

National Search and Rescue Plan of the United States

POLICY

1. It is the policy of the signatory federal agencies to provide a *National Search and Rescue Plan* (referred to as the “Plan”) for the United States for coordinating search and rescue (SAR) services to meet domestic needs and international commitments. Implementing guidance for this Plan is provided in the *International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual* (IAMSAR Manual discussed below), the *National Search and Rescue Supplement* (NSS)¹, and other relevant directives of the Participants to this Plan.

PURPOSE

2. This Plan continues, by interagency agreement, the effective use of all available resources in all types of civil SAR missions to enable the United States to satisfy its humanitarian, and national and international legal obligations.
3. The *National Search and Rescue Plan-1999* is superseded by this Plan.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

4. The following terms and definitions are used in this Plan.²
 - a. Civil Search and Rescue (civil SAR): Search operations, rescue operations, and associated civilian services provided to assist persons and property in potential or actual distress in a non-hostile environment;
 - b. Incident of National Significance: An actual or potential high-impact event that requires robust coordination of the Federal response in order to save lives and minimize damage, and provide the basis for long-term community and economic recovery;
 - c. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): A specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation, and provides for establishment of aeronautical SAR services;
 - d. Incident Command System (ICS): A standardized on scene emergency construct specifically designed to provide for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries;

¹ The NSS provides guidance to federal agencies concerning implementation of this Plan, builds upon the baseline established in the IAMSAR Manual and encourages each SAR agency to develop an addendum to the NSS that provides agency specific direction and guidance for implementing the NSS and IAMSAR Manuals.

² Additional terms and definitions are available in the IAMSAR Manual and the National Response Plan.

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2007	2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2007 to 00-00-2007		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE National Search and Rescue Plan of the United States			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Coast Guard, Washington, DC			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 19	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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- e. International Maritime Organization (IMO): A specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes the safety and security of international shipping, and provides for establishment of maritime SAR services;
- f. Mass Rescue Operations (MROs): SAR services characterized by the need for immediate response to large numbers of persons in distress, such that the capabilities normally available to SAR authorities are inadequate;
- g. National Incident Management System (NIMS): An ICS that provides a consistent, nationwide approach for federal, state, local, and tribal governments; the private sector; and nongovernmental organizations to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size or complexity;
- h. National Response Plan (NRP): The federal government's guiding document that establishes a comprehensive all-hazards approach to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents;
- i. National Search and Rescue Committee (NSARC): The interagency Committee that oversees the NSP and serves as a federal coordinating forum for national civil SAR matters;
- j. Participant: A signatory federal agency to this Plan;
- k. Rescue: An operation to retrieve persons in distress, provide for their initial medical or other needs and deliver them to a place of safety;
- l. Rescue Coordination Center (RCC): A unit, recognized by ICAO, IMO or other cognizant international body, responsible for promoting efficient organization of SAR services and for coordinating the conduct of SAR operations within a Search and Rescue Region (SRR);
- m. Rescue Sub-center (RSC): A unit subordinate to an RCC established to complement the latter according to particular provisions of the responsible authorities;
- n. Search: An operation using available personnel and facilities to locate persons in distress;
- o. Search and Rescue Coordinator: A federal person or agency with overall responsibility for establishing and providing SAR services for a search and rescue region(s) for which the U.S. has primary responsibility;
- p. Search and Rescue Region (SRR): An area of defined dimensions, recognized by IMO or ICAO, associated with a rescue coordination center, within which SAR services are provided;
- q. Search and Rescue Services: The performance of distress monitoring, communication, coordination and SAR functions, including provision of medical advice, initial medical assistance, or medical evacuation, through the use of public and private resources including cooperating aircraft, vessels and other craft and installations;
- r. Search and Rescue Satellite-aided Tracking (SARSAT): A national and international satellite Program that helps to protect life and property by providing accurate, timely, and

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reliable distress and security alert and location information to SAR authorities worldwide and that, along with the comparable Russian Cospas Program, comprises the international Cospas-Sarsat satellite system; and

- s. Urban Search and Rescue (US&R): The location, rescue (extrication), and initial medical stabilization of victims trapped in confined spaces.

OBJECTIVES

- 5. Knowing the importance of cooperation in providing expeditious and effective SAR services, the Participants desire to:
 - a. Provide a United States Plan for coordinating civil SAR services to meet domestic needs, international commitments, and to document related national policies;
 - b. Support lifesaving provisions of IMO's International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, ICAO's Convention on International Civil Aviation (Annex 12), certain international agreements to which the United States is Party, and similar international instruments;
 - c. Provide an overall Plan for coordination of civil SAR operations, effective use of available resources, mutual assistance, and efforts to improve such cooperation and services;
 - d. Integrate available civil SAR resources into a cooperative network for greater protection of life and property and to ensure greater efficiency and economy; and
 - e. Enable the United States to satisfy its humanitarian, and national and international legal obligations.
- 6. This Plan is further intended to:
 - a. Provide national guidance for development of civil SAR-related systems;
 - b. Describe its Participants and their roles in a pro-lifesaving context;
 - c. Recognize lead federal agencies, respectively, for the types of operations covered by this Plan, and describe civil SAR responsibilities;
 - d. Account for saving property, but on a secondary basis to saving lives;
 - e. Account for all operations up to and including providing initial assistance (food, clothing, medical, etc.) to SAR survivors and delivering them to a place of safety; and
 - f. Have, as a primary concept, cooperation for overall and continual development, coordination and improvement of civil SAR services.

SCOPE

- 7. It is intended that this Plan not conflict in any way with civil SAR responsibilities agreed to by contracting States of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, or other appropriate international instruments to which the U.S. is or may become a Party.

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8. No provisions of this Plan or any supporting plan are to be construed in such a way as to contravene responsibilities and authorities of any Participant as defined by statutes, executive orders or international agreements, or of established responsibilities of other agencies and organizations which regularly assist persons and property in distress resulting from incidents of a local nature.
9. This Plan is solely intended to provide guidance to the Participants. State authorities may retain SAR responsibilities within their boundaries for incidents primarily local or intrastate in character. In such cases, appropriate agreements are generally made between federal civil SAR coordinator(s) and relevant State authorities.

NATIONAL SAR COMMITTEE

10. The National Search and Rescue Committee (NSARC) is responsible for the provisions of this Plan, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders, and coordinates and provides guidance for its implementation.

PARTICIPANTS

11. The Participants to this Plan correspond to the NSARC Member Agencies, and are as follows:
 - a. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) carries out responsibilities to protect against and respond to hazards and distress situations affecting the nation and its people;
 - (1) United States Coast Guard develops, establishes, maintains and operates civil SAR resources for the promotion of safety on, under and over international waters and waters subject to United States jurisdiction. The Coast Guard has specialized expertise, facilities, and equipment for responding to maritime distress and other situations; and
 - (2) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates federal response under the guidelines of the NRP and oversees the national US&R response system.
 - b. Department of Transportation (DOT) carries out broad responsibilities in transportation safety;
 - (1) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) establishes and enforces flight safety regulations and operates the air traffic control, navigation, and flight service facilities that are available to assist in civil SAR operations; and
 - (2) The Maritime Administration (MARAD) maintains a fleet of ready reserve vessels for government use in contingencies and supports and promotes commercial maritime safety with regard to vessels, equipment, and mariners. MARAD advocates efficient maritime intermodal commerce through enhanced security.
 - c. Department of Defense (DOD) components have facilities and other resources that are used to support their own operations. These resources may be used for civil SAR needs to the fullest extent practicable on a non-interference basis with primary military duties according to applicable national directives, plans, guidelines and agreements. Within

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DOD, the United States Air Force provides and uses resources for the efficient organization and coordination of civil SAR services, including SAR operations, within its assigned SRR;

- d. Department of Commerce (DOC) participates in or supports civil SAR operations through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA provides satellite services for detecting and locating persons in potential or actual distress. NOAA is the lead federal agency for Sarsat and associated international Programs, including Cospas-Sarsat. NOAA also provides nautical and aeronautical charting; information on tides and tidal currents; marine environmental forecasts and warnings for the high seas as well as coastal waters and inland waterways, as well as environmental data used for search planning for civil SAR operations;
 - e. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) promulgates rules and regulations for non-government use of wire and radio facilities for promoting safety of life and property, and cooperates in civil SAR operations through its long-range direction finder network;
 - f. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) supports civil SAR objectives through research and development or application of technology to search, rescue, survival, and recovery systems and equipment, such as location tracking systems, transmitters, receivers, and antennas capable of locating aircraft, ships, spacecraft, or individuals in potential or actual distress. Additionally NASA has aircraft, spacecraft and worldwide tracking, data acquisition and communications networks that can assist in civil SAR operations; and
 - g. The Department of the Interior (DOI) National Park Service (NPS) provides civil SAR services on lands and waters administered by NPS, may assist federal, State, local and tribal authorities with emergency response operations outside NPS jurisdictions, and supports response operations during Incidents of National Significance.
12. A federal agency that is not a Participant may become a Participant in accordance with the procedures set forth in the *United States National Search and Rescue Committee Interagency Agreement*.

UNITED STATES SAR REGIONS

- 13. SRRs are established to ensure provision of adequate land-based communications infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing, and proper operational coordination to effectively support civil SAR services.
- 14. SRRs should be contiguous and, as far as practicable, not overlap.
- 15. Establishment of SRRs is intended to effect an understanding concerning where nations have accepted primary responsibility for coordinating or providing civil SAR services. The existence of SRR limits should not be viewed as a basis to restrict, delay, or limit in any way, prompt and effective action to relieve distress situations.

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16. All SRRs of the United States are established in cooperation with neighboring nations, are internationally recognized, and are described in pertinent IMO or ICAO documents.³
17. United States maritime and aeronautical SRRs will be harmonized with each other to the extent practicable, recognizing, however, that lines separating SRRs must normally be agreed by governments having neighboring SRRs when possible. SRRs will not be allowed to unduly affect or be affected by any political boundaries.
18. As defined in the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Annex 12) and the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, one RCC is associated with each recognized SRR. Comprehensive IMO and ICAO standards and guidance pertinent to these RCCs have been developed and may be found in relevant Conventions, the IAMSAR Manual, and other publications which should be held and used by United States RCCs.
19. United States SAR Coordinators, as designated in this Plan, are responsible for arranging civil SAR services and establishing RCCs for their respective SRRs; these RCCs must be staffed with trained personnel on a 24-hour basis. The United States civil SAR system becomes integrated into the global SAR system by establishing recognized SRRs and RCCs which comply with international standards. The geographic areas for which civil SAR Coordinators are responsible are assigned in the Section of this Plan on “SAR Responsibilities” below. SAR Coordinators are responsible for all the types of civil SAR services covered by this Plan (see paragraph 45) relevant to their respective SRRs.⁴
20. An SRR may be subdivided as long as the delimitation of the sub-regions coincides with the SRR limits. Where this is not practicable, changes to the SRR limits should be coordinated with any affected neighboring nation, and for aeronautical or maritime SRRs, the changes must be recognized by ICAO or IMO, respectively, in accordance with requirements of those Organizations.

SAR RESPONSIBILITIES

United States SAR Coordinators

21. The SAR Coordinators, designated below, have overall responsibility for establishing RCCs as necessary, and for providing or arranging for SAR services within United States SRRs. Only RCCs properly established by these SAR Coordinators should carry out domestic and international coordination of civil SAR operations.
22. United States SAR Coordinators are listed below:

³ United States maritime and aeronautical SRRs are established in accordance with the relevant IMO and ICAO Conventions and with the guidance of the IAMSAR Manual. These SRRs are internationally-recognized and documented in the appropriate ICAO Regional Air Navigation Plans and in the IMO SAR Plan. More specific information on United States SRRs can also be found in the NSS in which SRR charts are included for convenient reference.

⁴ Aeronautical SRRs are documented in appropriate ICAO Regional Air Navigation Plans, and maritime SRRs are documented in the IMO Global SAR Plan; the SRRs of the United States are also depicted in the NSS.

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- a. United States Air Force: Recognized SAR Coordinator for the United States aeronautical SRR corresponding to the continental United States other than Alaska;
- b. United States Pacific Command: Recognized SAR Coordinator for the United States aeronautical SRR corresponding to Alaska; and
- c. United States Coast Guard: Recognized SAR Coordinator for all other United States aeronautical and maritime SRRs. This includes the State of Hawaii as well as waters over which the United States has jurisdiction, such as navigable waters of the United States.

Other Responsibilities

23. National Park Service. The NPS provides emergency services on lands and waters administered by NPS, assists visitors within the National Parks or National Monuments, and aids authorities in neighboring jurisdictions. Civil SAR operations, including emergency medical aid, are conducted in a wide variety of environments such as remote, rural and roadless areas, lakes, rivers and oceans, and deserts, mountains and caves, and often require extended response times and use of specialized equipment. The NPS works closely with State, local and volunteer SAR organizations, and is proficient in use of the incident command system.
24. Critical Support Functions. SAR services include distress alerting and other critical functions that could not be carried out without the support of NASA, NOAA, the FCC and other entities. While most of this Plan concerns matters directly related to SAR operations, the importance of support functions of such Agencies cannot be over-stated. Close cooperation and mutual support among all the Participants to this Plan are vital to conducting effective SAR operations.
25. Federal Emergency Management Agency: FEMA oversees the national US&R response system.
26. Other Assistance: The Participants to this Plan are encouraged to support each other and other government authorities for civil SAR or other emergency response operations in accordance with applicable legislative authority.
27. Incidents of National Significance: Participants may use their specialized capabilities to support civil SAR or other operations associated with an Incident of National Significance when the NRP is implemented with lifesaving efforts normally having priority over all other activities.
28. State and local responsibilities: Outside the above listed national SAR Coordinator and federal civil SAR responsibilities, State and local authorities are responsible for land based SAR and designate a person to be "SAR Coordinator" within their respective jurisdictions. State SAR Coordinators are integral partners of the national SAR Coordinators and are critical to providing effective civil SAR services.

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International Representation

29. The Department of State normally designates federal agencies responsible for civil SAR to represent the United States in the following international forums:
- a. The Coast Guard leads and coordinates national participation in IMO's SAR and safety-related initiatives;
 - b. The Federal Aviation Administration leads and coordinates national participation in ICAO's safety-related initiatives;
 - c. NOAA leads and coordinates national participation in SARSAT and associated international programs; and
 - d. Based upon invitations from ICAO and IMO, respectively, the Air Force will provide an aeronautical SAR expert and the Coast Guard will provide a maritime SAR expert to serve as members of the ICAO-IMO Joint SAR Working Group.

Support Outside United States SAR Regions

30. SAR Coordinators, as well as other United States authorities, may support civil SAR operations anywhere in the world, consistent with their expertise, capabilities and legal authority. This is consistent with the principles of assisting persons in distress without regard to nationality or circumstances and of using all available resources for SAR. It is in the interest of the safety of United States citizens who travel or live worldwide. It is also consistent with United States humanitarian goals and the advantages of domestic and international cooperation.
31. In accordance with international law, United States SAR facilities, in a position to render timely and effective assistance, may enter into or over the territorial seas or archipelagic waters of another state for the purposes of rendering assistance to a person, ship, or aircraft whose position is reasonably well known, is in danger or distress due to perils of the seas, and requires emergency assistance.
32. Participants, consistent with their capabilities and legal authority, will support another country's SAR operations in territorial and international waters beyond recognized United States aeronautical and maritime SRRs. As appropriate, and within their capabilities, DOD combatant commanders should provide such support within their respective geographic areas of responsibility.
33. In carrying out civil SAR support functions with other nations, such as training, exercises, and liaison, each Participant will coordinate its activities with other Participants having SAR expertise with respect to the support concerned.⁵

⁵ A wealth of valuable reference material is available which should be used working with other nations in the area of SAR. These include, but are not limited to, the SAR-related conventions, the IAMSAR Manual (three volumes), this Plan, the NSS, information about the AMVER ship reporting system, and many documents of Cospas-Sarsat, IMO, ICAO, etc. Some of these references are available in languages other than English. Participants should be familiar with such references, and use them as appropriate.

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34. To the extent the Participants have the authority to do so, they may maintain liaison and cooperate with authorities of other nations that have comparable responsibilities for providing civil SAR services. Such cooperation should be carried out in coordination with the United States SAR Coordinators, and with other neighboring SAR authorities that might be affected, as appropriate. When such coordination deals substantially with matters relating to actual conduct of civil SAR operations, it should normally include United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Office of Search and Rescue, in order to ensure consistency with United States obligations under international agreements to which the United States is a Party, and compliance with the IAMSAR Manual and other international guidance relevant to implementing such agreements.
35. Participants should not accept a SAR Coordinator or RCC role for civil SAR operations for SRRs for which other nations are responsible. However, the Participants may provide and support civil SAR operations in such areas when:
 - a. Assistance is requested (normally this should be in accordance with RCC-to-RCC procedures prescribed in the IAMSAR Manual);
 - b. U.S. citizens are involved; or
 - c. U.S. facilities become aware of a distress situation to which no other suitable facilities are responding, or where other available SAR services appear to be inadequate.
36. For distress situations in international waters or airspace where no SRR exists for which an RCC is responsible, or where it appears that the responsible RCC is not responding in a suitable manner, United States RCCs or facilities will assist as appropriate. Such assistance will be subject to availability of resources, legal constraints, and other applicable United States policies.
37. Provisions of international conventions dealing with SAR are intended to ensure that suitable civil SAR services are in place and responsibilities are assigned worldwide to assist persons in danger or distress. However, there may be nations which are not Parties to, or which have not yet fully complied with, these conventions. Therefore, distress situations may arise for United States resources to supplement civil SAR capabilities in certain geographic areas. Additionally, the United States assistance may support these nations and help develop their SAR capabilities by providing training or other means, consistent with United States law. Participants may take advantage of such situations as appropriate.
38. When assisting other nation's SAR authorities, or other agencies and organizations that support these SAR authorities, Participants should ensure:
 - a. They have appropriate legal authority and expertise to do so;
 - b. Principles or provisions of conventions or agreements to which the United States is Party are not violated;
 - c. Applicable procedures set forth in the IAMSAR Manual, NSS, and other relevant directives are known and followed;
 - d. Such efforts are carried out in consultation with other Participants as appropriate; and
 - e. The authorities assisted are responsible for the civil SAR functions in that country.

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39. Policies on rendering assistance in foreign territories or territorial waters must balance concerns for saving lives, sovereignty and national security. Provisions for territorial entry, as necessary, should be addressed in international civil SAR agreements; care should be taken to ensure that such agreements are compatible with national policies in this regard.
40. When any Participant to this Plan is addressing civil SAR-related inquiries or proposals from other nations or organizations outside the United States, or when hosting or attending international SAR meetings, care should be taken that interested United States agencies, organizations, or persons are consulted and involved as appropriate.

SAR AGREEMENTS

41. Bilateral or multilateral SAR agreements with other United States agencies or organizations, or with international authorities or organizations of other nations, may be of practical value for SAR by:
 - a. Helping to fulfill United States domestic or international obligations and needs;
 - b. Enabling more effective use of all available SAR resources;
 - c. Better integration of United States civil SAR services within the global SAR system;
 - d. Building mutual commitment to support civil SAR;
 - e. Resolving civil SAR procedures and sensitive matters in advance of time-critical distress situations; and
 - f. Identifying types of cooperative matters and efforts which may enhance or support civil SAR operations (i.e., access to medical or fueling facilities, training and exercises, meetings, information exchanges, use of communications capabilities and joint research and development projects, etc.).
42. Negotiation and conclusion of such agreements should consider matters such as:
 - a. Which authorities of the Government, agencies, or organizations concerned should be involved with the agreement;
 - b. Which types of civil SAR operations (e.g., aeronautical, maritime, etc.) or SAR support functions should be included within the scope of the agreement;
 - c. Consistency with international and domestic civil SAR principles or policies;
 - d. Establishment of lines separating SRRs if relevant;
 - e. Whether other treaties, agreements, etc., exist which should be superseded or accounted for in preparation of a new agreement; and
 - f. Relevant guidance of the IAMSAR Manual, NSS, and other pertinent directives.
43. Participants which develop any agreement concerning civil SAR shall ensure that such efforts are coordinated with other interested Participants.
44. Any such international agreement may not be signed or otherwise concluded without prior consultation with the Secretary of State (refer to Title 1 USC 112b).

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SAR SERVICES COVERED BY THIS PLAN

45. This Plan covers the following types of civil SAR services:

- a. Maritime (involving rescue from a water environment);
- b. Aeronautical (including civil SAR assistance in the vicinity of airports);
- c. Land (including civil SAR operations associated with environments such as remote areas, swift water, caves, mountains, etc.);
- d. Urban search and rescue (US&R);
- e. Provision of initial assistance at or near the scene of a distress situation (e.g., initial medical assistance or advice, medical evacuations, provision of needed food or clothing to survivors, etc.);
- f. Delivery of survivors to a place of safety or where further assistance can be provided, or further transportation arranged if necessary;
- g. Saving of property when it can be done in conjunction with or for the saving of lives;
- h. Mass rescue operations (MROs); and
- i. SAR services associated with Incidents of National Significance covered by the National Response Plan (NRP).⁶

46. This Plan does *not* cover operations such as:

- a. Air ambulance services which did not result from a rescue or recovery operation;
- b. Rescues from space (although rescue of persons returned from space can be included);
- c. Military operations, such as combat SAR or other types of recovery by military operations to remove military or civilian personnel from harm's way;
- d. Salvage operations;
- e. Assistance in cases of civil disturbance, insurrection or other emergencies which endanger life or property or disrupt the usual process of government; and
- f. Operations and coordination in addition to those covered by this Plan that might be carried out concurrently with civil SAR operations on scene, such as could occur during a disaster or terrorism response situation, or an Incident of National Significance.

⁶ The NRP covers Federal responses to declared Incidents of National Significance; this Plan covers all civil SAR operations, whether conducted independently or concurrently with the NRP. If carried out concurrently, this Plan becomes an NRP supporting plan by integrating on matters relating to coordination and conduct of disaster response SAR operations. When the NRP is implemented, civil SAR operations will continue to be covered by this Plan; the only difference is that civil SAR services will be coordinated with other NRP operations on scene via the Operations Section of the Incident Command Post or Unified Command established under NIMS. During NRP implementation, SAR facilities may be tasked to support other operations carried out under the NRP on a not-to-interfere basis with lifesaving efforts, or assistance for SAR services may be supplemented by resources available under the NRP.

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MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

47. The Participants agree to cooperate as follows:
- a. Provide mutual agency support by pooling relevant facilities and support services as appropriate for operations within their respective SRRs, and consistent with each participant's relevant legal authorities;
 - b. Make and respond to requests for operational assistance between RCCs, RSCs, or comparable Participant command centers (CCs) as capabilities allow;
 - c. Develop procedures, communications, and databases appropriate for coordination of facilities responding to distress incidents and for coordination between the RCCs, RSCs or Participant CCs;
 - d. Normally follow applicable IMO, ICAO, or other relevant international guidance regarding operational procedures and communications; and
 - e. In areas where more than one authority may respond to distress situations, agreed procedures should be in place, which balance concerns for saving lives and for jurisdiction.
48. Participants may enter into other collaborative efforts with each other such as:
- a. Mutual visits, information exchanges, and cooperative projects for support of civil SAR;
 - b. Joint training or exercises;
 - c. Cooperation in development of procedures, techniques, equipment, or facilities;
 - d. Establishment of groups subordinate to NSARC as a means for more in-depth focus on matters of common concern; and
 - e. Carry out cooperative efforts similar to those indicated above on an international level.

GENERAL TERMS

49. No provision of this Plan or any supporting plan is to be construed as an obstruction to prompt and effective action by any agency or individual to assist persons in distress.
50. Cooperative arrangements between Participants with operational responsibilities and state, local, and private agencies should provide for the fullest practicable mutual cooperation for civil SAR operations, consistent with the willingness and ability of such agencies to act, and for such coordination by the responsible RCC, RSC, or CC of their facilities as may be necessary and practicable.
51. Participants with operational responsibilities may request assistance from other federal agencies having capabilities useful for a civil SAR mission.
52. The federal government does not compel state, local or private agencies to conform to this Plan; such entities can direct and control their own facilities within their boundaries, and cooperation will be pursued through liaison and consultation.

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CHARGING FOR SAR SERVICES

53. Each Participant will fund its own activities in relation to this Plan unless otherwise provided for by law or arranged by the Participants in advance, and will not allow cost reimbursement to delay response to any person in danger or distress.⁷
54. Participants agree that unless required for by law, civil SAR services provided to persons in danger or distress will be without subsequent cost-recovery from the person(s) assisted.
55. In accordance with customary international law, when a nation requests help from another nation to assist person(s) in danger or distress, if such help is provided, it will be accomplished voluntarily; the United States will neither request nor pay reimbursement costs for such assistance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

General

56. Participants coordinating operations should, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders, organize existing agencies and their facilities through suitable agreements into a basic network to assist military and non-military persons in actual or potential distress, protect property and to carry out obligations under customary international law and international instruments to which the United States is a Party.
57. Participants will seek to keep political, economic, jurisdictional, or other such factors secondary when dealing with lifesaving matters.
58. Consistency and harmonization will be fostered wherever practicable through plans, procedures, equipment, agreements, training, terminology, etc., for the various types of lifesaving and recovery operations, taking into account terms and definitions adopted internationally as much as possible.
59. Terminology and definitions used throughout the United States civil SAR community will be standardized to the extent possible, and be as consistent as possible with usage in pertinent international conventions and the IAMSAR Manual.
60. If a distress situation appears to exist or may exist, search, rescue or similar recovery efforts will be based on the assumption that a distress situation does actually exist until it is known differently.
61. Assistance will be provided to persons in distress without regard to their nationality, status, or circumstances.
62. Generally, cost-effective safety, regulatory, or diplomatic measures that tend to minimize the need for United States services will be supported.

⁷ In some cases, SAR operations may be reimbursed under provisions of the Stafford Act when the NRP is implemented, and may include civil SAR activities leading up to implementation of the NRP; however, such funding provisions are beyond the scope of this Plan, and possibility of such reimbursement should never adversely affect the commencement or conduct of needed civil SAR operations.

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63. Close cooperation will be established between services and organizations, which may support improvements in lifesaving functions in areas such as operations, planning, training, exercises, communications and research and development.
64. Recognizing the critical importance of reduced response time in successful rescue and similar efforts, a continual focus will be maintained on developing and implementing means to reduce the time required for:
 - a. Receiving alerts and information associated with distress situations;
 - b. Planning and coordinating operations;
 - c. Facility transits and searches;
 - d. Rescues; and
 - e. Providing immediate assistance, such as medical assistance, as appropriate.
65. All aeronautical and maritime civil SAR personnel should be generally familiar with IMO's International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, ICAO's Convention on International Civil Aviation, Annex 12 ("Search and Rescue"), the joint ICAO-IMO IAMSAR Manual, the NSS, and other primary directives or applicable information.
66. Local cooperative arrangements within the United States should be made in advance between civil SAR, air traffic, and airport authorities for close coordination in handling aircraft emergencies, unless the same authorities hold all the involved responsibilities.
67. SAR principles and procedures of relevant customary international law, international Conventions and the IAMSAR Manual will serve as the framework for coordination of civil SAR operations, and especially civil SAR operations involving multiple countries, organizations or jurisdictions; U.S. organizational or operational civil SAR plans and provisions of the NSS will be consistent with these international provisions to the extent practicable.
68. Operational responsibilities for maritime and aeronautical civil SAR will generally be associated with internationally-recognized geographic maritime and aeronautical SRRs. A single federal agency will be given primary responsibility for coordinating civil SAR operations within each SRR, with other agencies and organizations providing support as appropriate. However, in some specific sub-areas, such as within national parks, other federal authorities may be responsible.
69. Distress situations involving airborne aircraft will normally be handled by the maritime or aeronautical civil SAR authorities responsible for the SRR concerned once the distressed aircraft is down; cooperation between these civil SAR authorities and air traffic service authorities will continue while the aircraft remains airborne.
70. Land civil SAR services may include aeronautical civil SAR operations. Participant's involvement in such operations may be governed by agreements between SAR coordinators and various state and local authorities. Participants will support such operations, as appropriate, bearing in mind the provisions of paragraph 9 of this Plan.

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Coordination of Operations

71. Each agency responsible for operations under this Plan will:
 - a. Keep information readily available on the status and availability of key civil SAR facilities or other resources which may be needed for operations; and
 - b. Keep each other fully and promptly informed of operations of mutual interest, or which may involve use of facilities of another Participant;
72. SAR Coordinators will delegate to their RCCs the authority to:
 - a. Request assistance via other RCCs/RSCs including those of other nations;
 - b. Promptly respond to requests for assistance from other RCCs/RSCs, including those of other nations as discussed below;
 - c. Grant permission for entry into the United States of civil SAR facilities of other countries; and
 - d. Make arrangements with appropriate customs, immigration, health or other authorities to expedite entry of foreign civil SAR facilities as appropriate.
73. SAR Coordinators will authorize their RCCs to arrange promptly, or in advance, for entry of foreign rescue units into the United States should it ever become necessary. Such arrangements should involve appropriate United States authorities as well as proper authorities of the nation or SAR facility involved with the entry. Such entry may include overflight or landing of SAR aircraft and similar accommodation of surface (land or water) civil SAR units as circumstances dictate. Such entry can be for the purpose of fueling, medical, delivery of survivors, or other appropriate and available operational support, or it could also be in response to a request from a United States RCC to the RCC of another nation for assistance of those facilities.
74. Establishment of jointly sponsored and staffed RCCs or RSCs, is encouraged where appropriate.
75. Use of any SAR facility committed to support any civil SAR mission should normally be coordinated and, as appropriate, directed by an appropriate RCC or RSC consistent with this Plan's provisions.
76. On scene coordination may be delegated to any appropriate unit participating in a particular incident under the cognizance of the SAR mission coordinator or an incident commander.
77. If an RSC is established by any agency, it must operate under the oversight of an RCC, and be responsible for certain tasks, or for portions of the RCC's SRR, as determined by the agency concerned.
78. SAR Coordinators shall arrange for the receipt of distress alerts originating from within SRRs for which they are responsible, and ensure that every RCC and RSC can communicate with persons in distress, with SAR facilities, and with other RCCs/RSCs.

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National Incident Management System

79. The type of incident command system adopted for use within the United States is the National Incident Management System (NIMS). When civil SAR operations are conducted in situations where the NIMS structure has been implemented, one or more representatives of the SAR mission coordinator should be assigned to work with the Operations Section of the active incident command post or unified command. Coordination procedures of this Plan will continue to be used under NIMS.

Military Roles and Military/Civilian Relationships

80. Arrangements between federal military and civil agencies should provide for the fullest practicable cooperation, consistent with statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned civil SAR functions.
81. Cooperative arrangements involving Department of Defense and Coast Guard commands should provide for the fullest practicable use of their facilities for civil SAR on a non-interference basis with primary military duties, consistent with statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned agency functions.
82. Participants with operational responsibilities should develop plans and procedures for effective use of all available civil SAR facilities and for contingencies to continue civil SAR operations if military forces are withdrawn because of another emergency or a change in military missions.
83. Department of Defense responsibilities under this Plan include support of civil SAR on a non-interference basis with primary military duties, according to applicable national directives, plans, guidelines, agreements, etc.

Resources

84. To optimize delivery of efficient and effective services, and, where practicable and consistent with agency authorities, provide organizations and persons interested in supporting these services the opportunity to do so, all available resources will be used for civil SAR. Certain state and local governments, civil and volunteer organizations, and private enterprises have facilities that contribute to the effectiveness of the over-all civil SAR network, although they are not Participants to this Plan.
85. To help identify, locate and quantify primary civil SAR facilities, Participants may designate facilities which meet international standards for equipment and personnel training as “SAR units” (SRUs). (Such facilities do not need to be dedicated exclusively to the associated type of operations, and this designation is not intended to preclude use of other resources.)
86. Recognizing the critical role of communications in receiving distress information and coordinating a response which can involve multiple organizations and jurisdictions, the Participants will work aggressively to develop suitable civil SAR provisions for:
- a. Interoperability;
 - b. Means of sending and receiving alerting information;

NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE PLAN OF THE UNITED STATES

- c. Means of identification;
- d. Effective provisions for equipment registration and continual access to registration data by civil SAR authorities;
- e. Rapid, automatic, and direct routing of emergency communications;
- f. High system reliability; and
- g. Preemptive or priority processing of distress communications.

Technical and Support Services

87. The Participants will strive together to:

- a. Apply the most effective systems to save the most lives at the least operational risk and cost; and
- b. Foster innovation in technical, administrative and information systems, which will improve the ability of the Participants and associated non-governmental organizations to carry out civil SAR responsibilities.

88. Each Participant's managerial, operational, and support personnel will strive towards maximizing operational effectiveness.

89. Priority goals of the Participants shall include:

- a. Make distress alerts and associated data available to operational personnel as quickly, comprehensively, and reliably as possible;
- b. Provide communications systems which are highly reliable, simple, problem-free, interoperable, and as functionally effective as possible;
- c. Enable operational personnel to be as highly effective in the planning and conduct of civil SAR operations as possible; and
- d. Ensure civil SAR personnel are provided quality training, equipment, procedures, facilities, information, and other tools necessary to conduct SAR operations in a consistent, highly professional, and effective manner.

90. Participants should:

- a. Encourage development and proficiency in civil SAR techniques and procedures by other agencies participating in SAR, and assist these other agencies as appropriate;
- b. Encourage continued development of State and local civil SAR facilities as appropriate; and
- c. Enter into agreements, as appropriate, with State, local, and private organizations to provide for the fullest practicable cooperation in civil SAR consistent with their capabilities and resources, and to account for use of federal facilities in SAR missions with which these organizations are involved.

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Suspension or Termination of Operations

91. Civil SAR operations shall normally continue until all reasonable hope of rescuing survivors has passed.
92. The responsible RCC/RSC concerned shall normally decide when to discontinue these operations. If no such center is involved in coordinating the operations, the On Scene Commander (OSC) or Incident Commander (IC) may make this decision. If there is no OSC or IC involved, the decision will be made at an appropriate level of the chain-of-command of the facility conducting the operations.
93. When an RCC/RSC or other appropriate authority considers, on the basis of reliable information that a rescue operation has been successful, or that the emergency no longer exists, it shall terminate the SAR operation and promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified.
94. If an operation on-scene becomes impracticable and the RCC/RSC or other appropriate authority concludes that survivors might still be alive, it may temporarily suspend the on-scene activities pending further developments, and shall promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified. Information subsequently received shall be evaluated and operations resumed when justified on the basis of such information.

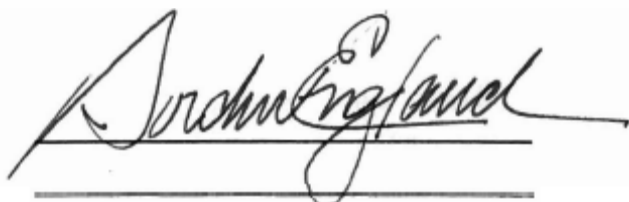
ENTRY INTO FORCE, AMENDMENT OR TERMINATION

95. Entry into force, amendment or termination of this Plan shall be in accordance with the procedures set forth in the *United States National Search and Rescue Committee Interagency Agreement*.

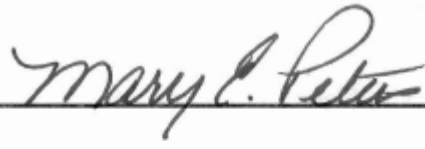
NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE PLAN OF THE UNITED STATES


Secretary,
Department of Homeland Security

Date: 4-18-07


Deputy Secretary of Defense,
Department of Defense


Date: JUL 18 2007


Secretary,
Department of Transportation


Date: 6/15/07


Chairman,
Federal Communications Commission

Date: 5/15/07

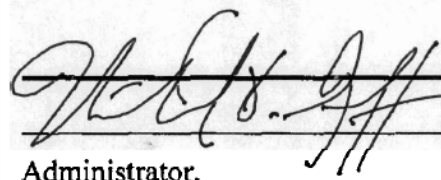

Secretary,
Department of Commerce

Date: _____


Secretary,
Department of the Interior

JUN 08 2007

Date: _____


Administrator,
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

AUG 02 2007

Date: _____