



Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group

A Member of the Appalachian Search & Rescue Conference



PROSPECTIVE MEMBER PACKET

Welcome! Thank you for your interest in the Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group. We hope that the information provided in this packet will help answer questions that you may have about our search and rescue organization. Please carefully review the contents in this packet and the membership process. If you have any questions, feel free to contact our New Member Coordinator or any SMRG member.

Contact Information:

Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group

118 Park Street, SE
Vienna, VA 22180-4608
www.smr.org

New Membership Coordinator: join@smrg.org

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OVERVIEW OF SMRG

The Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (SMRG) is a professional, all-volunteer wilderness search-and-rescue (SAR) organization, dedicated to saving lives. SMRG is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia and has Non-Profit status (as 501(c)3 corporation). Begun in 1974, SMRG was established to assist people who become lost or injured in the outdoors. We provide specialized services generally not offered by other emergency service agencies.

As an organization, we are led by a Board of Directors, which provides day-to-day leadership and oversight. Budgetary and other important decisions are deliberated and voted by the “Active” membership, those members who have met the requirements of a probationary period and remain active in the group. Operationally, we are called out based on direct relationships with local law enforcement agencies, or through our affiliation with the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC).

We are one of several SAR groups in the ASRC (see Figure 1). All or some of the ASRC member-groups may be called out to support searches or other emergency missions throughout the mid-Atlantic region; primarily in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.. As a certifying and standards-setting organization, the ASRC is well known throughout the United States.

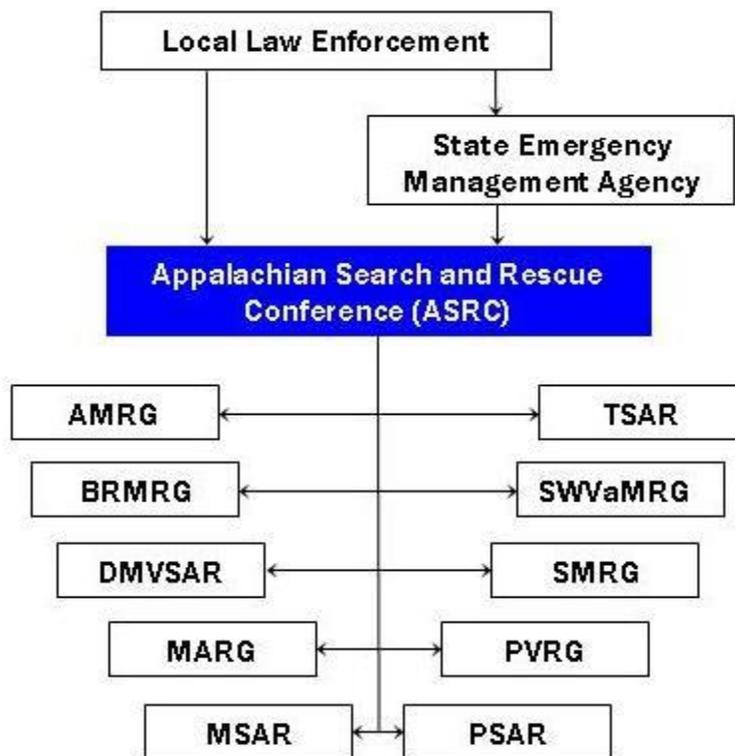


Figure 1. ASRC Organization.

SMRG and the ASRC are also affiliated with the following professional organizations and councils:

- National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR)
- Virginia Search and Rescue Council (VSARCO)
- Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council (PSARC)

SMRG's membership is entirely volunteer, with professional training in SAR techniques. We are supported by membership dues, contributions, and fund-raising activities. Our expenses include:

- Capital Equipment (computers, handheld and base radios, generators, ropes, etc.)
- Normal SAR Equipment (batteries, map boards, etc.)
- Insurance
- Dues to other organizations and associations
- Administration (photocopying, mailings, office supplies, etc.)
- Expendable Mission Supplies (pens & pencils, flagging tape, medical supplies, etc.)
- Training Materials (handouts, visual aids, etc.)

SMRG SERVICES

SMRG provides specially trained personnel for aboveground SAR activities. We can provide Field Team Leaders (FTL) and Field Team Members (FTM) to organize, lead and perform field tasks to cover the search area. We also have sign-cutters, radio operators, wilderness medical specialists, and technical rescue specialists. For a callout, we immediately begin to mobilize our resources to respond. Often, a quick response team (available for transport in 1 hour) will handle the initial request for assistance. For a missing person search, this team typically includes members trained for incident command, incident management, field team leadership and field search work. Additional ASRC personnel are dispatched once the incident needs are understood.

SMRG does not displace local emergency services; instead, we serve to supplement local emergency services with our specialized skills. The ASRC considers a mission complete when the subject is located and transported to an accessible location where they can be transferred to the local medical authority or the Responsible Agent. The ASRC and member-groups are also willing to assist law-enforcement agencies with certain tasks such as evidence collection or recovery of a subject in wilderness areas. However, we will not be involved in the direct apprehension of criminals.

We operate at the discretion, and under direction, of a legally Responsible Agent (RA). The RA will usually be the local law enforcement agency (County Sheriff's Office or Police Department) or another organization responsible for search and rescue activities in their region (such as a local fire department or rescue squad). The RA may be State Police, or in the case of federal land, the park or forest-service staff. Our personnel fulfill roles defined by the RA and within the scope of our training. Water rescue, search by aircraft, and cave search are handled by other agencies specializing in those techniques. However, the ASRC can provide ground support for these types of missions. When responding to a search incident, SMRG is able to maintain its own communications, field equipment, ground transportation, dispatch coordination and on-scene liaison. We also provide specialized management and technical services for outdoor search problems.

SMRG also offers SAR training and outdoor-safety education for interested organizations and groups. We can provide speakers on a variety of wilderness topics, including land navigation, rescue techniques, field communications and on wilderness medical issues such as hypothermia and heat injuries. We have also developed a children's education program based on the National Park Service's video, *Lost But Found . . . Safe and Sound*.

MISSION ALERTING & CALLOUT PROCEDURES

All ASRC teams, including SMRG, are available for callout 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, regardless of weather, location or terrain. SMRG makes notifications about pending incidents and gives the status of current operations through the use of text messaging and e-mail alerts.

Since the ASRC functions under the authority of a legally responsible agent for the incident, it is the RA that initiates the alert. Typically, an RA notifies their state department of emergency management, who in turn alerts the ASRC. For a callout, a response team is usually mobilized within one hour of the initial alert. The ASRC & SMRG maintain a dispatch system to track, and to ensure the safety of personnel responding to the mission.

SMRG can also be put on alert when major weather incidents occur or are expected to occur. Examples include being on standby for floods, hurricanes, and other severe weather. Members with specialized experience have assisted in specific emergencies, such as fighting fires in the Midwest, Florida and Virginia, as well as SAR missions after Hurricane Andrew.

The ASRC and SMRG are always willing to work with any other agencies or organizations responding to an incident. SMRG can easily deploy personnel to locations within a three-hour drive of Washington, D.C. SMRG members typically drive their personal vehicles to the location of the incident, carpooling when possible.

TRAINING & CERTIFICATIONS

The ASRC's reputation rests on its training standards. All member-groups of the ASRC meet the same training standards and follow the same standard operating procedures. SMRG members are skilled in search techniques, orienteering and land navigation, wilderness survival, wilderness emergency medical care, technical rescue, and search-incident management.

To meet the ASRC's training requirements, SMRG conducts regular training. Classroom sessions typically convene once per week, generally on Tuesday or Thursday. These weekday training sessions usually start at 7:30 PM and last until approximately 10:00pm. Weekend practical field training is scheduled once per month. The field exercises vary in length and location, depending on the purpose of the training. Usually, though, a weekend field exercise will consume at least one full day, stretching late into the evening. Other training activities may be scheduled as opportunities arise.

As a group, SMRG conducts training in the following areas:

- SAR Operations & ASRC Protocols
- SMRG Dispatch Procedures
- Ground Search Tactics
- Land Navigation
- Wilderness Survival and Safety
- Semi-Technical Rope Rescue Techniques
- Communications

Certifications within SMRG/ASRC reflect an individual member's level of training and experience.

Callout Qualified (CQ): Members holding the Callout Qualified (CQ) certification are typically fairly new members. They have completed an equipment and basic safety check, and have at least rudimentary knowledge of the basic principles of search-and-rescue and protocols of SMRG and the ASRC. Prior to attaining CQ, members are PCQ (probationary CQ), which restricts response to a mission unless they can coordinate and attend the search with a more senior member.

Field Team Member (FTM): The first formal level of training is the Field Team Member (FTM). FTM's are presumed to be knowledgeable in SAR techniques and proficient in basic skills. FTM training lasts about sixty (60) hours of field training and evaluation. Both SMRG and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management teach the FTM course and members are able to take the course from either provider (although members attending VDEM courses must complete some additional SMRG requirements to achieve our FTM certification). FTM training covers basic search operations, search strategy & tactics, basic land navigation, communications, patient packaging and related search and rescue skills. Typically, an FTM functions as a trained member of a search team, working under more experienced SAR personnel.

Field Team Leader (FTL): With additional training, mission experience, practice of advanced field skills, search strategy and demonstration of leadership qualities, a member may become a Field Team Leader (FTL) by taking another course of training. FTL training requires approximately forty (40) hours of field training and evaluation. FTL's can act as team leaders of any search or rescue team. They are often tasked to lead groups of untrained searchers (such as local on-site volunteers). FTL's can oversee evacuations and medical treatment of victims. FTL's are vital to the search mission.

Search Managers: After FTL, a member may continue with specialized search-management training by taking a formal course called "Managing Land Search Operations." After completing this course, another in "Practical Search Operations," and gaining supervised, evaluated mission-management experience, members may become qualified as **Search Managers (SM)**. These search-managers run operations, planning, and the logistics of a search. The SM works directly with the locally Responsible Agent. These levels require considerable search experience, a formal classroom-training program, and approval by the ASRC Board of Directors. The ASRC training standards describe in detail all of the knowledge and performance requirements for each of the certifications above.

MEMBERSHIP PARTICIPATION & GROUP ADMINISTRATION

There are no prerequisites of experience or training to become a member of SMRG. Although outdoor experience is very helpful, we invite anyone who is interested in the outdoors and emergency services to join. SMRG does not discriminate in membership based on sex, race, religion, ethnic background or sexual preference. **The nature of our outdoor services is often physically and mentally demanding, both in training and in practice. Active members are expected to put in at least 100 hours per year in training or mission events.** Because the ASRC is a licensed EMS agency in Virginia, no member can have a felony or conviction of a sexual crime, a criminal records background check is completed on all members.

Of our current membership of approximately 100 individuals, most are professional men and women residing in the Northern VA, Washington, and Baltimore metropolitan areas. Some members are undergraduate or graduate students, while others are active professionally in emergency medical and fire services, government and US Armed Forces.

Initially, prospective members attend the New Member's Orientation Meeting at the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club headquarters, 118 Park Street SE in Vienna, Virginia. Prospective members will receive this Application Packet, and a short overview of SMRG. You are encouraged to ask questions regarding the organization and the application process.

Then, the prospective applicant is invited to attend the Pack Check and Intro to SAR event, again at PATC Headquarters. This step covers in more detail our search-and-rescue activities and important ASRC and SMRG protocols. A prospective applicant is expected to bring all application materials, their "SAR pack," and appropriate clothing and footwear for field-work. Your gear will be inspected to verify that you have all appropriate minimum equipment, as listed in second Appendix: ASRC/SMRG Essential Equipment List.

Upon completing this training and being voted into the group, a member is considered a **Probationary Member** of SMRG and will be assigned a Mentor. Probationary members may participate in all activities of the organization, as appropriate to their training level. Probationary members do not vote on business matters before the membership. After a minimum of three months and 36 hours of SMRG activities (4 of which must contribute to the administrative operation of SMRG), the member is eligible to become an **Active Member**, following nomination of the Group Training Officer and voted endorsement of the membership.

SMRG holds business meetings once per month, normally on the last Tuesday of the month beginning at 7:30PM, all members are welcome to attend. SMRG members elect the Board of Directors: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Operations Officer, Group Training Officer, and two representatives to the ASRC Board of Directors. Other officers are appointed. An organizational chart of SMRG administrative leadership is shown in Figure 2. These positions are voluntary, and all members are strongly encouraged to contribute to the administration of the club. Taut administration ensures that our mission-response is coordinated and strong, and that our trainings are instructive and challenging.

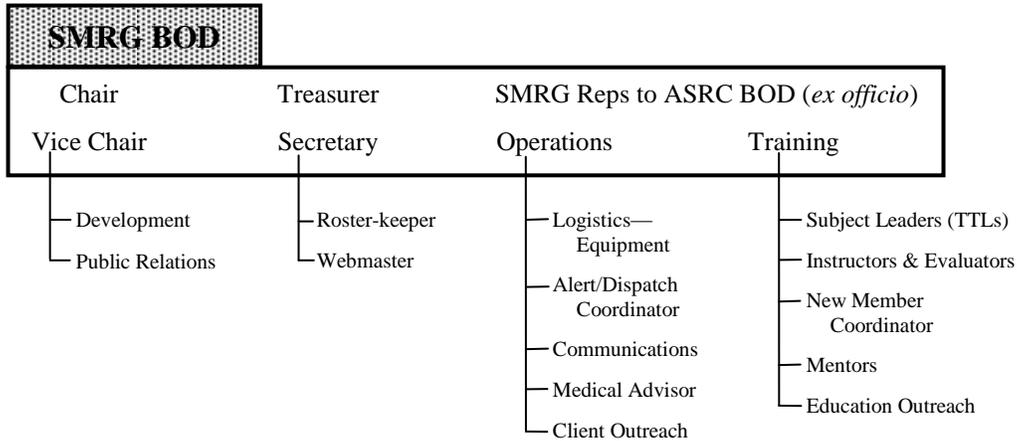


Figure 2. SMRG Organizational Chart

Additional policies governing members and organizational processes are defined in Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and an Administrative Manual for SMRG; the same three documents for ASRC, plus an ASRC Operations Manual and ASRC Training Standards; plus SMRG-specific Training Policy and Operations Policy.

Finally, mission response can be intense. Our trainings push members hard to meet ambitious expectations. And our business meetings and administrative efforts can raise difficult, often contentious, matters. SMRG fosters a culture of professionalism to support our hard work and to accommodate the challenging situations we occasionally encounter. But we also note that volunteers drift away if our hard work is not tempered by FUN. Frequently, impromptu social events will occur at the end of our meetings and trainings. We encourage carpooling to missions and trainings, which offers an added measure of safety and good company. Some of our best “team building” occurs in such pleasant settings. So our last expectation of members: *All members are encouraged to attend informal social gatherings and to enjoy their participation in SMRG!*

SMRG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The following items **MUST** be brought to the Pack Check.

1. SAR Pack with Minimum Essential Equipment, as described in the ASRC/SMRG Essential Minimum Equipment List (next page).
2. Your completed SMRG Membership Application. Attach a \$30 check (payable to “SMRG”) or cash for Annual SMRG Dues.
3. A SMRG Waiver Form.
4. A completed Medical Data Form.
5. A copy of any current CPR/First Aid Certifications.
6. A Request Form for Criminal Background Check (completed at pack check).
7. Two (2) SMRG Reference Forms completed by family, friends or co-workers.
8. Proof of PATC Membership (completed on-line or in person at PATC).
9. Completed FEMA courses (see below).

In addition to your application package and equipment requirements, you will need to complete the on-line FEMA training courses listed below. These training modules will take a few hours to complete and can be taken at your convenience. Links to these courses are also found on the SMRG website under the “Join” tab. When completed, FEMA will email you a completion certificate. You must bring a copy of each of the certificates along with your completed application package.

Training can be accessed from the following link: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/>

IS100._: Introduction to Incident Command System

IS700._: National Incident Management System (NIMS)

IS800._: National Response Framework, An Introduction

IS809: Emergency Support Function (ESF) #9, Search and Rescue

ASRC/SMRG ESSENTIAL MINIMUM EQUIPMENT LIST

This is a list of our pack “essentials.” You may want to begin collecting them in one place in preparation for becoming a probationary member. These items are required for you to become Callout Qualified (CQ) and must be carried with you at all times during searches and during specific training events.

1. Daypack
2. Appropriate clothes and footgear (For fair and foul weather!)
3. Water (2 quarts)
4. Food (For at least 48 Hours)
5. Lighter, matches (or equivalent waterproof fire source) **and** candle
6. Compass
7. Whistle (Plastic without cork)
8. Trash bags – 5 Large Heavy Duty
9. Five One-Gallon Zip Lock Bags
10. Pen/Pencil and Paper (Either store in a zip-lock bag or use “waterproof” paper/pen)
11. Personal First Aid Kit (With at least 2 pair of nitrile exam gloves)
12. Small Knife or multi-tool
13. Headlamp and flashlight with extra set of batteries (spare bulb required for non LED lights)
14. Leather gloves (leather palm, with full fingers)
15. Personal Identification (state or federal issue)

Other items that should be seriously considered:

- Medication
- Glasses/Contacts, etc.
- Money
- Toilet Paper
- Safety Glasses



Use common sense as you have to carry it all yourself.

Never allow yourself to get separated from your pack!

SMRG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

SMRG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM					
Last Name		First Name		M.I.	Date of Birth
Home Address			City	State	Zip Code
Home Phone	Work Phone		Mobile Phone		
E-mail Address			Alt. E-mail Address		
Emergency Contact Name			Relationship		
Emergency Contact Phone			Alternate Contact Phone		
Vehicle (1) Make and Model		Year/Color	License number	State	
Vehicle (2) Make and Model		Year/Color	License number	State	
List SAR and Related Certifications with cert agencies & expiration dates, if applicable					
List Current CPR & Medical Certifications , including certifying agencies and expiration dates					
APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE				DATE	

SMRG WAIVER FORM

The undersigned applicant acknowledges that he/she applies for membership in the Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group, Inc. (SMRG), a member group of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference, Inc. (ASRC), with full knowledge of the dangerous conditions and risks associated with the activities of training for and participating in search and rescue operations, and that he/she assumes sole and entire responsibility for any property damage, injuries, or loss of life he/she may sustain in connection therewith.

In consideration of the privilege of training and participating with SMRG and other ASRC member groups, the applicant agrees to release SMRG and the ASRC, their directors, officers, agents, members, affiliates and Groups from any and all liability for property damage, injury, or loss of life resulting from any cause whatsoever in connection therewith.

In addition, I agree to abide by the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and other properly established rules and regulations of both SMRG and the ASRC. Finally, the information given on this document is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of the Applicant

Date

SMRG MEDICAL DATA FORM

Name: _____

Pertinent Medical History: _____

Allergies: _____

Medications: _____

Comments:

REFERENCE FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

To the
Evaluator:

_____ is applying to the Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group, a search-and-rescue organization dedicated to saving lives in the outdoors. We ask you to be as candid as possible in your evaluation of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, as work in an emergency setting can be very demanding.

1. Your name and phone number: _____

2. Your relationship to the applicant:

_____ family _____ employer _____ friend
_____ co-worker _____ other

3. How long have you known the applicant? _____

4. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being best), please rate the applicant's willingness to work as a team:

Gets along with others _____
Conscientious worker _____
Cooperates with others _____
Dependable when assigned a task _____

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate the applicant's leadership qualities:

Promotes teamwork, pursuit of team goals _____
Leads by example _____
Demonstrates good decision-making skills _____

6. Please rate the applicant on the following qualities:

a = adequate g = good e = excellent

Willingness to work hard to learn a new skill _____
Ability to get along with colleagues _____
Persistence and self-motivation _____
Common sense _____
Good judgment under pressure _____

7. Please provide any other comments, impression, or information:

REFERENCE FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

To the Evaluator:

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Good judgment under pressure _____

7. Please provide any other comments, impression, or information: