

Chapter 8: Training and Exercises

8.1 General

8.1.1 The importance of thorough training for all personnel employed on SAR missions cannot be over-emphasised. Failure of a single link in the often complex chain of action required in SAR missions can compromise the success of the operation, resulting in loss of lives of SAR personnel, lives of those that might otherwise have been saved and/or loss of valuable resources. The purpose of training is to meet SAR system objectives by developing SAR specialists. Since considerable experience and judgement are needed to handle SAR situations, necessary skills require significant time to master. Training can be expensive but contributes to operational effectiveness. Quality of performance will match the quality of training.

Training

8.1.2 Training is critical to performance and safety. The SAR system should save those in distress when it can, and also use training to reduce risks to its own valuable personnel and resources. Training personnel in making sound risk assessment will help to ensure that these trained professionals and valuable resources remain available for future operations.

8.1.3 Consistency in training and sharing of information relating to search and rescue is promoted through the National Amendment and Training sub-committee and the National SAR Council. Standardisation to the prosecution of SAR Operations is encouraged through these avenues.

8.1.4 Efforts to ensure professionalism extend to career development for individuals who are assigned to undertake SAR duties. The aim is to ensure SAR officers are competent. In additions, agencies should consider making assignments of sufficient length to develop expertise and take advantage of SAR experience in subsequent assignments of officers.

Who to Train

8.1.5 All personnel involved in SAR Operation need to undertake SAR-specific training.

8.1.6 An individual, a group or multiple groups may be trained. Each person should have had previous training to perform individual tasks. Where the individuals integrate into teams, team training is required so that the individuals can support the team effort. Where teams integrate, multiple team training is required to support the overall effort.

Requirement for Training

8.1.7 Search and rescue organisations are responsible for the establishment of formal training programs for SAR personnel to reach and maintain competence appropriate to their role.

8.1.8 Training of SAR personnel should focus on both the practical and theoretical application of SAR and may include the following:

- a) Study of SAR procedures, techniques and equipment through lectures, demonstrations, films, SAR manuals and journals;
- b) Assisting in or observing actual operations; and
- c) Exercises in which personnel are trained to coordinate individual procedures and techniques, or operate specialised equipment, in an actual or simulated environment.

8.2 National Training Framework

Public Safety Training Package

- 8.2.1 The Public Safety Training Package has been developed through extensive consultation involving all Australian SAR authorities. The qualifications contained within the package are consistent with Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) guidelines and are endorsed by the National Quality Council.
- 8.2.2 The Public Safety Training Package provides units of competence and qualifications that identify core competency standards for personnel who are involved in SAR activities. Units of competence have been packaged and aligned to a specific qualification within the AQF to establish the qualification level and title.

National Search and Rescue School

- 8.2.3 The National SAR School, a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), is the training arm of RCC Australia.
- 8.2.4 The National Search and Rescue School provides specialist aviation and maritime search and rescue training to officers primarily in Australia's Rescue Coordination Centre. In addition, the School provides SAR training to Australian and International Defence Forces, Police personnel, and search and rescue staff in neighbouring countries.
- 8.2.5 The National Search and Rescue School offers the Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Police Search and Rescue Management) to members of Australian police services on behalf of the National Search and Rescue Council.
- 8.2.6 The National Search and Rescue School oversees and administers training in units of this advanced diploma by a combination of distance education and classroom instruction. A residential instruction and assessment program, the National Police Search and Rescue Managers Course, is held annually in Canberra.
- 8.2.7 Directing staff of the National Police Search and Rescue Managers Course, in addition to instructors from the National Search and Rescue School, are drawn from Australian police organisations. These officers are subject matter experts in land and marine search and rescue and are qualified in workplace training and assessment.

State/Territory SAR Authority Training

- 8.2.8 In addition to participating in the National Police SAR Managers training program the State/Territory Police organisation in Australia conduct search and rescue specific training with personnel involved, or who may become involved, in SAR operations at a local level.
- 8.2.9 This training involves principally land and coastal search and rescue operations employing their own personnel and personnel from other State/Territory organisations having a role in local search and rescue missions.
- 8.2.10 Formal training in the Diploma of Public Safety (Police Search and Rescue Coordination) is conducted by a number of registered training organisations associated with the Australian Police Services.

8.3 Search and Rescue Exercises

- 8.3.1 Exercises test and improve operational plans, provide learning experience and improve liaison and coordination skills. Exercises, conducted on a realistic basis, help to demonstrate and assess the true effectiveness of training and the operational efficiency and competence of the SAR service. Exercises will reveal

deficiencies that may exist in SAR plans and enable them to be improved. It is safer to have shortcomings revealed by exercises rather than during actual operations

- 8.3.2 Each search and rescue organisation should periodically take part in coordinated search and rescue exercises (SAREX). These SAREXs should be designed to exercise the SAR system, in whole or part, and test such things as operational plans, communication procedures and facilities, individual staff performance, SAR unit performance and inter-organisation and/or international operations.
- 8.3.3 It is equally important that personnel have a good knowledge of the duties and procedures of other units and person who may be involved in a SAR operation, particularly those with whom they will have direct contact. It is especially important that SMCs be aware of the time, effort, and risk involved when requests are made to other units or organisations.
- 8.3.4 The regular conduct of joint SAREXs between SAR Authorities should form a part of any training program.
- 8.3.5 Emergency Management Australia (EMA) has developed a handbook, *Managing Exercises* that should be used as a guide and to assist SAR personnel designing and conducting search and rescue exercises. This Handbook and other EMA publications can be found at:
http://www.ag.gov.au/www/emaweb/emaweb.nsf/Page/Publications_AustralianEmergencyManualSeries_AustralianEmergencyManualSeries-A-Z)

8.4 Training of Search and Rescue Units

Land SAR Training

- 8.4.1 Land SAR training is generally conducted by State/Territory Police organisations, with assistance from members of the State and Territory Emergency Services, as they have the responsibility coordinating search and rescue operations for persons and vehicles missing in a land environment.
- 8.4.2 Other SAR authorities that may become involved in a land SAR incident should ensure that their members are familiar with police arrangements for alerting and dispatching of rescue units.

Aircrew Training

- 8.4.3 SAR Authorities should coordinate SAR exercises in conjunction with aircrews to ensure practice is maintained in pilot techniques employed in SAR operations.
- 8.4.4 Under the 'self-help' philosophy adopted in Australia, exercises involving commercial pilots on a large scale are not practicable; however, seminars including SAR operations as a subject provide an opportunity for discussion and display of training material.

Dropmaster and Dispatchers

- 8.4.5 The dispatch of survival stores and equipment from an aircraft to survivors on land or over water is an exacting task, which, if not performed well, can nullify or seriously delay the rescue effort and may endanger the aircraft and its crew.
- 8.4.6 Supply dropping operations by civil aircraft should only be carried out by personnel trained in the preparation and delivery of droppable equipment in accordance with CASA regulations.
- 8.4.7 Joint exercises involving all authorities that organise or participate in land rescue should be arranged on a periodic basis.

Air Observer Training

- 8.4.8 Major SAR operations require a considerable number of observers who may be drawn from various organisations.
- 8.4.9 RCC Australia has published a comprehensive handbook for Observers that is available to all SAR Authorities from the SAR Resources and Training section of AMSA.
- 8.4.10 Observer leaders, observer briefing check lists, aircraft observer instructions and observers on ships are discussed in detail at Chapter 5.

Aviation Search and Rescue Units (SRU)

- 8.4.11 RCC Australia provides training to contracted aircraft operators who are considered suitable and capable of providing a SAR response.
- 8.4.12 These operators once formally trained and equipped are provided with appropriate continuation training and are known operationally as civil Search and Rescue Units (SRUs). The scope of training provided is specific to the resource capability of individual operators, in terms of human resources and aircraft availability.
- 8.4.13 Accordingly, operators are given training in one or more of the following aspects of SAR operations:
 - a) Visual search procedures/techniques;
 - b) Airborne location of distress beacons using aural homing techniques;
 - c) Airborne location of distress beacons using DF equipment;
 - d) On ground location of localised distress beacons;
 - e) Operation of electronic sensor systems in SAR operations;
 - f) Aerial delivery of supplies/equipment overland and/or over water; and
 - g) Helicopter rescue techniques.

8.5 Photographic Records

- 8.5.1 Where possible, photographic or video recordings should be taken on exercises and actual SAR missions for use as future training aids. Participating authorities' film crews may be helpful in providing this facility.

8.6 Liaison Visits

- 8.6.1 It is important that personnel have a good knowledge of the duties and procedures of other units and persons who may be involved in SAR operations, particularly those with whom they will have direct contact. It is especially important that SMCs be aware of the time, effort and risk involved when requests are made to other units or persons.
- 8.6.2 Liaison visits between personnel likely to become involved together in SAR operations are encouraged. SMCs should inspect other units' facilities and where possible take part in appropriate activities, e.g. packing and loading equipment, helicopter rescue exercises, etc. The personnel of other organisations or units should be encouraged to visit RCCs and other SAR related units. Potential SAR team members, either units or individuals, should be invited to participate in, or attend exercises.