

**KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN
EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 9
SEARCH AND RESCUE**

PRIMARY AGENCY: King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO)

SUPPORT AGENCIES: King County Executive
King County Council
King County Office of Emergency Management
King County Search & Rescue Association
Other Law Enforcement Agencies and Associations
State and Local Emergency Management Organizations

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of this ESF is to identify search and rescue roles and responsibilities within King County during a disaster.

B. Scope

ESF 9 discusses search and rescue operations within King County during disasters including those in wilderness and urban environments.

II. POLICIES

King County Sheriff's Office Special Operations Section, Search and Rescue (referred to in the future as King County SAR), will coordinate with other federal, state, and local organizations when providing search and rescue functions.

King County SAR will manage search and rescue operations within their jurisdictional boundaries. Washington State Emergency Workers (WAC 118-04), registered in King County as SAR volunteers, will follow guidelines established by the command structure of the Sheriff's Office, SAR Unit. In cases where King County SAR is called to assist another agency, SAR leadership will coordinate activities with the lead agency.

King County SAR will follow normal policies and procedures whenever possible, realizing that extraordinary circumstances may dictate some adjustments. King County SAR resources will comply with all federal, state, and local laws governing search and rescue activities.

III. SITUATION

A. Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards

King County will periodically experience emergency situations, which may overwhelm current search and rescue capabilities. Equipment and personnel may be damaged or unavailable at times when they are most needed. The King County Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Analysis describes situations that affect our area that may impact resource availability. Mountainous terrain, rivers, vast wooded areas, inland lakes, and Puget Sound waters, mixed with urban areas, provide for the periodic use and testing of existing search and rescue services.

“Search and Rescue” means the acts of searching for, rescuing, or recovering by means of ground, marine, or air activity any person who becomes lost, injured, or is killed while outdoors or as a result of a natural or technological disaster. This includes instances involving search for downed aircraft when ground personnel are used. Evidence searches of crime scenes may be so vast or complex that they require search and rescue resources.

B. Planning Assumptions

Search and rescue operations in a disaster will require the use of existing trained search and rescue personnel (reference RCW 38.52) and specialized equipment.

During normal circumstances, an adequate number of volunteers can be recruited for general search and rescue purposes from within the County.

Natural and technological disasters will greatly increase the scope of search and rescue operations.

King County recognizes that it cannot provide all necessary equipment or personnel to cope with every search and rescue mission during a major emergency or disaster.

Support such as helicopters, tracking dogs, and outside search and rescue groups may be required from adjoining political subdivisions or from state resources to ensure maximum search and rescue effectiveness.

When search and rescue activities result in the discovery of a deceased person or search and rescue workers assist in the recovery of human remains, the County Sheriff shall ensure compliance with RCW 68.08.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATION

A. General

The King County Sheriff's Office will have complete responsibility for ground and water search operations using local resources as available. When local search and rescue resources are exhausted, or if needed resources are not locally available, assistance will be requested through the Washington State Division of Emergency Management.

The goal of search and rescue operations is to save the lives of victims who are unable to ensure their own survival without assistance. This includes, but is not limited to locating persons lost in wilderness areas and assisting injured people in unsafe areas to reach safety.

The search for and recovery of bodies will be conducted only after the rescue of survivors has been completed and the environment will allow for safe operation by search and recovery personnel.

B. Organization

The King County Sheriff's Office is responsible for search and rescue operations within its jurisdiction. The Office of Emergency Management supports the Sheriff's Office in its use of registered emergency workers and provides coordination with Washington State Emergency Management Division whenever necessary.

Search and rescue volunteer units are organized under the authority of King County Sheriff's Office. Volunteers are all registered as emergency workers and follow guidelines established by RCW 38.52 and WAC 118-04. Volunteers specific to air search and rescue missions are registered by Washington State DOT, Aviation Division under RCW 47.68 and WAC 468.200.

C. Procedures

When a report of a search and rescue incident is received by King County, a Sheriff's patrol unit will be dispatched to the scene to evaluate the need for Search and Rescue. The deputy will then alert the SAR Duty Officer of the pending search and rescue mission.

The SAR Duty Deputy will alert search and rescue agencies, organizations, and volunteers, and initiate search and rescue operations. A state mission number will be obtained from Washington State Emergency Management Division.

A SAR Duty Deputy will be sent to the area where the search and rescue operations are to be conducted, to establish a base camp and to coordinate support required for search and rescue operations.

Existing Sheriff's Office search and rescue personnel and volunteer search and rescue units qualified in accordance with RCW 38.52, and WAC 118.04, will be used as a nucleus around which greatly expanded rescue operations may be conducted in a major emergency.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Aeronautics Division of the State Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration assume responsibility for search of downed aircraft. King County Search and Rescue Units coordinate ground rescue and/or recovery operations of persons in downed aircraft. The Director, State Department of Transportation, has statutory authority to conduct air searches for missing or downed civil aircraft in the State of Washington.

The Sheriff, as chief law enforcement office of King County, is responsible for search and rescue operations in the unincorporated area of the County, and selected cities that contract with KCSO for police services.

The King County Office of Emergency Management will provide support through activation of the Emergency Operations Center or coordinate the use of emergency workers as requested.

The Search and Rescue Coordinator, Special Operations Section of the Sheriff's Office, is responsible for coordinating and monitoring search and rescue operations with supporting government units and volunteer organizations trained in accordance with RCW 38.52 and WAC 118-04. The SAR Coordinator will also track volunteer training requirements under WAC 118.04.

The SAR Duty Deputy shall be responsible for coordinating actual administrative and field operations by government and volunteer search and rescue supporting units.

The chief law enforcement official of political subdivisions (cities and towns), located in King County shall be responsible for search and rescue activities within respective jurisdictional boundaries.

Fire agencies are responsible for search and rescue in structures, or collapsed structures.

VI. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Sufficient commissioned deputies, support staff, qualified volunteers and equipment to provide 24 hour a day coverage until the demands of the emergency situation or disaster is over.

VII. REFERENCES

Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
Revised Code of Washington (RCW)
Washington Administrative Code (WAC)
King County Code (KCC)
King County Sheriff's Office General Orders Manual
King County Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Analysis

VIII. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

AGENCY APPROVAL: _____ **DATE** _____
Sheriff