Fire Department Search & Rescue SOP 10.7

Introduction: The Washington Township Fire Department has been requested by law enforcement to assist in a steadily increasing number of missing person search missions. The search for a lost or missing person requires a systematic and well-coordinated response by emergency responders. An understanding of lost person behavior and efficient search tactics has the ability to dramatically shape the outcome of a search assignment. It is for these reasons that the Washington Township Fire Department has identified the need to enhance the organization's ability to conduct missing or lost person searches.

Purpose: The Washington Township Fire Department Search and Rescue (WTFD SAR) team has been formed in order to provide requesting agencies with a cadre of highly skilled and trained professionals to help locate missing persons in urban and wilderness search areas.

Scope: Typically, a lost or missing person search is primarily a law enforcement event, however WTFD may be asked to be a part of unified command with local law enforcement agencies. WTFD SAR in most cases, will function as a resource to the lead agency having jurisdiction if not part of unified command. This document shall serve as guidance for the formation, training, and response of the team both within in the boundaries of Washington Township and beyond. WTFD SAR, for administrative purposes, shall be organized under the Technical Rescue Team Policy #35-06. This SOP is not intended to be all inclusive of every incident.

Mission: The mission of WTFD SAR is to provide assistance to law enforcement and other requesting agencies to locate missing or lost persons in the form of a highly motivated and trained team of search specialists providing additional non-technical ground search resources.

Training: The District has recognized the need to seek formalized training on the subject of missing person searches. Therefore, WTFD SAR shall train and receive certification under the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) curriculum. The team shall also seek guidance from NFPA 1006 and 1670 for aspects pertaining to wilderness search and rescue. The team shall participate in periodic training sessions as needed in order to maintain proficiency in search and rescue skills.

Response:

- When requested for an assignment within Washington Township; normal dispatch procedure will be initiated for a battalion or district response. SAR trained/certified members of the department will be utilized to fill critical roles alongside members who may have less experience with the SAR discipline.
- When requested for an assignment outside the boundaries of Washington Township; The Gloucester County RSAN notification system (*FD 10 SARTECH group*) shall be utilized to alert SAR trained/certified members of the department of the assignment. Additional

specific deployment information/instructions may be issued with the RSAN notification. Deployments for a SAR assignment within Gloucester County or to other mutual aid jurisdictions shall follow the protocol of the WTFD Mutual Aid Operations document. Deployments out of state or to areas well beyond our mutual aid boundaries shall be limited to a 5 or 6 man SAR team. Out of state assignments must be done through an EMAC agreement or with authorization of the county, regional, and state fire coordinator.

Operations: WTFD SAR shall operate as a Type IV Wilderness Search and Rescue Team as defined by the National Incident Management System under the ESF#9 category.

- Initial Actions: A systematic search process requires that critical initial actions are performed quickly and prior to the field deployment of search teams. Some or all of the following actions may take place prior to the arrival of WTFD SAR. The team leadership will need to interface with the requesting agency to determine into which phase of the operation the team is entering.

    - Gather information: If not done so already by the requesting agency, the team will need to complete a *Missing Person Questionnaire* (form ICS 302). The information gathered may be applied to the *search urgency chart*, and the *Missing Person Flyer Template*.

    - Evaluate search urgency: Utilize the *Search Urgency Chart*, with the information that was gathered, in order to determine the possible relative urgency of the situation. This evaluation may be used to determine an appropriate level of response.

    - Establish search area: The *Lost Person Behavior* (Koester, 2008) manual may be used to profile the statistically probable behavior of the lost/missing subject. This information can be used to establish a search area where the subject is likely to be located, based on historical, statistical, or theoretical data.

- Field Deployment:

    - Establish confinement: Once a search area has been established, personnel may be dispatched to establish a search perimeter with the task of detecting the subject if he/she leaves the established search area.

    - Deploy search teams: Once a search area has been established and confined, the appropriate search teams may be deployed. The teams may utilize a variety

of tactics based on the needs of each individual search assignment including but not limited to: hasty search, grid search, tracking, and/or attraction.

Equipment:

- In order to remain effective in the field, searchers must be equipped to remain self-reliant during their field deployment. Members may be deployed for short durations (a few hours) in urban areas where logistical support is close at hand; or for a longer duration (up to 24hrs) in remote areas where each member will need to carry their own provisions. To allow for this variance in mission intensity, members may deploy with an *Urban SAR Pack* or a *24hr SAR Pack* based on the characteristics of the search mission. Each type of pack will be equipped following the NASAR equipment recommendations/requirements. Team members should not be deployed into the field if they are not properly equipped for the mission.
- PPE utilized during search missions typically would be a duty uniform (Class B or Class C) with boots. Structural turnout gear should not be used when conducting searches unless it involves fire hazards in structures or collapsed buildings. Helmets, gloves, long sleeve uniform shirt or the yellow Brush shirts are also basic PPE items required for searches.
- In addition to SAR Pack items, search teams may be deployed with thermal imaging cameras, iPads, first aid kits, or additional technical items.

- Documentation: In order to effectively gather, analyze, and disseminate information a standardized documentation system must be utilized. Each team member must be familiar with and able to complete at least the following forms: ICS 201 Incident Briefing, ICS 214 Activity Log, ICS 104, Team Assignment, ICS 302 Missing Person Questionnaire, ICS 211 Agency Check-in, and ICS 216 Urban Search Log. The previous list may not be all inclusive of every incident. Additionally, the Team may not be responsible to complete any or all of the previously listed forms depending on the Team's role in the incident.

- Termination: A search mission may be terminated for several reasons such as, but not limited to, locating the subject, an increased danger to the searchers (i.e. weather conditions), or completion of the search area. The lead agency having jurisdiction will be responsible for any decision to terminate or suspend a search operation.