



**STANDARD  
OPERATING  
PROCEDURES**

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## **1. Mission Statement**

The mission of the Kent County Ground Search and Rescue team is to safely locate, assist, stabilize, and transport missing persons of Kent County and surrounding communities.

## **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to outline guidelines for the Kent County Ground Search and Rescue Team operations and training. The following SOPs are designed for the highest level of safety possible.

## **3. Who We Are**

The Kent County Ground Search and Rescue (KCGSAR) team is a division of Kent County Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (KCRACES), which is overseen by the Kent County Emergency Management Division (KCEMD).

## **4. Personnel**

KCGSAR personnel shall:

- A. Conduct themselves in a safe manner at all times.
- B. Volunteer without any expectation recognition or payment.
- C. Be a minimum of 18 years of age for full membership, 16 years of age for youth membership.
- D. Complete full KCGSAR application and be accepted by KCGSAR leadership staff.
- E. Pass an initial criminal history check and then periodic checks as stated by the KCRACES guidelines / by-laws.
- F. Successfully complete a minimum of GSAR awareness training prior to responding to actual event.
- G. Attend minimum of 65% of monthly trainings and occasional drills.
- H. Stay in physical shape to respond to incidents.
- I. Abide by any and all KCEMD, KCGSAR, and KCRACES By-Laws, SOPs, rules, directives, and/or direction by staff leadership.
- J. Abide by any law enforcement officer on scene.
- K. Be familiar with and use of the Incident Command System.
- L. Acquire an FCC amateur radio license within 4 months of membership approval (Technician class as a minimum).

## **5. Leadership Structure (Chain of Command)**

Kent County Emergency Management Director  
Kent County GSAR Director  
Kent County GSAR Directorate Appointees  
Kent County GSAR Search Managers  
Kent County GSAR Team Leader  
Kent County GSAR Crew Leader  
Kent County GSAR Personnel

## **6. Training**

- A. KCGSAR training levels:
  - o Awareness
  - o Operations
  - o Technician
  - o Crew Leader
  - o Search Manager
  - o Other levels may be added as required or as needs arise.
- B. KCGSAR shall accept ground search and rescue certifications from KCGSAR, National Association of Search and Rescue (NASAR), and Will County, IL Search and Rescue.
- C. KCGSAR personnel shall provide leadership staff with copies of any current certifications as well as keeping emergency information current.
- D. KCGSAR leadership shall maintain personnel files in safe location. These records shall not be accessed by any person other than people authorized by the KCEMD or KCGSAR leadership.
- E. KCGSAR personnel shall complete the FEMA Incident Command System training within 4 months of joining KCGSAR.
- F. Regular trainings shall take place minimum one time per month with occasional response drills (scheduled and real time) as well as special training activities.

## **7. Activation Notification**

- A. KCGSAR team shall be notified by Kent County Sheriff Dispatch on behalf of any public safety organization with the pertinent activation information.
- B. Private requests for assistance shall be directed to proper law enforcement agency.
- C. KCGSAR leadership staff shall determine type of response appropriate for the situation after notification from county dispatch.
- D. KCGSAR personnel shall be notified via Alpha Numeric pager or text message with the pertinent activation information.
- E. KCGSAR Voice Pagers are issued to top leadership for notification from Kent County dispatch.
- F. KCGSAR personnel shall notify leadership staff of any changes in their notification procedures.

## **8. Activation Response Types**

- A. The KCGSAR team shall be requested for deployment for missing persons or for an evidence search.
- B. Due to safety concerns KCGSAR shall not deploy for criminal searches or for violent suicidal people. We will consider activation to provide technical or communication support for law enforcement agencies.

- C. Types of Responses
  - 1. Stand-by: personnel shall be notified of a potential search operation. Members should take this time to prepare themselves for the operation and should only respond to staging when notified to do so.
  - 2. Leadership response: leadership staff and equipment shall respond to scene.
  - 3. Leadership/ K-9 response: leadership staff, equipment, and appropriate K-9 search team shall respond to scene.
  - 4. Full Response: All available leadership, personnel, K-9, and equipment shall respond to staging area and report to the staging officer. One member of the leadership staff will report to the Incident Command post.
- D. KCGSAR personnel shall not respond or report to the missing person's Place Last Seen (PLS) or Incident Command Post unless directed to by Incident Command or the Search Manager.
- E. A Staging Officer shall maintain a check-in List and an assignment list for accountability of KCGSAR personnel during an operation.
- F. No KCGSAR member shall drive in emergency mode (lights and siren).
- G. Amber lights may be authorized for on scene use only on a case by case basis by the Search Manager for protection of SAR team members during an active search.
- H. All KCGSAR personnel shall drive in a safe manner being aware of road and weather conditions. Personnel shall obey all traffic laws and shall not violate any provision of the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code.
  - a. Any member receiving an infraction from any law enforcement agency shall be solely responsible for any and all fines and/or punishment.
  - b. Any member receiving an infraction shall notify KCGSAR leadership staff as soon as possible for review and possible disciplinary action. Failure to do so may also result in disciplinary action.
- I. KCGSAR members should notify leadership staff if they will be unavailable for response for more than 12 hours.
- J. KCGSAR members will maintain a 24 hour readiness pack and should be able to sustain operations without outside assistance for up to 48 hours.
- K. No KCGSAR member shall respond to an operation or training if under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescribed medication that may negatively affect driving or search performance.
- L. KCGSAR members should check into net control when READY to respond only!

## **9. Scene Operations**

- A. Safety is our number one concern with any search operation.
- B. KCGSAR personnel shall wear proper uniform, identification, and PPE at all times as directed by leadership staff.
- C. KCGSAR personnel will turn in an accountability tag to the staging manager when at the staging location for accountability purposes.
- D. KCGSAR personnel shall look, act, and perform professionally at all times during a search operation, exercise, and other official events.
- E. KCGSAR personnel shall follow the directions of the Incident Command, Search Manager, and Safety Officer all times. At no time will "free lancing" be allowed. ANY personnel not complying with ICS structure and procedures may be asked to leave scene. This is done for safety and accountability reasons.

- F. KCGSAR personnel shall inform the Search Manager and/or Safety Officer immediately if any injury occurs during operation. Personnel are responsible for any and all treatment needed from resulting injury sustained during an operation.
- G. KCGSAR personnel shall immediately notify their Team Leader who shall notify the Search Manager of any ailment that affects them and their duties during an operation.
- H. KCGSAR personnel shall not smoke during an active search operation. This includes the staging area as well as the re-habilitation area.
- I. KCGSAR personnel shall not at any time disturb or remove any actual or possible evidence at an operation.
  - a. Personnel shall notify their Team Leader who shall notify the Search Manager or Net Control of evidence or possible evidence.
  - b. Search Manager shall notify Law Enforcement and follow their direction in the handling of evidence or possible evidence.
    - 1. Type and location of evidence or possible evidence.
    - 2. Name and team of person locating item.
    - 3. Time located.
    - 4. Also above information shall be noted on KCGSAR clue log sheet along with officer's name.
  - c. Evidence or possible evidence area shall be marked with 3 wraps of flagging tape and avoided by personnel. This will not be done prior to receiving the approval of Law Enforcement.
- J. KCGSAR personnel shall at all times ensure scene security. Personnel shall request law enforcement if unauthorized people do not leave the area when directed.
- K. KCGSAR personnel shall at no time enter private property with out expressed consent from property owner or representative. If private property is entered, personnel shall report it to the net control station.
- L. KCGSAR personnel shall not at any time enter private residences unless accompanied by a law enforcement Officer. If a residence is entered, personnel shall report it to the net control station.
- M. KCGSAR members are not to carry a firearm while working an incident, if leadership identifies a member with a firearm they will be asked to lock it in a vehicle. The only exception is for duly sworn officers who are within their jurisdiction.

## **10. Communications and GPS Usage**

- A. KCGSAR personnel shall abide by all communications laws and directives.
- B. KCGSAR personnel, no matter what training level, are required to obtain an FCC amateur radio license within 4 months of joining the team.
- C. KCGSAR personnel shall abide by Incident Command System procedures for communicating with Search Leadership unless there is an emergency situation or communication failure.
- D. KCGSAR Search Manager or Net Control shall assign frequencies used for each necessary division.
- E. KCGSAR personnel shall use any and all proper communication procedures including proper transmissions and language and phrases as well as properly stating the FCC call sign after each transmission.

- F. Whistle commands should be used as follows:
  - a. 1 Blast - Stop
  - b. 2 Blasts - Go
  - c. 3 or more blasts – Emergency
  
- G. Flagging tape
  - a. 1 Wrap - Flank
  - b. 2 Wraps - Boundary
  - c. 3 Wraps - Evidence or Hazard
  
- H. Communication when subject is found:
  - a. When subject is in good condition report that subject has been located, in good condition, and give location.
  - b. When subject is in need of medical attention report that subject has been located and needs medical, give location and basic medical condition so NCS can advise medical personnel.
  - c. When subject is located and deceased consider if radio communications is the best means to report the situation. Consider calling NCS or search manager on a phone. If radio communication is used be discreet and request law enforcement and give location.  
*For example, "Team one with Priority traffic. I have located the subject and request law enforcement behind the barn at 123 Pine Island Dr."*
  - d. When communicating be aware that media and others are listening. Being considerate to the content and using discretion are important. Although radio communications is the primary method of communicating, using telephones and/or messengers can be used when sensitive information must be reported.
  
- I. Members who are acting as communications support for a K9 team will only report canine status and canine behavior information after the handlers specifies what to report. The communication person will not report the information based on what the behavior appears to be. For example, if the net control station asks if a bloodhound team is on a track, the communications support person will ask the handler before reporting back instead of just reporting what the dog appears to be doing. This standard also applies when speaking to law enforcement officers, or others that may be involved with the search.
  
- J. Team leaders or their designee will be the only person of a team that communicates with the net control station, search manager, operations manager, incident command, or law enforcement officers.
  
- K. A GPS should be used whenever possible to track a team's search activities. KCGSAR uses WGS84 map datum and the decimal degrees format (**hddd.ddddd°**). If your GPS is not capable of this format you should sign one out from the truck if available or advise NCS if it is of a different format when reporting.

## 11. Search Types

- A. The type of search used in a search assignment will be determined by the Search Manager and communicated to the Staging Officer who shall assign personnel to execute the search.
  
- B. The types of searches used by KCGSAR personnel are:
  - a. Confinement
  - b. Hasty (Type 1)
  - c. Loose Grid (Type 2)
  - d. Tight Grid (Type 3)
  - e. Evidence Search
  
- C. Requests for additional resources will be made through the Search Manager as outlined by the Incident Command System.

## **12. Medical Care**

- A. KCGSAR personnel shall be trained and proficient, at minimum, in Adult/ Child/ Infant CPR & Foreign Body Airway Obstruction (FBAO) and First Aid.
- B. KCGSAR personnel shall attend annual CPR and First Aid trainings and provide copies of certification cards to leadership staff.
- C. KCGSAR personnel shall not provide any medical care outside their training or what is allowed by law.
- D. KCGSAR personnel shall wear proper personal protective equipment and body substance isolation when treating any sick or injured person.
- E. KCGSAR personnel are encouraged to attend education for and become licensed in higher levels of emergency medical service care.

## **13. Documentation**

- A. KCGSAR personnel shall complete any and all required documentation required by law, law enforcement, and KCGSAR requirements.
- B. Leadership staff shall store documentation in a safe location for review, training, or court proceedings.

## **14. Media Relations**

Since the media will often be present with search operations the following should be observed:

- A. At no time will KCGSAR personnel speak with media personnel.
- B. KCGSAR personnel shall refer media personnel to Incident Command staff or if assigned the Public Information Officer

## **15. End of Operations**

- A. KCGSAR personnel will notify the Staging Officer when leaving an operation, who shall document that the person is leaving.
- B. KCGSAR personnel shall ensure all documentation is completed in timely manner and secured for safe keeping.
- C. KCGSAR personnel shall make all effort to attend any debriefings or Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) meetings.
- D. KCGSAR leadership shall document debriefing proceeding and minutes for future training and legal purposes.
- E. KCGSAR personnel shall ensure all equipment used is cleaned, repaired, and returned to its proper location. If this cannot be done then notify the Search Manager or KCGSAR leadership of the equipment status.

## **16. Disciplinary Procedures**

- A. KCSGAR is an “at will” voluntary organization and at any time KCEMD, KCSGAR, or KCRACES leadership may terminate any membership of a KCSGAR team member for any reason. This includes during operations, trainings, or other events.
- B. KCSGAR personnel who asked to leave an operation, training, or event area are to leave the area immediately. The removal of any team member will be reviewed after the event has concluded. Personnel refusing to leave an area or operation will be referred to law enforcement officers.
- C. Anytime a team member is removed from an operation, training, or event area, the situation will be reviewed by KCSGAR and/or KCEMD staff as soon as possible after the operation. The review will determine the member’s status. Disciplinary actions may include removing the member from the group.
- C. KCSGAR members who do not follow the above SOP’s may be removed from the KCSGAR team at any time.
- D. Members may be moved to an inactive or probationary status for disciplinary reasons, failure to complete required training requirements or failure to meet commitment levels.
- E. Members displaying unprofessional, criminal, or other inappropriate actions that may bring discredit to KCEMD, KCSGAR, and/or KCRACES teams while on or off duty will have their membership status reviewed by KCEMD, KCSGAR, and/or KCRACES leadership to determine the appropriate disciplinary action including removal from the group.
- F. Any formal reviews or disciplinary actions shall be documented and placed in the member’s personnel file.

## **17. Membership Status**

- A. The membership status levels are as follows:
  - 1. Probationary: Members who are within their 6 month probationary period or as a result of disciplinary action.
  - 2. Youth: Members who are between the ages of 16 and 18 years old.
  - 3. Associate: Members who live outside of the 60 minute response time requirement or who cannot make a full commit to the organization. Associate member status for those within 60 minute response area must be approved on case by case basis.
  - 4. Full: Members who have met the membership requirements, completed their 6 month probationary period, and are in good standing. Full members are required to participate in 65% of all activities.
- B. Training levels - See training matrix - attached

- C. Unit's within the SAR team
  - 1. Support
    - a. Members who are not trained in Ground SAR but support the SAR team as needed.
    - b. New members are placed in this group until they complete operations level training.
  - 2. Ground Team 1: Active SAR Members trained in Ground Search and Rescue. Members may specialize in different aspects of Rescue / Response.
  - 3. Ground Team 2: Inactive SAR members trained in Ground Search and Rescue.
  - 4. K9 Unit: Members who are trained in Ground SAR and specialize in canine searches.
  - 5. Youth Team: Members who are between the ages of 16 and 18 years old and are trained in SAR.
  - 6. Special Teams:
    - a. Mountain Bike
    - b. Mounted
    - c. ATV
    - d. 4x4

## **18. Logos and Uniforms**

- A. Members are required to wear proper uniforms for field work during all activations.
- B. Authorized uniforms consist of:
  - 1. Safety yellow shirt – with Search and Rescue on back and RACES logo on the front chest.
  - 2. Black BDU pants or Black work pants.
  - 3. During any search operations the following items are prohibited:
    - Any camouflage clothing or outerwear
    - Being clothed in all black
- B. At night all members must wear some type of brightly colored clothing or a reflective vest to aid in visibility.
- C. During any KCGSAR operation, KCGSAR personnel are prohibited from using any products that display the CERT logo or identifications.

## **19. Team Assignments and General Information**

- A. Team identification
  - a. Ground Teams should be numbered sequentially 1-999. As team's are brought back to staging and reassigned they will be assigned a new team number.
  - b. K9 Teams should be named by the K9 that is assigned to that team. IE: Team Jed or Team Tucker.
- B. Team make up:
  - 1. Ground Team (no more than 6 team members). Usually 1 team leader and up to 4 team members, but no more than 5 team members.
  - 2. K9 Team (no more than 4 team members): canine, handler, flanker, communicator
- C. Gear requirements for specific response – see attachment.

## 20. Subject Location Procedures

- A. Live Subject location:
  - a. The team leader should immediately take control of the location and team members.
  - b. The team leader or their designee is the only person authorized to communicate with Net Control.
  - c. The team leader should radio back to Net Control advising they have a find and to standby for victim status and location.
  - d. Medically trained personnel should assess the victim's status and give a report to the team leader for transmission back to Net Control.
  - e. Any team member not involved in stabilizing the victim should acquire GPS coordinates, flag an area to the nearest trail or access point and set up a small base of operations to work from.
  
- B. Deceased Subject Location:
  - a. The team leader should immediately take control of the location and team members.
  - b. The team leader should radio back to Net Control advising they need a law enforcement representative
  - c. The team leader shall secure the scene making sure that NOTHING is touched, moved or disturbed. The team leader or their designee should be the only person to approach the victim to confirm the find and assess their status.
  - d. All persons should back off from location to protect scene as best as possible
  - e. All Radio traffic should be limited and cell phones should be used whenever possible.

### Attachments:

- Medical Policy
- Training Requirements
- Equipment Requirements
- Training Agreement form
- Search Management Packet

Reviewed / Changes Made on 01/2/2008 JSN & KK

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RECORD OF PERSONNEL RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF KENT COUNTY GROUND SEARCH AND RESCUE (KCGSAR) STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print) have received a copy of and understand the KCGSAR Standard Operating Procedures. I also understand as a member of the KCGSAR team, I must abide by these standards to be a member in good standing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness