

GEORGIA SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL
“GSARAC”
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
August 15, 2010

MISSION

As stated in our bylaws, the purpose of this Georgia Search and Rescue Advisory Council (“GSARAC” or “Council”) is to “improve search and rescue capabilities in the State of Georgia by assisting volunteer search and rescue resources to organize, prepare and respond to search emergencies when requested by authorities having jurisdiction over search incidents.”

1. Purpose

These Standard Operating Procedures (SOP’s) are designed to be used as an administrative manual that govern the actions of the GSARAC Board and Members.

2. Document Application and Precedence

The GSARAC will meet our mission requirements by operating in the manner defined in these standard operating procedures (“SOP’s”). GSARAC also maintains Bylaws appropriate for a non-profit corporation in the state of Georgia. The GSARAC Bylaws have higher precedence than these SOP’s in managing Council operations. The corporation is coordinated as a Georgia non-profit corporation under Articles of Incorporation, which have the highest order of precedence if conflicts arise in these procedures.

These SOP’s are in place to define what the council intends to do and how we will do it.

This document will be maintained by the Council board with discussion and voting as deemed necessary and appropriate by the general membership.

3. Authority

The Council does not provide rescue services as described in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.), Title 38. (<http://www.lexis-nexis.com/hottopics/gacode/>). The GSARAC mission and these related procedures shall not conflict specifically with section 38-3-36 of the Georgia Legal Code which defines licensing requirements with the state emergency management agency. GSARAC is essentially a group of individuals acting in “good faith” as described in O.C.G.A. section 51-1-29, to help our membership groups organize and prepare for emergency response when they are properly requested by authorities having jurisdiction.

4. Annual Review

The GSARAC Secretary shall conduct an Annual Review of this manual and will present suggested changes to the GSARAC Board and membership at the annual full membership meeting of the GSARAC.

5. Administration of Standards Procedure

This policy shall be administered by the following:

a. President of the GSARAC

The President is responsible for ensuring GSARAC-wide compliance with all GSARAC policies and procedures.

b. Vice President of the GSARAC

The Vice President shall serve in the President's absence if the President is incapacitated or otherwise unable to fulfill their duties regarding the application of these procedures.

c. GSARAC Member Group Responsible Authority

The GSARAC is comprised of organizations called Groups or Organizations. Each Group has an executive officer that for the purpose of these procedures shall be responsible for naming one or two Group Representatives, as appropriate. The member group *Representative and Executive Officer* is responsible for ensuring Group compliance with the policies and procedures set forth in this document.

6. Financial Procedure:

a. Financial Year:

As established in the Bylaws, the GSARAC fiscal year coincides with the calendar year of January 1st thru December 31st.

b. GSARAC annual dues:

There are currently no annual dues for GSARAC member teams.

c. Treasurer of the GSARAC:

The GSARAC Treasurer is responsible for the accurate reporting and maintenance of the GSARAC financial reports and accounts.

d. Financial Reports:

The GSARAC Treasurer shall submit a financial status report at each regularly scheduled meeting of the Board. This report should include any changes to accounts, funds spent and funds received. The Treasurer shall submit an annual financial status report at the annual full-membership meeting of the GSARAC.

e. Maintenance of financial accounts:

The GSARAC Treasurer shall create and maintain the necessary checking, saving and other financial accounts. The Treasurer has the authority to move funds between accounts as necessary.

f. Authority to pay bills:

The Treasurer shall be responsible for the payment and reimbursement of expenses as directed by the board, and membership, as appropriate. The Treasurer shall have the authority to pay standing and recurring bills that are less than \$250.00 without expressed membership approval.

g. Authority to write checks:

The Treasurer, President, and Vice President shall have the authority to write checks and be delegated signatory on any account held by GSARAC. Two signatures will be required on all GSARAC checks.

h. Authority to accept finances:

The Treasurer shall accept donations and other financial resources and properly deposit those funds into accounts maintained by GSARAC. The Treasurer is responsible for providing a reply or if appropriate, a thank you note to the provider of the funds.

i. Authority to submit financial statements:

The Treasurer shall prepare and submit all necessary financial statements to financial institutions, the federal, state and local governments. This includes all financial statements for tax purposes, opening and closing accounts and related corporate needs. All financial statements shall confirm to standard US accounting principles.

j. Storage of Financial Records:

All financial records shall be stored for a minimum of seven (7) years.

7. Records Procedure

a. Secretary of the GSARAC

The GSARAC Secretary is responsible for maintaining all records and historical documents of the GSARAC.

b. Meeting Minutes Dissemination

The Secretary is responsible for taking minutes at every Board or Membership meeting. The Secretary is responsible for the dissemination of those minutes to the Board and the Membership. Additionally, the Secretary is responsible for supplying a copy of the meeting minutes to the GSARAC Webmaster for posting onto the GSARAC website.

c. Member Group Information

It is the responsibility of the GSARAC Secretary to see that the information about GSARAC Member groups is maintained and accurate. The actual function of updating this information may be delegated to the Chair of the Membership Committee however; the Secretary is to validate said information periodically.

8. Disciplinary Procedures

The GSARAC Disciplinary Procedure is defined in our bylaws.

9. Membership Procedures

a. General

General membership procedures are to be defined and updated by the Membership Committee and brought to the Board of Directors for approval. All membership policies and procedures approved by the Board are to be documented in this manual by the Secretary.

b. Applying for Membership

A team that is applying for membership in the GSARAC shall provide the following to the Membership Committee:

- i. A completed membership application form,
- ii. Their proof of availability for callout, plans to prepare for callout, or equivalent documentation demonstrating an intent to prepare for emergency call-out for search and rescue incidents,
- iii. The name of the current GSARAC team that is sponsoring the applying team.

c. Role of the Sponsoring Team

The Sponsoring team is responsible for:

- i. Non-governmental groups only,
- ii. Assuring that the applying team is in fact a search and rescue organization,
- iii. Assessing the applying team's general ability to perform search and rescue using currently accepted methods and techniques,
- iv. Reporting their assessment to the Membership Committee.

d. Member Group Team Qualifications

All GSARAC membership groups in good standing shall have policies and procedures in place to ensure their team members are prepared for emergency call-out. All GSARAC membership teams will comply with the team requirements contained in the GSARAC Bylaws for either Full Organizational Members, Members-at-large or Affiliated membership. In addition, the following criteria will be considered by the board, along with sponsoring team recommendations, before a team is voted in as a GSARAC member:

- i. For Full Organizational Membership
 1. Provide the official group name, address and background that demonstrates a commitment to Search and Rescue,
 2. Provide the name and contact information for the team leader and the training officer that will be responsible for improving the knowledge, skills and overall capability of the team applying for membership,

3. Demonstrate they meet FEMA type III requirements for their FEMA typed resource as stated in FEMA document 508-8 (or equivalent subsequent FEMA document) for full-callout readiness,
4. At least one SAR team member with a current NASAR SARTECH II or equivalent certification as determined by the GSARAC membership committee and their sponsoring GSARAC member team,
5. All SAR team members will have a current CPR and first aid certification.
6. All SAR team members have completed the following FEMA online training programs:

- (a) NIMS 100 (IS-100)
- (b) NIMS 200 (IS-200)
- (c) NIMS 800 (IS-800)
- (d) NIMS 809 (IS-809)

7. Provide the name and contact information for two representatives that are willing to attend a majority of GSARAC meetings on behalf of their team and help ensure the GSARAC mission and requirements are met by their SAR team.
8. Inform GSARAC of any change in status for their assigned representative[s],
9. Demonstrate to the sponsoring team and the GSARAC membership committee that they have policies or procedures in place that will:
 - (a) assure they follow the chain of command on any callout as defined by the NIMS standard,
 - (b) assure they have a callout procedure that allows them to respond to their authority having jurisdiction in an expedient manner,
 - (c) assure they have some form of internal team communication capability that will allow team members to remain in contact with each other while on a mission in their normal response terrain,
 - (d) assure they have some form of safety plan for all activities that will help control the inherent risks involved in Search and Rescue activities and minimize the impact when risks that are taken result in a secondary team incident.

ii. For Member-at-large Membership

1. Provide the official group name, address and background that demonstrates a commitment to Search and Rescue,
2. Provide the name and contact information for the team leader and the training officer that will be responsible for improving the knowledge, skills and overall capability of the team applying for membership,
3. Demonstrate they meet FEMA type IV requirements for their FEMA typed resource as stated in FEMA document 508-8 (or equivalent subsequent FEMA document) for full-callout readiness,
4. Demonstrate to a sponsoring team and to the GSARAC membership committee that a plan exists that is expected to meet the requirements

for becoming a GSARAC Full Organizational Member within 12 months of application as a member-at-large,

5. Provide the name and contact information for one representative that is willing to attend a majority of GSARAC meetings on behalf of their team and help ensure the GSARAC mission and requirements are met by their SAR team.
6. Inform GSARAC of any change in status for their assigned representative,

iii. For Affiliated Membership

1. Provide the official group name, address and background that demonstrates a commitment or jurisdictional authority over Search and Rescue,
2. Provide the name and contact information for the team leader and a primary contact that has an interest in their group becoming affiliated with GSARAC,
3. Agree to support the general mission of improving Search and Rescue capabilities in Georgia and to work with GSARAC in a positive manner that will not hinder our pursuit of fulfilling our corporate mission and objectives.
4. Provide the name and contact information for one representative that is willing to attend a majority of GSARAC meetings on behalf of their team and help ensure the GSARAC mission and requirements are met by their SAR team.

e. Member Group Representative Qualifications

All SAR team representatives must be in good standing with their respective SAR teams to be a group representative on the Council.

10. Standing Committees

A list of Committees and Committee Chairs will be maintained by the Secretary and published on the GSARAC Website.

a. MEMBERSHIP

The MEMBERSHIP committee is responsible for soliciting GSARAC membership, verifying eligibility of proposed membership teams, gathering information from sponsoring teams and membership teams as a basis for a board vote, presenting prospective teams to the GSARAC board and maintaining necessary contact information to allow prompt emergency contact with all members.

b. SPECIAL EVENTS

The SPECIAL EVENTS committee is responsible for the organization and operation of any special event. This committee is responsible for all aspects of this event including, but not limited to, securing

instructors and speakers, securing the site, providing for meals during the event, providing for communications during the event, ensuring that all required permits are in place.

c. TRAINING

The Training committee is responsible for the development and delivery of a special curriculum of materials, class-work and classes that are designed to help SAR teams organize, prepare and respond to search and rescue incidents. The GSARAC training committee will focus on coordinating joint training events that meet the GSARAC mission, and on developing classes that are not readily available through NASAR or other nationally recognized leaders in the Search and Rescue field.

This committee is responsible for all aspects of the GSARAC training program, including but not limited to:

- Receiving input from membership at the annual meeting for new course suggestions, training schedule and other changes to the GSARAC training program,
- Gaining board approval for new class development,
- Developing a training schedule with a reasonable effort to avoid schedule conflicts,
- Coordinating open training events that are open to all member organizations in good standing and, as much as possible, to other individuals and organizations interested in improving their knowledge and ability to participate in search and rescue incidents,
- Providing support to the SAR-CONFERENCE committees; with responsibility in assuring all GSARAC delivered content meets GSARAC board and Training Committee requirements,
- Securing instructors, presenters, equipment, materials and other requirements for GSARAC sponsored training events, as appropriate.

d. STANDARDS

The STANDARDS committee is responsible for the development of GSARAC standards that are designed to help SAR teams organize, prepare and respond to search and rescue incidents. The GSARAC STANDARDS team will work closely with the TRAINING committee, GSARAC Board, GSARAC membership teams, and nationally recognized leaders to ensure our standards represent the best information available and apply to our specific needs in Georgia.

GSARAC Standards shall be posted on the GSARAC website and made available for free public use.

11. GSARAC Officer and Board of Directors Election Schedules

a. Initial Elections

Initial elections for the formation of the non-profit GSARAC Corporation and the initial charter member teams that helped form the GSARAC Mission, Bylaws and these standard procedures, were conducted as necessary for the formation of this organization. These elections are part of the historical record but are not relevant with regard to any election schedule policy or procedure.

b. Officer and Board Term Schedule

2011 - Any open board positions and board positions for Vice President and Secretary

2012 - Any open board positions and board positions for President and Treasurer

This schedule will replicate every two years with odd years resulting in VP and Secretary replacements and even years requiring President and Treasurer replacements.

c. Election Procedure

An email will be sent out each year, prior to the GSARAC annual meeting, describing the board positions and officer positions that will be filled during the upcoming meeting. When nominations have been filled, the final list of candidates will be provided to an ad hoc nominating committee to make additional nominations if appropriate, and verify eligibility and willingness to serve for all nominations.

The President for GSARAC will read the board director positions and officer positions that will be voted on for the election year during the annual meeting. The annual meeting will be held in February, or as defined in the GSARAC Bylaws.

If director positions or officer assignments that are voted on are not contested, the secretary will make a motion to accept nominations without a vote and those positions will be filled and nominated members shall serve as duly elected directors. For those positions that require voting, voting ballots will be provided through an appropriate means and votes will be solicited in the open meeting. If a position has no nominated candidates prior to the annual meeting, nominations will be opened up on the meeting floor to fill the open position.

Ballots will be counted by the nominating committee and board members that are not up for reelection. Voting results will be announced and all positions should be filled before the end of the annual meeting.

12. Use of Electronic Communications

As electronic communications become a more critical part of the operation of the GSARAC it is imperative that the GSARAC web site and mailing lists be well maintained and updated in a timely manner.

a. GSARAC Webmaster

The GSARAC Webmaster is a Board appointed position. The Webmaster is responsible for the creation and maintenance of all forms of official electronic communications used by the GSARAC, with timely updates. Forms of communication include, but are not limited to, the GSARAC web site, the GASAR public message board and the GSARAC mailing list. The Web Master is responsible for validating information to be posted on the GSARAC web site to the extent that the information must come from an authorized source, such as committee chair persons, appropriate board members or outside authorities, etc... The Webmaster is responsible for timely updates to the Website.

b. Acceptable use of the GSARAC Email lists

The GSARAC will maintain an email list server, message board and other social networking sites as approved by the board, for exchanging information pertinent to the GSARAC and its member teams.

Information posted or disseminated must be considered acceptable and appropriate. Types of information for posting or dissemination may include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Training and relevant event announcements
- Ideas and discussion on search and rescue issues
- Updates on GSARAC status and news
- Membership List
- Committees List

At no time will any email list, message board, website or other form of communication be allowed to contain derogatory comments, offensive comments, irrelevant comments, or unprofessional comments, as determined by the Webmaster, with final review by the GSARAC board. Type of comments or information that will not be allowed may include the following:

- Political views, statements, solicitation or satire, not immediately relevant and pre-approved by the GSARAC board,
- Religious views, statements, solicitation or satire, not immediately relevant and pre-approved by the GSARAC board,
- In general, any type of forwarded material (commonly referred to as “spam”) that does not contain information that is immediately relevant to our broader Search and Rescue membership,
- Any content of any kind that conflicts with legal requirements or discriminates against any person in anyway, regardless of race, sex, religion, cultural background, sexual preference, or economic and social condition.

The decision of the Board of Directors is final on all matters related to proper use of communications.

13. Allowable Use of the GSARAC Emblem/Logo and Name

The GSARAC logo is the Council’s primary method of identifying the GSARAC and its members. As such, its use must be guarded with the same attention given to any corporate, private or public trade mark.

a. Use of the GSARAC Logo and Name

The GSARAC Name, patch and logo is the most readily recognized symbol of the organization. Its use on missions or for official business is encouraged. The use of the GSARAC logo shall be limited to official GSARAC or Member Team business (including but not limited to training, missions and meetings). This does not prohibit the use of the name or patch on personal items provided those items are used while engaged in GSARAC activities.

b. Display of the GSARAC patch by Non-GSARAC organizations

Non-GSARAC organizations or individuals may receive GSARAC patches for display in patch collections or other appropriate displays through request of the GSARAC Directors but no GSARAC patch, logo or name shall be used while on any mission, official or unofficial business, or for any type of personal use by non-GSARAC members except for storage or display as described above.

14. Situations Not Covered

In the event of a situation not covered in this document or the GSARAC Bylaws, the GSARAC *Board of Directors* may then confer with Members of the Council to acquire information as required by the situation, but within the intent and scope of this manual or the GSARAC Bylaws. Such action shall require approval of the Board of Directors.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

Our Board members, member teams, lost subjects and victims trust us to respect their privacy and dignity at all times. Therefore no one is permitted to disclose any form of confidential information relating to them in any way. Confidentiality is the preservation of information disclosed in a professional working relationship. All of the information you gain regarding Board members, member teams, lost subjects and victims is confidential. Disclosure of such information could make you legally liable for violating confidentiality laws.

All records and information, including names, concerning individuals are confidential. General information, policy statements, or statistical material not identified with any particular information is not considered confidential.

Breaching confidentiality or giving information to an unauthorized individual would be interpreted as acting outside the scope of your duties and the GSARAC will not support you in the event of legal action and may terminate your affiliation with the Council, as appropriate.

16. Code of Ethics

As a Georgia Search and Rescue Council Board Member, Group Representative or member Organization, we agree to abide and honor the following values:

- As a volunteer search and rescue provider we agree to furnish search and rescue services and care, to the best of our abilities and training, to any individual who is missing or injured and in need of these services. We will do so regardless of race, sex, religion, cultural background, sexual preference and economic or social condition,
- We ensure that, in the performance of our duties, we will conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity and shall not misrepresent ourselves, or any member of our team, beyond our abilities or training,
- We will not seek financial restitution for our team or ourselves as an individual, in response to any search,
- We will not knowingly participate in any search and rescue incident without being requested by a proper authority,

- Our membership's goals for any search will be to provide the most immediate response, and best of care to the missing or injured individual or persons, while ensuring the safety of all searchers involved and not acting beyond their level of training,
- We agree to work in unity with all responding search personnel, called upon by the Search Manager of the search and we will know and respect the chain of command,
- We shall at all times conduct ourselves in a manner which does not discredit the GSARAC and shall not be disrespectful, insolent, mutinous or insubordinate in attitude or conduct and be courteous and respectful in our official dealings with the public, fellow members, superiors, and subordinates,
- We support the rights of the victim to the utmost of discretion, on our part, in the matter of confidentiality of privileged information,
- We believe that we not only have an obligation to advance our knowledge and skills in relation to the search and rescue field; but also agree to assist, to the best of our abilities, with the development and training of any individual or team truly interested in this endeavor,
- We will not use or transport alcohol or illegal drugs to or from any search incident,
- We do not utilize equipment or take possessions that are not our own without expressed permission,
- As much as reasonably possible, we will remain ready for duty, even when unassigned,
- Maintain all personal protective equipment and wear it when appropriate.