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**Directive Amended: 2017-11-24**

For information regarding this policy, contact Contract and Aboriginal Policing at GroupWise address [OPS\\_POLICY\\_HQ](#).

1. [General](#)
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### 1. General

1. 1. The Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) is responsible for:

1. 1. 1. conducting searches for people or vessels lost or in distress off the Canadian coastline, on the Great Lakes, and on the St. Lawrence Seaway;

1. 1. 2. providing aids to navigation, e.g. buoys and markers;

1. 1. 3. supplying icebreaking and ice-management services;

1. 1. 4. delivering marine communications and traffic management services; and

1. 1. 5. operating vessels in support of other government departments.

1. 2. The CCG can be reached through the Joint Rescue Coordination Centres (JRCCs).

1. 2. 1. The following JRCCs are responsible for the coordination of Search and Rescue (SAR) operations for lost/downed aircraft and vessels lost or in distress off the Canadian coastline, on the Great Lakes, and on the St. Lawrence Seaway:

1. 2. 1. 1. for British Columbia and Yukon, the JRCC Victoria in Esquimalt, B.C.

1. 2. 1. 2. for Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Nunavut, and Northwest Territories, the JRCC Trenton in Trenton, Ontario;

1. 2. 1. 3. for Quebec, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Sub-Centre in Quebec City, Q.C.;

1. 2. 1. 4. for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, the JRCC Halifax in Halifax, N.S.; and

1. 2. 1. 5. for Newfoundland and Labrador, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in St. John's, Nfld.

1. 2. 2. For JRCC contact information, refer to [CCG SAR - Rescue Centre Contact Information](#).

1. 3. National Defence is responsible for conducting searches for lost/downed aircraft and their missing occupants.
1. 4. Parks Canada is responsible for conducting searches for lost/overdue persons within national parks.
1. 5. In a contract province, if requested, the RCMP will assist the JRCC in organizing a search.
1. 6. In a non-contract province, if requested, RCMP vessels or aircraft in the area will provide, if available, secondary resources for assistance.
1. 6. 1. The search will be turned over to the responsible agency as soon as possible.
1. 7. The provincial/territorial government is responsible for conducting searches for lost/overdue persons on land or in inland waters, except in national parks.
1. 7. 1. In most of Canada, this responsibility is delegated to the policing agency having local jurisdiction.
1. 7. 2. For more information on lost/overdue persons, refer to [OM 37.2](#).
1. 7. 3. For information on missing persons, refer to [OM 37.3](#).
1. 8. If a province/territory directs that a search be continued after the CO of the province/territory or their delegate determines it is no longer practical, all expenses, e.g. travel, overtime, equipment rental, will be recovered from the province/territory. Refer to [FMM 3.8](#).
1. 9. Where the RCMP does not have primary jurisdiction or primary responsibility, e.g. national parks, other agencies, the RCMP may still provide SAR assistance if required.
1. 10. An RCMP tactical troop, trained in SAR fundamentals, may be used in the absence of trained volunteers.
1. 11. The RCMP's primary role in SAR operations is to provide leadership, with a focus on coordination, response, prevention, intergovernmental agency cooperation, and volunteers.
1. 12. An RCMP on-site SAR command structure usually consists of:
  1. 12. 1. a Search/Incident Commander, who is an RM, and who has overall authority and responsibility for the search; and
  1. 12. 2. a SAR Manager, who may be a volunteer or an RM, and who is responsible for the management and coordination of the search.
1. 13. The SAR Manager and the Search/Incident Commander jointly:
  1. 13. 1. determine SAR strategies and tactics, and
  1. 13. 2. lead and direct SAR volunteer teams.
1. 14. Although tasks can be delegated or assigned to the SAR Manager and SAR teams, the RCMP has the final authority to make decisions in SAR operations.
1. 15. When possible, the RCMP will designate a Search/Incident Commander and a SAR Manager with experience in SAR operations.

1. 16. A civilian search dog team may be used if it meets the criteria outlined in [OM 33.1., sec.5.](#)
1. 17. There is no specific training requirement for Search/Incident Commanders.
  1. 17. 1. Recommended incident command courses include the Critical Incident Commanders Course and Incident Command System 100/200/300/400.
1. 18. The SAR program's core competency training standards for searchers, team leaders, and SAR Managers are established and maintained by the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada (SARVAC), in conjunction with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Refer to the [SARVAC website.](#)
  1. 18. 1. Recognized basic and advanced search management training courses are offered by various organizations, e.g. Emergency Response Institute (ERI), Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC).
1. 19. The minimum requirements for a SAR Manager are successful completion of recognized basic SAR and search management courses.
1. 20. The RCMP will, to the extent possible, assist in the basic SAR training of civilian volunteers and other agencies/departments.
  1. 20. 1. A trained volunteer:
    1. 20. 1. 1. has completed the minimum level of SAR training established by the province/territory, and
    1. 20. 1. 2. should be screened for working in the vulnerable sector as defined in [SM 1.5.](#)
1. 21. If approved by the province/territory and Search/Incident Commander, untrained, spontaneous, or convergent civilian volunteers may be used in the absence of trained volunteers or to support a team of trained volunteers.
  1. 21. 1. All civilian volunteers will be supervised by the Search/Incident Commander or SAR-trained delegate. For Lost/Overdue Persons, refer to [OM 37.2., sec.5.](#)
1. 22. When possible, the RCMP will use trained SAR volunteers to conduct a physical search.
  1. 22. 1. Exhibits discovered by SAR volunteers during a search for articles should be processed by RCMP members. Refer to [OM 22.1.](#)
1. 23. To assist with a search, SAR teams from other areas may be requested.

## **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **2. 1. Member**

2. 1. 1. Familiarize yourself with this policy and provincial/territorial SAR policies.
2. 1. 2. Familiarize yourself with the SAR programs and contacts available in your jurisdiction.

### **2. 2. Commander/Delegate**

2. 2. 1. Ensure that members under your command are aware of this policy and provincial/territorial SAR policies.

2. 2. 2. If informed that an aircraft/vessel is lost or in distress, immediately notify the nearest JRCC.
2. 2. 3. If immediate action could save lives, request assistance from any aircraft/vessel near or within the area of a SAR operation.
2. 2. 4. Hand over the SAR responsibilities as soon as possible to:
  2. 2. 4. 1. National Defence, if it involves an aircraft;
  2. 2. 4. 2. CCG, if it involves waters under its jurisdiction.
2. 2. 5. Document the date and time the responsibilities were relinquished, as well as the person to whom the Commander/delegate spoke.
2. 2. 6. Ensure SAR protocols are in place for the coordination of SAR operations in your jurisdiction.

### 2. 3. Search/Incident Commander

2. 3. 1. For all SAR incidents, establish a command post to aid in coordinating the search and facilitating communications between search members.
  2. 3. 1. 1. Consider the most appropriate location for the command post, which should normally be close to the search area.

NOTE: If it is appropriate for the situation, the command post may be an RCMP detachment.
  2. 3. 1. 2. Ensure that at least one member with knowledge of the search is present in the command post at all times.
2. 3. 2. For the specific duties of the Search/Incident Commander in cases dealing with lost/overdue persons, refer to [ch. 37.2., sec.5.](#)

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### References

- [Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada \(SARVAC\)](#) - Core Training Competency Standards

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