are en route, you will receive an alert to that effect with instructions to turn around.
10. When you are leaving the scene, either after the search has ended or if you have to leave while it is in progress, you need to update Active 911 that you are driving. Once you are on the road home you should inform dispatch of any changes that will significantly delay your arrival. When you arrive home you must update Active 911 to show that you are back home. Dispatch will not close down until all personnel are accounted for.
11. When all AMRG personnel have reported in from home, dispatch will close, concluding the mission. A final notification will be sent out stating that dispatch is closed. If it is very late at night, the dispatch officer may elect to send this e-mail to the AMRG list rather than sending a notification or may simply update Active 911 without sending a new notification.

4.2 [Deprecated: Pager Codes]

In the past, when we used pagers and phones with limited text message sizes, we used various pager codes as a type of short hand. While AMRG no longer uses these codes, some other ASRC teams still do. They are included here for historical reference. Plain text is preferred to page codes at this time.

000	Disregard previous page	441	Status 1 find
100	AO call	442	Status 2 find
101	Handled	443	Status 3 find
102	IC call	444	Teams en route turn around
103	ACA call	445	Search suspended
105	Dispatch number changed	551	Base call
111	Notification	552	Dispatch call
123	Pager test	553	Teams en route call
222	Alert	554	Group dispatch call
331	Overhead team requested	777	Meeting on Tuesday
332	Limited callout	888	Dispatch closing
333	Full callout	999	Disaster callout

4.3 Mission Response/Minimum Response Requirements

Generally, in order for AMRG to be able to respond to an incident a Rescue Member or higher must be available. When responding, a team Officer, Search Manager, or other Rescue member should be the first to arrive on scene. Lower level members may be held back to avoid having them arrive prior to a Rescue Member. This is to ensure that the first AMRG members on scene are able to begin organizing the search effort and provide expert advice to the Responsible Authority (RA) which has requested our assistance. In some SAR documents, the RA may be referred to as the AHJ (Agency Having Jurisdiction) which is a roughly equivalent term. The Alert Officer handling the request for service will determine when and if AMRG resources are deployed, based on the nature of the call and the available Certified Members.

AMRG members certified as Callout Qualified or Operational Member may be authorized to respond to searches being managed by other teams without the presence of an AMRG Rescue Member, if a senior member of the team requesting us is on scene to supervise and approves AMRG sending less experienced members. This must be approved by either the Commander or the Operations Officer.

Only an Alert Officer, the Operations Officer, or Commander can authorize the team's response to a mission. Members may not respond to incident scenes without being properly dispatched as part of an authorized team response, including returning to an incident scene after a mission has been

suspended or AMRG's participation in it has been suspended. Responding outside of the AMRG dispatch system or without the knowledge or authorization of the team is known as "self-deploying" and is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

Additionally, AMRG members may not bring, invite, or request any non-AMRG Callout Qualified individuals to incidents. All individuals responding to an incident must be properly credentialed and requested through official dispatch channels. Requests for assistance from other SAR teams or emergency services organizations must be made through official AMRG dispatch/on-scene command, must be approved by or at the request of the RA/AHJ, and may only be made to teams/organizations approved for mutual aid in the AMRG resource manual. When in doubt, contact the team Commander, Operations Officer, or team dispatch.

4.4 Response Area

AMRG's primary response area is the Southwestern portion of Pennsylvania and includes all counties that make up the Pennsylvania Region 13 All Hazards and Counter Terrorism Task Force, including: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland. Within the primary response area AMRG will respond with the entire group and its complete equipment cache and trailer.

AMRG's extended response area includes all of Pennsylvania and other areas within a 4-hour drive time from Pittsburgh. Within the extended response area AMRG expects it will be working with another SAR team local to the area and will not be considered the primary response team. AMRG will generally respond with a partial team and with limited equipment including one operations kit, team communications equipment, one small vertical rescue kit, and a one BLS medical kit.

AMRG will generally not respond outside of the extended response area. Under exceptional circumstances, such as large scale natural or manmade disasters, AMRG may respond outside of the extended response area with a specialized team provided roundtrip transportation is arranged by the requesting organization. Under these circumstances AMRG will provide specialized resources as requested and available. The decision to respond outside of the extended response area will be made by the AMRG Commander or Operation Officer.

Through our mutual aid agreements with the ASRC and PSARC present opportunities for members to respond to outside the extended response area to support other teams, if they so choose. These may require long drives and overnight stays. These are often paged out as optional, limited response missions for those interested or who happen to be traveling in the area.

4.5 AMRG and Search Leadership

AMRG's role is to bring leadership to the lost person search incident. This is done in many ways, including providing search management resources, field team leaders, and specialized search resources such as canine and technical rescue teams. These tools are used to coordinate and guide local resources to conduct the search in a more efficient and successful way. All AMRG members, regardless of certification level, should act as leaders and role models during search missions. Members should be willing to help out and support the search managers in any way that they can, they should proactively look for problems and take the necessary steps to avoid or correct them, and they should provide a calm and reassuring example to the local resources and families that we are there to help. Complaints about how a search is run should be addressed in private with a superior. Public complaining or gossiping is hurtful both to the search effort and to AMRG's image.

4.6 Briefing/Debriefing

It is the responsibility of each member to ensure that they are properly briefed before beginning a task. No task should be started without a clear understanding of the goal of the task. After completion of the task members must ensure that they are properly debriefed and that a completed Task Assignment Form is returned to search base. It is recommended that people who act as FTLs for a task also keep a copy of the TAF for their personal records.

This is not only the responsibility of AMRG Rescue Members, it is the responsibility of all members. If the FTL of your team does not brief or debrief you or does not debrief with base speak up and address the situation before it becomes a real problem.

4.7 Mutual Aid/Requesting External Assistance

AMRG maintains formal and informal agreements with a number of external agencies to assist one another. These agreements are documented in Resource Manual. Only agencies with current agreements and approved in the Resource Manual are authorized to be requested or recommended by AMRG. Nothing in this policy prevents requesting any standard non-SAR resources to an incident through the local county 911 center.

AMRG is part of PSARC, which includes the ability to make mutual calls to any other PSARC team.

Beyond the formal agreement with PSARC, the Commander may enter into additional agreements with the leaders of other teams for mutual aid. Generally, teams that meet the following criteria will be eligible for a mutual aid agreement with AMRG.

- Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit or government sponsored agency dedicated to search and rescue or a related field.

- Be a team in good standing in the local SAR community, with a reputation as a professional resource.
- Follow widely accepted minimum SAR training and certification standards.
- Agree to and demonstrate the willingness to call AMRG into searches and recommend us to RAs.
- Regularly training with AMRG.

Activities that may exclude an organization from being accepted as a mutual aid resource or may result in termination of an agreement include:

- Unprofessional, unethical, or illegal activity by the team or individual members of the team. This may include self-deploying, failure to follow ICS procedures, rude or unreputable behavior.
- Unsafe behavior or activities, including dangerous or uncontrolled canines.
- Having bite or protection trained canines (except for law enforcement agencies)
- Saying or disseminating negative things about AMRG or otherwise failing to partner with AMRG.

Individuals are not eligible for mutual aid agreements and individuals outside of a recognized agency or organization will not be requested or recommended.

4.8 Resource List

The Operations Officer will maintain and make available to all alert officers and search managers a resource list of external agencies that AMRG may call on for additional support. Only to teams/organizations approved for mutual aid in the AMRG resource manual should be requested for support.

4.9 Medical Protocols

AMRG personnel providing medical treatment to patients in the backcountry context will use the Wilderness Emergency Medical Institute's Pennsylvania Wilderness EMS Protocols and standing orders from AMRG's Medical Director. The Pennsylvania Department of Health's EMS Protocols will be followed in medical situations outside the backcountry context

4.10 Medical Command

The Medical Director may be reached for medical command when and if needed at 412-607-0400 (cell) or 412-276-1980 (home).

4.11 Media Contact

AMRG strives to maintain productive relations with the media. To facilitate this, during a mission a designated media contact person, or Public Information Officer, will be appointed. All media contact should be handled by the person. All other AMRG members should avoid any discussion of the

incident with the media. Talking about general background of AMRG or your personal background or allowing your photo to be taken may be allowed, but you should not make any comments about the current search or about similar past searches. The best course of action is always to simply refer the reporter to the Public Information Officer and not to make any comments yourself.

4.12 Family Contact

Family members and friends of the subject will often be in and around search base and they may be going into the field as part of the search effort. Family members may have radios on the search frequency or be standing near someone who does. Family members may or may not be wearing an identification arm band. Always be aware that family members are around and may overhear anything that you say. With that in mind always avoid negative, pessimistic, thoughtless, crude, or otherwise inappropriate comments during a search.

4.13 CISD/Post incident Safety Follow-up

AMRG realizes that occasionally members may encounter particularly stressful incidents. Members are encouraged to seek assistance from local CISD teams and will assist members in any possible way to accomplish this goal.

4.14 Violent Subjects

It is AMRG's policy not to accept missions involving subjects that may be armed and dangerous to searchers. AMRG will not provide field resources for searches for criminal suspects or escaped convicts or perform other law enforcement functions. AMRG may, however, provide overhead support and advice for these types of searches. AMRG will search for crime victims and crime scene evidence. AMRG will also search for despondent and suicidal subjects. It is the responsibility of the AMRG leadership to determine if a subject is likely to pose a threat to searchers and to decline or suspend operations if it is determined that they are a threat. It is the responsibility of all AMRG members to realize that any subject could pose a threat to their health and safety and to take reasonable steps to mitigate any safety risks.

An AMRG member who encounters a situation that involves a violent, hostile, or armed subject should immediately leave the area, advise search base, and wait until law enforcement has declared the scene safe.

4.15 Hazardous Environments

The wilderness search environment contains many potential hostile and dangerous situations. Flooded areas, aggressive animals (domestic and wild), hazardous materials, illegal drug labs, hostile individuals, downed power lines, crash scenes, and unstable manmade structures are just some of the dangers that searchers may encounter.

An AMRG member who encounters a hazardous environment that they are not equipped and trained to enter safely should avoid or immediately exit the area. Search base should be advised of the hazardous area so that it can be avoided by other teams and arrangements made to safely gain access to the area. The hazard should be documented on the TAF and noted on the task map. The hazard should be addressed during the task debriefing to make it clear to the search management that the hazard exists and that the area was not searched as a result.

4.16 Trespassing

AMRG members must respect the private property rights of land owners at all times. Due to the emergency nature of search operations, it is generally assumed that landowners will permit searchers on their property. However, if a land owner requests the searchers not enter their property or if the land is posted no trespassing, the searchers must comply. AMRG personnel should try to politely explain the situation to the land owner and attempt to gain their permission to search the property. If permission cannot be secured, the searchers should leave the area and advise search base of the situation and await further instructions. Search management will attempt to secure permission through other means, such as local law enforcement.

4.17 Scene Procedures

All search scenes are to be treated as crime scenes. Do not unnecessarily disturb the scene. As much evidence as possible should be preserved, while not hindering the treatment of a patient or endangering the safety of the team. Any evidence that is moved or damaged should be documented as soon as possible and law enforcement should be informed.

4.18 DOA Procedures

If a subject is located and appears to be deceased, the area should be secured immediately to prevent evidence from being damaged. Incident base should be informed of the situation. The subject should be approached by the medic only, being careful not to damage any potential evidence, and examined to confirm the subject is deceased. The medic should then leave the area via the precisely same entry path. The entry and exit path should be documented. The team should then wait further instructions from base or the arrival of law enforcement.

4.19 Mission Summaries/Debriefs

The final search manager or highest ranking members participating in a mission is responsible for writing a mission summary which should be included in the mission records and sent to the AMRG Operations Officer.

Major missions will be debriefed, either at the next business meeting or at a special debrief meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to expand our

knowledge base and is part of a continual improvement process to learn from what worked and what did not in order to improve performance at future searches. During a mission, members are only seeing a small part of the overall event; by debriefing we are able to collect experiences and observations from all areas of the search effort. All members are encouraged to participate in mission debriefs, even if they were not present at the search.

4.20 Radio Frequencies

AMRG is able to legally operate on the following frequencies, using the following FCC licenses:

- WPAU365 (Mountain Rescue Association)
 - 155.160 (National SAR Frequency)
- WPEZ758 (Appalachian Search & Rescue Conference,)
 - ALFA 155.1600 tone 127.3 National SAR
 - CHARLI 155.2800 tone 127.3
 - ECHO 155.2050 tone 127.3 VA SAR
 - FOXTRO 155.2200 tone 127.3
 - GOLF 155.1750 tone 127.3
 - HOTEL 155.2350 tone 127.3
 - INDIA 155.2650 tone 127.3
 - JULIET 155.2950 tone 127.3
 - ROMEO 150.7750 tone 127.3 PA SAR
 - SIERRA 150.7900 tone 127.3
 - ASRC Repeater 155.2800 150.7750 tone 127.3 W
- WQEU871 (Appalachian Search & Rescue Conference)
 - LIMA 151.6250 tone 127.3 W ASRC Business/Logistics
- Additional PSARC frequencies that may be used:
 - Repeater 155.160 RX 150.775 tone 127.3
 - 155.570 tone 186.2 (Open MURS frequency, no license required: MURS Channel 4 “Blue Dot”)

4.21 Infection Control

All AMRG personnel should read, be familiar with, and follow the ASRC Exposure Control Plan.

Additionally, all members must complete a bloodborne pathogens training, either through First Responder or higher training, or a dedicated bloodborne pathogens class (http://www.saferesponse.com/sub_page/bbp_main.htm).

All patients and all body substances will be treated as potentially infectious. Standard body substance isolations procedures will be used when examining and treating all patients. Non-latex gloves shall be worn in all circumstances

that involve contact with patients. Further, gowns, eye wear, and masks will be worn as necessary. Careful hand washing shall be practiced by all group personnel before and after each direct patient contact. A Bag-valve mask or pocket face mask should be used when CPR is being performed.

4.22 Search Tactics

Reserved.

4.23 Technical Rescue Response

Documented separately in the AMRG Technical Rescue Standard Operating Guidelines.

4.24 Cave Rescue Response

AMRG is a cave response organization and provides the initial point of contact/emergency dispatching for other local cave rescue organizations. Cave rescue alert and dispatch information is available on the members only section of the AMRG website.

For cave rescue incidence, only AMRG members with cave rescue training and certification may enter the cave and participate in below ground operations unless specifically authorized by the senior AMRG member at the operation as documented in writing in the incident log with an appropriate explanation. The minimal level of training to participate in cave rescue operations is NCRC Orientation to Cave Rescue. Members without this training may only participate in above ground portions of the operation except as above.

4.25 Water Rescue Response

AMRG is not a primary water rescue/recovery response organization. AMRG will support water rescue operations with shore based activities such as shore based search, recovery, line-systems, medical support and overhead management. In emergent and emergency water rescue situations during operations or training where primary water rescue teams are not immediately available, AMRG members with appropriate water rescue training and equipment may take necessary actions to assist.

Members will wear appropriate personal safety equipment when operating on or near water. Members are encouraged to take Water Rescue for First Responder (Awareness Level).

4.26 Safety Officer

A Safety Officer will be appointed for any training or mission involving technical rescue or water rescue. The Safety Officer's primary responsibility is to ensure the safe conduct of the rescue. The Safety Officer has the final

say about engaging in, continuing, modifying or terminating rescue operations. In making this determination, the safety of the rescuers is paramount.

A Safety Officer may be appointed for any type of training or mission and will serve a similar function.

4.27 Safety Vests

Florescent orange, green, or yellow safety vests are to be worn while directing traffic or entering areas that are subject to active hunting.

4.28 Lights and Sirens Policy

Members responding to an incident are to follow all applicable traffic laws, including speed limits and seat belt use. Flashing lights and sirens are not to be used.

4.29 Vehicle Use

Members are advised that any use of their private vehicle during a mission or training or while traveling to or from a mission or training is done at their own risk. AMRG is not responsible for any damage or wear and tear to vehicles or other equipment that does not belong to the group.

4.30 Driving

Members responding to an incident are to follow all applicable traffic laws, including speed limits and seat belt use.

4.31 Sleeping/Proper Amount of Rest.

Members are to receive a proper amount of rest during search missions, both for their safety and to maintain their operational effectiveness. No AMRG members are to operate a motor vehicle if they have not had a proper amount of sleep. AMRG members are subject to examination by incident staff prior to leaving a mission scene to ensure that they have received enough sleep. Driving while sleepy is exceedingly dangerous. The ASRC's only line-of-duty death occurred when Lisa Hannon, an experienced senior member, was driving back from a mission sleep-deprived and suffered a fatal vehicle accident.

4.32 Delaying or Suspending Operations

Decisions about when and how to delay or suspend search operations will be made by the Commander and by the on-scene search manager, in conjunction with the Responsible Authority for the incident.

4.33 Canine Procedures

Canine teams will be deployed on searches, consistent with the AMRG Canine Operational Performance and Credentialing Standards.

Only AMRG operationally certified canines may respond to searches. AMRG members are not permitted to bring canines that are not operationally certified to incident scenes, except with the permission of the Canine Officer or the Commander.

Non-operationally certified canines, including trainees, pets, and canines belonging to non-team members are permitted at AMRG trainings and other non-mission functions only if the canine has been evaluated and approved to participate by the Canine Officer or the Commander. Additional requirements and limitations on canine participation may be set for each individual training/event or each individual canine.

Bite, protection, or schutzhund trained canines are prohibited at all AMRG missions, trainings, functions, and events. This policy does not apply to sworn law enforcement officers with a law enforcement service animal. Canines which have been bite or protection trained in the past, but have been retrained to no longer be protection canines, may be permitted at AMRG functions, after being evaluated and approved by the Canine Officer and Commander.

5. Tactical Guidelines

5.1 First on Scene

It is the responsibility of the first AMRG member to arrive on scene to take control of the situation and begin to organize the response, as training and the needs of the RA allow. It may be necessary for the first arriving member to secure the search area, gather information about the subject, arrange a location for and begin to organize the search base, and undertake other tasks that are needed to facilitate the search effort, rather than to begin searching immediately themselves. The first member on scene will act as AMRG Agency Representative, essentially incident commander, until a higher ranking member arrives on scene. As a result, the first member on scene should always be at least a Rescue Member.

See section 4.3 Mission Response/Minimum Response Requirements and 1.5 Chain of Command for additional details.

If AMRG is responding to an incident that another team is already present at, AMRG will integrate into the incident using standard ICS/NIMS processes.

5.2 Forcible Entry/Gaining Access

AMRG members may not forcibly entry a building except in extraordinary situations where it is clear that a subject is present and in need of emergency medical care. If the situation is not a clear emergency, search base must be contacted and law enforcement will be dispatched to the scene in order to gain access.

5.3 Evasive Subjects

Any encounter with an evasive subject – a subject that runs or hides from searchers – should be reported to search base. No attempts should be made to physically apprehend an evasive subject.

5.4 Patient Pat Down Procedures

All patients requiring transport should have a head to toe physical exam by a medic and an important part of that exam is to check for any weapons the patient may be carrying. AMRG personnel are not to rely on police officers or other searchers to perform this important procedure. Each patient who could under the most remote circumstance pose a threat is to be checked thoroughly and completely for any items that might be used as weapons. Any items are to be secured prior to transport of the patient. Any dangerous items should be turned over to law enforcement as soon as possible.

5.5 Suicidal Persons

Any encounter with a possible suicidal subject should be reported to incident command and local law enforcement should be dispatched to the scene. AMRG members should provide care for subjects within their medical scope of practice and attempt to prevent subjects from harming themselves, as long as this can be accomplished without risk of personal harm to the member. AMRG members should attempt to avoid dangerous situations and contact law enforcement to assist, if needed.

5.6 People with Weapons

Any encounter with a subject who is armed and potentially dangerous should be reported to incident command and local law enforcement should be dispatched to the scene. AMRG members should manage any dangerous situations so as to minimize danger first to themselves, then danger to the subject; if the perceived level of danger to themselves is high, they should withdraw and wait until law enforcement has declared the scene safe.

5.7 Patient Restraints

If patient is a potential threat to him/herself or others and restraint can be accomplished safely by personnel on scene, the patient may be restrained and transported against his/her will. A patient may be restrained in the following situations under Pennsylvania law and PA DoH BLS protocols:

- 1) Law enforcement personnel order restraint and transport
- 2) Medical command physician orders restraint and transport
- 3) Meets one of the criteria below, specified in Section 302 of Pennsylvania's Mental Health Procedures Act:
 - The person has attempted suicide or the person has made threats to commit suicide and committed acts in furtherance of the threats
 - The person has mutilated himself/herself or the person has made threats to mutilate and committed acts in furtherance of the threats.
 - The person has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily harm on another or has threatened serious bodily harm and has committed acts in furtherance of the threat to commit harm to another.

AMRG's Medical Director has also provided the following information about the duty to restrain under Federal common-law:

<http://www.conovers.org/ftp/AMA-302-Medical-Restraint.pdf>

If a patient must be restrained, in order to take them to a treatment facility for involuntary emergency examination and treatment the care giver shall explain to the person in need of such examination and treatment the nature and purpose of the action to be undertaken. Every effort shall be made to use the least force necessary and, to the extent possible, act in a courteous manner toward such individual giving attention to the dignity of the person.

5.8 Helicopter Operations

All certified member at the level of FTM are higher are required to have successfully completed the U.S. Forest Service/Department of the Interior B3 Combination Helicopter/Airplane Safety course which covers topics including aviation safety, safety equipment, crash survival, preflight briefings, and accident reporting. All helicopter operations will be conducted within the guidelines of the training received. Members having not competed the mandatory Helicopter/Airplane Safety course will not directly participate in trainings or operations involving aviation resources.

Appendices

6.1 Member Acknowledgement

Standard Operating Procedures Acknowledgement of Receipt

I, _____ hereby acknowledge receipt of the Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group's Standard Operation Procedures and my obligation to read and comply with its contents.

I understand that this handbook is intended to provide an overview of Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group's operational policies and does not represent all policies in force.

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group may, at any time, add, change or delete any policy or practice at its sole discretion and without notice.

Signature

Member Name (printed)

Date

ATTEST:

Officer Signature

Date

6.2 Liability Release

**ALLEGHENY MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP AND THE
APPALACHIANSEARCH & RESCUE CONFERENCE**

RELEASE OF LIABILITY

I hereby apply for acceptance as a volunteer with Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group and the Appalachian Search & Rescue Conference (hereinafter the Conference).

I understand that in doing so I may be asked to participate in training and/or search and/or rescue incidents and/or tasks (hereinafter events) anywhere in the world to serve in a potentially dangerous, chaotic, life-threatening situation wherein my personal safety cannot be guaranteed. I understand that I am subjecting myself to situations that may encompass a variety of natural and manmade disasters and/or events in which I may be subject to illness, injury or death. I understand that these situations may lack proper water, food, shelter, sanitation and medical care. I further understand events may expose me to death or disability caused by diseases, direct and indirect assault by humans and wild beasts, attacks by venomous creatures, exposure to environmental hazards (including but not limited to fires, high temperatures, flash floods, swift water, mud slides, landslides, rock slides, blizzards, ice storms, snowstorms, bitterly cold temperatures, tornadoes, high winds, lightning strikes, hazardous plant life, etc.), electrical shock, serious or deadly falls, hazardous terrain, and injury or death from a technical rescue system failure. I understand that all the modes of transportation available to me may pose a risk both at the event and transportation to and from the event. I understand that I may be subject to unusual emotional and psychological stress that may occur at the incident or long after the incident. I further understand that any appointment of a safety officer or other officer responsible for safety or the creation of a safety rule or regulation shall not be construed to be an indication that the Conference is liable for my personal safety. Accordingly, I also realize that I

may refuse any event for any reason and I may refuse, alter, or abort any task when I feel I have received an inadequate briefing, inadequate training, inadequate sleep, possess inadequate physical strength, or do not feel that the event is safe. Finally, I realize that the information available to those briefing me may be incorrect or inadequate.

I understand the Conference will not provide insurance for me of any sort, whether disability, accident, medical, life or any other form of insurance. I understand that I will receive no pay for my services and may not receive reimbursement for my out-of-pocket expenses.

Nevertheless, I willingly volunteer to engage in such hazardous activities under often difficult conditions knowing that I may be exposed to life-threatening situations.

As a consequence and in consideration of the privilege of training and participation with the group, I hereby assume all of the above mentioned risks, and will hold the Conference harmless from any and all liability, actions, causes of actions, deaths, claims, demands of every kind and nature whatsoever, whether in tort in contract or in any other legal theory, which may arise from or in connection with my participation as a volunteer with the Conference. In doing so I similarly release the officers, directors, agents and membership of the Conference. The terms of this release shall serve as a release and assumption of risks for my heirs, executor and administrators and for all those dependent upon me. I state that I am of legal age and competence according to the laws of the jurisdiction in which I reside and certify that I have read and understand the above. If I am married, my spouse joins in this release as evidenced by my spouse's signature below. If I am a minor my parent or legal guardian joins in this release as evidenced by the signature below.

DATED this _____ day of _____ 20_____

in _____, state or Commonwealth of _____

Applicant's printed name

Spouse or parent or legal guardian's signature

Seal

Applicant's signature

Spouse or parent or legal guardian's printed name

The Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group and Appalachian Search & Rescue Conference Liability Release)