



**PEMIGEWASSET VALLEY  
SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM**

**STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES**

**APRIL 2005**

Revised July 2008

# **PEMIGEWASSET VALLEY SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES**

## **I. Purpose:**

- A. The purpose of the Standard Operating Guidelines ("SOG") is to provide a set of guidelines for field operations of the Pemigewasset Valley Search and Rescue Team ("PVSART").
- B. The SOG's are designed with safety as the highest priority. Members wishing to maintain membership in the PVSART must abide by these guidelines. At any time, members may be dismissed from the scene by a PVSART officer should he/she compromise the safety of the operations.
- C. The mission of PVSART is to provide support to the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department who under RSA 206:26 (XII) is the controlling authority of all woodlands Search and Rescue services in the State of New Hampshire. PVSART will provide manpower to assist with carry outs and will assist in the search for lost or missing persons ("Operation").
- D. PVSART is not a "First Responder" organization and due to liability issues will only respond if requested by the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department or another public safety agency that will provide umbrella liability and worker's compensation coverage to the members of PVSART.
- E. PVSART primary response area will be Grafton County and the western side of the White Mountains.

## **II. Preplanning**

- A. PVSART members should:
  - 1. Thoroughly understand the guidelines listed herein.
  - 2. Possess and maintain at all times a 24 hour ready pack, with the items described in the *PVSART Equipment List*. Members should be equipped to endure the rigors of an operation without outside support.
  - 3. Maintain themselves in a fit manner to be able to endure the rigors of an Operation for 24 hours.
  - 4. Train on a regular basis to remain proficient in the skills needed to participate in Operations.

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5. Possess appropriate personal clothing and gear for the weather conditions and terrain that are likely to be encountered in an Operation.
- B. Understand and be able to work within the Incident Command System ("ICS").
- C. Maintain with the Officers of PVSART a current address, home telephone number, and work telephone number. PVSART members shall if available, also provide a cell phone number, pager number and an e-mail address.

**III. Notification and Dispatch for an Operations Response:**

- A. Receipt of Notification:
  1. An Officer of PVSART will be notified of a request to respond to an Operating Incident only from the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department. If contacted by another Public Safety agency they will be advised to call NH Fish & Game.
  2. Information regarding the incident will be obtained consisting of the following:
    - a) Requesting Agency
    - b) Call Back Phone Number
    - c) Nature of Operation
    - d) Number of Members Requested
    - e) When the Team is needed
    - f) Where the Team is to Report (Staging Area)
    - g) To Whom the Team Leader is to report
    - h) Call off procedures
- B. Member Notification:
  1. Members will be notified via a telephone calling tree and via e-mail.
  2. Dependent upon the needs and location of the Operation it is possible that all Members will not be notified of an Operation.
- C. Requesting Agency Verification
  1. Once members are notified the PVSART member taking the initial notification will call the Requesting Agency to confirm the number of members that will respond to the Operations.

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**IV. Departure to Scene:**

- A. Prior to responding to the Staging Area PVSART members shall take the necessary time to be certain they are properly dressed and have the necessary equipment.
- B. All PVSART members when responding to the Staging Area of an Operation shall abide by all laws of the road. They shall not speed and shall not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- C. Members must transport themselves to the Staging Area in a safe and responsible manner.
- D. Emergency lights and/or audible warning devices of any kind are not to be used on route or return from a callout. Use of emergency lights or audible warning devices will result in automatic suspension and possible expulsion from the team.

**V. On Scene Arrival:**

- A. First arriving PVSART member assumes the responsibility as Team Leader until a member of PVSART of higher authority or seniority arrives at the Staging Area.
- B. In a search, the Team Leader should report to the Incident Commander once the team is assembled. In the case of a carry out individual members shall approach the Incident Commander and may be dispatched without the team fully assembled.
- C. The Team Leader is in charge of setting up the appropriate Sector of the Incident Command System (ICS) as it relates to PVSART and the mission assigned to the Team.
- D. Signing In:
  - 1. All members must sign the NH Fish & Game Volunteer Log as soon as they arrive at the Staging Area.
  - 2. Before leaving the Staging Area, members need to complete a PVSART Mission Log entry including:
    - a) name
    - b) mission
    - c) time
    - d) estimated time of completion of mission
    - e) person authorizing mission
  - 3. Members returning to the Staging Area must complete the PVSART Mission Log by signing their return time.

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4. A separate PVSART Mission Log entry must be completed any time any member leaves or returns to the Staging Area.
5. PVSART members arriving after the first arriving team has been assigned missions shall remain at the Staging Area until dispatched.

**VI. On Scene Behavior:**

A. Professionalism:

1. Behavior of all members of PVSART must display a professional attitude.
2. Professional attitude is dictated by common sense, the standard of technical skill level to which each member is trained, and a regard for personal safety above all other issues.
3. Photographs during and after a mission may be taken provided:
  - a) they do not interfere with the Operation;
  - b) they are in good taste and not overly graphic;
  - c) they are not distributed to members directly and only distributed by the Secretary;
  - d) they are not distributed outside of the Team without permission of the photographer and President; and
  - e) they are not copied, downloaded, posted, displayed or forwarded by members to non-members.

B. Continuum of Command:

On scene changes in the command structure, must be clearly communicated to all involved. Both members, the one giving up the position, and the one undertaking the position must be present together and aware of the exchange and all others in the Team's chain of command must be notified.

**VII. Planning, Strategy, Tactics and Operations**

A. The Chain of Command

1. The overall planning and operational authority of a field response belongs to the NH Fish & Game Department.
2. The overall incident will be run under the Incident Command System (ICS). PVSART members must be familiar with the form and vocabulary of the ICS in order to function smoothly with other agencies. The Team Leader is in charge of all team operations and the Safety Officer is allowed and dictated to stop any unsafe behavior.

B. Knowledge and Skills of SAR

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In general, members need to be familiar with and are responsible for working to meet the objectives listed in the *PVSART SAR Technician Objectives*. All members should, at a minimum, be familiar with:

1. Personal safety
2. Land navigation (e.g., map and compass)
3. Basic Search Techniques (e.g., Types I-III, confinement operations, concepts of active and passive search)
4. Basic patient packaging and transport techniques (e.g., Stokes Litter)
5. CPR and Basic First Aid

### **C Communicating with the Media**

It is the policy of PVSART to not communicate with the news media during field operations. Refer all questions to the Command Post, Public Relations Officer or the Team Leader.

### **D Safety**

Personal and team safety are of the highest priority in all phases of search and rescue operations. Any member uncomfortable with a particular duty or situation due to safety concerns should relay the circumstances by the appropriate chain of command to the Team Safety Officer or the Team Leader.

### **E. Providing Medical Care in the Field**

Team members are expected to perform to their level of training and within the limits of the relevant laws and regulations when providing medical care while on an Operation.

### **F. Personal Preparation**

It is the responsibility of the PVSART individual team member to be appropriately prepared for SAR operations. Any unprepared member may be required to end their participation in an Operation and possibly depart the scene.

### **G. Attitude**

Members on a call represent the PVSART. As representatives they are expected to behave professionally at all times. Any behavior counterproductive to the team's efforts and or function within the ICS will not be tolerated. Unessential critiques and dissent have no place

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during the course of an Operation and they should be reserved until such operations have ended. Strict adherence to the chain of command is absolutely necessary in the field.

H. Dismissal

Any PVSART Officer or Team Leader can dismiss someone from the field at any time without discussion, and that person must be prepared to leave as ordered. This is only done when necessary to protect the Team and maintain the safety of its members.

**VIII. Upon Completion of an Emergency**

A. Leaving the Scene

The Team Leader must verify by the Mission Log that all members have departed the scene before the Team Leader leaves the scene.

B. Debriefing Report

It is the responsibility of the highest ranking Officer or Team Leader present on the call to collect all relevant information for post incident review.

C. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Members of PVSART are encouraged to use available resources after any incident that may have been psychologically trying. There are local critical incident stress debriefing teams composed of people trained to help others recover from the psychological trauma that often accompanies emergency work. A Critical Incident Stress Debriefing can be arranged through any PVSART Officer.

**IX. Personal Responsibility/Liability**

A. PVSART does not provide insurance coverage for its members or the organization. All members must be aware that the activities of PVSART are hazardous and that there is the possibility of death, disability, and/or loss of property and that the member recognizes and accepts these risks, releasing PVSART and its members from all liability.

B. Members are expected to carry adequate personal health and auto insurance. Individual participants in PVSART functions assume all responsibilities and consequences of all actions/events related to the Operation.

C. While working directly under the auspices of the New Hampshire Fish & Game, PVSART members are considered State of New Hampshire employees.