

POTOMAC VALLEY SEARCH & RESCUE GROUP

The Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group is a volunteer organization trained to provide land, cave and river search and rescue services upon request to appropriate government agencies and organizations.

ORGANIZATION -- Formed in 1970, the Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group is the Washington-area unit of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference, a non-profit corporation chartered in the State of Virginia. Based in Washington, D.C., the Group's primary area of coverage is the Potomac Valley, the northern region of Virginia, and the southern, southwestern and western region of Maryland. In conjunction with the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group, a second unit of the ASRC based in Charlottesville, Va., the Group also responds to outdoor emergencies in southern and western Virginia and in West Virginia.

PURPOSE -- The purpose of the Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group is to support and cooperate with existing agencies which are responsible for managing and conducting search and rescue operations. The Group specifically does not operate independently from or replace the established services or authority of law enforcement agencies, fire departments, rescue squads or river patrols. A secondary purpose of the Group is to provide program assistance and training opportunities to other organizations and agencies concerned with outdoor safety.

SKILLS AND CERTIFICATION -- Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group members are trained and certified under standards set by the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference. Upon completion of training, candidates are qualified as basic members. Each has one or more outdoor skills, such as rock climbing, canoeing and caving, and also one or more specialized skills, such as medicine and communications.

All basic members are certified as Emergency Medical Technicians or hold current American Red Cross Advanced First Aid and CPR certificates. Basic training includes land, cave and river rescue theory and techniques, survival skills, land navigation, wilderness medicine, rescue ropework, communications, transport of injured, and search and rescue management.

CAPABILITIES -- The Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group is available for volunteer assignments on short notice 24 hours a day. The Group provides its own surface transportation, specialized equipment, support facilities and communications during an operation. Each member is self sufficient for an outdoor stay of at least two days. Depending on the nature of the emergency, a Group alert officer will institute a general call-out of members or dispatch a quick-response team. The team or general call-out of members will be directed to the emergency location and the official in charge, designated by the requesting agency. Once in the field, Group members function as team units or join other established teams at the discretion of operation officials.

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Sometime soon you may be called on to organize a search for a lost child. Or perhaps a hunter is overdue at day's end. Maybe a caver is hurt somewhere underground.

Who do you call for help? Sure, your staff is available, trained and ready. And you can count on other area agencies for support. But their time and energy may be limited. Many citizens will offer their help, of course, but they are generally unskilled and untrained in the complex business of search and rescue.

Do you know that a local volunteer organization has taken part in many search and rescue operations in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia at the request of local, state and federal officials? Do you know that this organization, trained and experienced in search and rescue skills and management, stands ready to assist you?

All it takes is a phone call to the Potomac Valley Search and Rescue Group. Enclosed is an information sheet about the Group, describing its organization, qualifications and capabilities. The Group's help is available any time you need it.

You can enlist Group assistance for a search and rescue operation in your area by calling the Group Alert Officer at 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Alert Officer will immediately activate a Quick-Response Team to your location or, if required, will begin a general call-out of all Group members. In both cases, members will report to you or your deputy and will function under your command.

We certainly hope that you will not have an outdoor emergency requiring a search and rescue operation in your area. However, if the need arises, you can count on our help.

If you would like more information about the Group and its service to you, please call or write me at

Sincerely,