

**United States**  
**National Search and Rescue Plan--1999**

**POLICY**

1. It is the policy of the signatory federal agencies to provide a National Search and Rescue Plan for coordinating civil search and rescue (SAR) services to meet domestic needs and international commitments. Implementing guidance for this Plan is provided in the *International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual* (IAMSAR Manual discussed below), the *National Search and Rescue Supplement* (a domestic interagency supplement to the IAMSAR Manual), and other relevant directives of the Participants to this Plan.

**PURPOSE**

2. This Plan continues, by interagency agreement, the effective use of all available facilities in all types of SAR missions. The National Search and Rescue Plan-1986 is superseded by this Plan.

**TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

3. The following terms and definitions are based on international usage for civil SAR. For more information about these terms and others commonly used for civil SAR, refer to the IAMSAR Manual, which is jointly published by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Search and rescue coordinator. A federal person or agency with overall responsibility for establishing and providing civil SAR services for a search and rescue region(s) for which the U.S. has primary responsibility.

Search and rescue region (SRR). An area of defined dimensions, recognized by ICAO, IMO or other cognizant international body, and associated with a rescue coordination center within which SAR services are provided.

Search and rescue services. The performance of distress monitoring, communication, coordination and SAR functions, including provision of medical advice, initial medical assistance, or medical evacuation, through the use of public and private resources including cooperating aircraft, vessels and other craft and installations.

Rescue coordination center (RCC). A unit, recognized by ICAO, IMO or other cognizant international body, responsible for promoting efficient organization of civil SAR services and for coordinating the conduct of SAR operations within an SRR.

Rescue sub-center (RSC). A unit subordinate to an RCC established to complement the latter according to particular provisions of the responsible authorities.

Joint rescue coordination center (JRCC). An RCC responsible for more than one primary type of SAR services, e.g., both aeronautical and maritime SAR incidents. *NOTE: The term "JRCC" will not be used for civil SAR purposes solely on the basis that an RCC is staffed by personnel from, or is sponsored by, more than one organization.*

## OBJECTIVES

4. Knowing the importance of cooperation in providing expeditious and effective SAR services, the Participants to this Plan desire to:
  - Provide a national plan for coordinating SAR services to meet domestic needs and international commitments, and to document related basic national policies;
  - Support lifesaving provisions of the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue of IMO, the Convention on International Civil Aviation of ICAO, certain international agreements to which the U.S. is Party, and similar international instruments;
  - Provide an overall Plan for coordination of SAR operations, effective use of all available resources, mutual assistance, and efforts to improve such cooperation and services; and
  - Integrate available resources which can be used for SAR into a cooperative network for greater protection of life and property and to ensure greater efficiency and economy.
5. This Plan is further intended to:
  - Help the U.S. satisfy its humanitarian, national, and international SAR-related obligations;
  - Provide national guidance for development of SAR-related systems;
  - Describe its Participants and their roles in a pro-lifesaving context;
  - Recognize lead federal agencies, respectively, for the types of operations covered by this Plan, and describe geographic regions of SAR responsibility, as appropriate;
  - Account for saving property, but on a secondary basis to saving lives;
  - Account for all operations up to and including providing initial assistance (food, clothing, medical, etc.) to survivors and delivering them to a place of safety; and
  - Have, as a primary concept, cooperation for overall and continual development, coordination and improvement of SAR services.

## SCOPE

6. It is intended that this Plan not conflict in any way with SAR responsibilities agreed to by contracting States of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, or other appropriate international instruments to which the U.S. is or may become a Party.
7. No provisions of this Plan or any supporting plan are to be construed in such a way as to contravene responsibilities and authorities of any Participant as defined by statutes, executive orders or international agreements, or of established responsibilities of other agencies and organizations which regularly assist persons and property in distress resulting from incidents of a local nature.
8. This Plan is solely intended to provide internal guidance to all signatory federal agencies. State organizations may wish to retain established SAR responsibilities within their boundaries for incidents primarily local or intrastate in character. In such cases, appropriate agreements are generally made between SAR coordinator(s) and relevant State organizations.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

9. The Participants to this Plan are as follows:

- The agencies of the Department of Transportation (DOT) carry out broad responsibilities in transportation safety. The Coast Guard develops, establishes, maintains and operates rescue facilities for the promotion of safety on, under and over international waters and waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction, conducts safety inspections of most merchant vessels, and investigates marine casualties. The Federal Aviation Administration has air traffic control and flight service facilities available to assist in SAR operations. The Maritime Administration operates a fleet of merchant ships for government use and promotes a safe merchant marine.
- Department of Defense (DOD) components have facilities and other resources that are used to support their own operations. These resources may be used for civil SAR needs on a not-to-interfere basis with military missions.
- The Department of Commerce (DOC) participates in or supports SAR operations through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA provides nautical and aeronautical charting; information on tides and tidal currents; marine environmental forecasts and warnings for the high seas, and coastal and inland waterways; and satellite services for detecting and locating aircraft, ships or individuals in potential or actual distress.
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) promulgates rules and regulations for non-government use of wire and radio facilities for promoting safety of life and property, and cooperates in SAR operations through its long-range direction finder network.
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has aircraft, spacecraft and worldwide tracking, data acquisition and communications networks which can assist in SAR operations. Additionally, NASA supports SAR objectives through research and development or application of technology to search, rescue, survival, and recovery systems and equipment, such as location tracking systems, transmitters, receivers, and antennas capable of locating aircraft, ships, spacecraft, or individuals in potential or actual distress.
- Land managing components of the Department of the Interior (DOI) provide SAR services on lands and waters administered by DOI and may assist in operations in adjacent jurisdictions. The degrees of responsibility assumed in each DOI field area depends upon the legislative and jurisdictional character of the bureau and field area. Responses range from support of law enforcement authorities or other local units to primary SAR coordination and operations. Similarly, components assume varying degrees of responsibility for preventative measures to protect the visiting public.

10. A federal agency that is not a Participant to this Plan may become a Participant by unanimous vote of the National Search and Rescue Committee, followed by written notification by the agency to the Chairman of the National Search and Rescue Committee of its accession to the Plan.

## **U.S. SEARCH AND RESCUE REGIONS**

11. SRRs are established to ensure provision of adequate land-based communications infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing, and proper operational coordination to effectively support SAR services.
12. SRRs should be contiguous and, as far as practicable, not overlap.
13. Establishment of SRRs is intended to effect an understanding concerning where nations have accepted primary responsibility for coordinating or providing SAR services. The existence of SRR limits should not be viewed as a basis to restrict, delay, or limit in any way, prompt and effective action to relieve distress situations.
14. All SRRs of the U.S. are established in cooperation with neighboring nations, are internationally recognized, and are described in pertinent documents of IMO or ICAO.

*NOTE: U. S. maritime and aeronautical SRRs are established in accordance with the relevant IMO and ICAO Conventions and with the guidance of the IAMSAR Manual. These SRRs are internationally-recognized and documented in the appropriate ICAO Regional Air Navigation Plans and in the IMO SAR Plan. More specific information on U.S. SRRs can also be found in the U.S. "National Search and Rescue Supplement," in which SRR charts will be included for convenient reference.*

15. U.S. maritime and aeronautical SRRs will be harmonized with each other to the extent practicable, recognizing, however, that lines separating SRRs must normally be agreed by governments having neighboring SRRs when possible. SRRs will not be allowed to unduly affect or be affected by any political boundaries.
16. For civil SAR there must be, by definition, one RCC associated with each recognized SRR. Comprehensive standards and guidance pertinent to these RCCs have been developed by IMO and ICAO, and may be found in relevant Conventions, the IAMSAR Manual, and other publications which should be held and used by U.S. RCCs. U.S. SAR Coordinators as designated in this Plan are responsible for arranging for SAR services and establishing the RCCs for these SRRs. The U.S. civil SAR system becomes integrated into the global SAR system by establishing recognized SRRs and RCCs which comply with international standards.
17. SRRs may be subdivided as long as the delimitation of the sub-regions coincide with pertinent SRR limits. Where this is not practicable, changes to international limits should be proposed to the appropriate international organization through proper channels by the agency primarily concerned.

## **PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Primary Responsibilities**

18. The SAR Coordinators, designated below, have overall responsibility for establishing RCCs as necessary, and for providing or arranging for SAR services within U.S. SRRs. Only RCCs properly established by these SAR Coordinators should carry out domestic and international coordination of civil SAR operations.
19. U.S. SAR Coordinators are as follows (see paragraph 14):

- The U.S. Air Force for the recognized U.S. aeronautical SRR corresponding to the continental U.S. other than Alaska;
- The U.S. Pacific Command for the recognized U.S. aeronautical SRR corresponding to Alaska;
- The U.S. Coast Guard for the recognized U.S. aeronautical and maritime SRRs which coincide with the ocean environments, and including Hawaii.

*NOTE: State and local authorities often designate a person to be a “SAR Coordinator” within their respective jurisdictions. Responsibilities of such personnel may be quite different from the responsibilities of national SAR Coordinators as designated in this Plan, but often these personnel are important contacts for the national SAR coordinators.*

20. The National Park Service (NPS) is the lead agency that provides SAR and other emergency services within national parks.
21. The Department of State has designated the U.S. Coast Guard to lead and coordinate national participation in the SAR and safety-related initiatives of IMO.
22. The Department of State has designated the Federal Aviation Administration to lead and coordinate national participation in safety-related initiatives of ICAO.
23. Based upon invitations from ICAO and IMO, respectively, the U.S. Air Force will provide an aeronautical SAR expert and the U.S. Coast Guard will provide a maritime SAR expert, to serve as members of the ICAO-IMO Joint SAR Working Group.

#### **Support Outside U. S. Search and Rescue Regions**

24. SAR Coordinators, as well as other U.S. authorities, may support civil SAR operations anywhere in the world, consistent with their expertise and capabilities and legal authority. This is consistent with the principles of assisting persons in distress without regard to nationality or circumstances and of using all available resources for SAR. It is in the interest of the safety of U.S. citizens who travel or live worldwide. It is also consistent with U.S. humanitarian goals and the advantages of domestic and international cooperation.
25. In accordance with international law, U.S. SAR facilities, in a position to render timely and effective assistance, may exercise the right to enter into or over the territorial seas or archipelagic waters of another state for the purposes of rendering assistance to a person, ship, or aircraft whose position is reasonably well known, is in danger or distress due to perils of the seas, and requires emergency assistance.
26. Participants to this Plan, consistent with their capabilities and legal authority, will support civil SAR operations of other countries in territory and international waters beyond recognized U.S. aeronautical and maritime SRRs. As appropriate, and within their capabilities, DOD combatant commands should provide such support within their respective geographic areas of responsibility.
27. In carrying out civil SAR support functions with other nations, such as training, exercises, and liaison, each Participant will coordinate its activities with other Participants having civil SAR expertise with respect to the support concerned.

*Note: A wealth of valuable reference material is available which should be used working with other nations in the area of civil SAR. These include, but are not limited to, the SAR-related conventions, the IAMSAR Manual (three volumes), this Plan, the National Search and Rescue Supplement, information about the AMVER ship reporting system, and many documents of Cospas-Sarsat, IMO, ICAO, etc. Some of these references are available in languages other than English. Participants should be familiar with such references, and use them as appropriate.*

28. While it is appropriate, to the fullest extent the Participants have the authority to do so, to maintain liaison and cooperate with authorities of other nations that have comparable civil SAR responsibilities, such support should be carried out in coordination with the U.S. SAR Coordinators, and with other neighboring SAR authorities, as appropriate. Such coordination will normally include U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Office of Search and Rescue, in order to ensure consistency with U.S. obligations under international agreements to which the U.S. is a Party, and compliance with the IAMSAR Manual and other relevant international guidance relevant to implementing such agreements.
29. Participants should not accept a SAR Coordinator or RCC role for SAR operations for SRRs for which other nations are responsible. However, the Participants may provide and support SAR operations in such areas when:
  - Assistance is requested (normally this should be in accordance with RCC-to-RCC procedures prescribed in the IAMSAR Manual);
  - U.S. citizens are involved; or
  - U.S. facilities become aware of a distress situation to which no other suitable facilities are responding, or where other available SAR services appear to be inadequate.
30. For distress situations in international waters or airspace where no SRR exists for which an RCC is responsible, or where it appears that the responsible RCC is not responding in a suitable manner, U.S. RCCs or facilities will assist as appropriate. Such assistance will be subject to availability of resources, legal constraints, and other applicable U.S. policies.

*NOTE: Provisions of international conventions dealing with SAR are intended to ensure that wherever any person goes in the world, suitable SAR services and responsibilities will be in place to assist should that person become in danger or distress. However, there may be nations which are not Parties to, or which have not yet fully complied with, these conventions. Therefore, situations may exist for U.S. resources to supplement SAR capabilities in certain geographic areas, or to support these nations by training or other means, consistent with U.S. domestic law, to help develop their SAR capabilities. Participants to this Plan may be take advantage of such situations as appropriate.*

31. When assisting civil SAR authorities of other nations, or other agencies or organizations supporting these authorities, Participants to this Plan should ensure that:
  - They have appropriate legal authority and expertise to do so;
  - Principles or provisions of conventions or agreements to which the U.S. is Party are not violated;

- Applicable procedures set forth in the IAMSAR Manual, National SAR Supplement, and other relevant directives are known and followed;
  - Such efforts are carried out in consultation with other Participants to this Plan as appropriate; and that
  - The authorities assisted are responsible for the SAR functions in that country.
32. Policies on rendering assistance in foreign territories or territorial waters must have the goal of balancing concerns for saving lives, for sovereignty, and for national security. Provisions for territorial entry as necessary should be addressed in international SAR agreements where relevant, as discussed below, and care should be taken to ensure that such agreements are compatible with national policies in this regard.
33. When any Participant to this Plan is addressing civil SAR-related inquiries or proposals from other nations or organizations outside the U.S., or when hosting or attending international meetings on civil SAR, care should be taken that interested U.S. agencies, organizations, or persons are consulted and involved as appropriate.

#### **CIVIL SAR AGREEMENTS**

34. Bilateral or multilateral SAR agreements with other U.S. agencies or organizations, or with authorities of other nations, may be of practical value to civil SAR, and beneficial for purposes including:
- Helping to fulfil U.S. domestic or international obligations and needs;
  - Enabling more effective use of all available resources;
  - Better integration of U.S. SAR services with the global SAR system;
  - Building commitment to support civil SAR;
  - Resolving SAR procedures and sensitive matters in advance of time-critical distress situations; and
  - Identifying types of cooperative matters and efforts which may enhance or support SAR operations, such as access to medical or fueling facilities; training and exercises; meetings; information exchanges; use of communications capabilities, or joint research and development projects.
35. Negotiation and conclusion of such agreements should consider matters such as the following:
- Which authorities of the governments, agencies, or organizations concerned are the proper ones to be involved with the agreement;
  - Which types of SAR operations (e.g., aeronautical, maritime, etc.) or SAR support functions should be included within the scope of the agreement;
  - Consistency with international and domestic SAR principles or policies;
  - Establishment of lines separating SRRs if relevant;
  - Whether other treaties, agreements, etc., exist which should be superseded or accounted for in preparation of a new agreement; and

- Relevant guidance of the IAMSAR Manual, National SAR Supplement, and other pertinent directives.

36. Participants which develop any agreement dealing with civil SAR shall ensure that such efforts are coordinated with other interested Participants.

37. Any such international agreement may not be signed or otherwise concluded without prior consultation with the Secretary of State (see Title 1 USC 112b).

### **NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE COMMITTEE**

38. The sponsor of this Plan is the National Search and Rescue Committee. The National Search and Rescue Committee, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders:

- Coordinates implementation of this Plan;
- Reviews matters relating to the Plan affecting more than one Participant, including recommendations for Plan revision or amendment;
- Encourages federal, state, local and private agencies to develop equipment and procedures to enhance national capabilities for implementing the Plan; and
- Promotes coordinated development of all national resources for this purpose.

39. In particular, the Committee is intended to accomplish the following:

- Oversee this Plan;
- Provide a standing national forum for coordination of administrative and operational civil SAR matters;
- Provide an interface with other national, regional, and international organizations involved with providing or supporting civil SAR services;
- Develop and maintain suitable guidance for implementation of this Plan, such as a National SAR Supplement to the IAMSAR Manual;
- Promote effective use of all available resources for support of civil SAR;
- Serve as a cooperative forum to exchange information and develop positions and policies of interest to more than one Participant;
- Promote close cooperation and coordination between civilian and military authorities and organizations for provision of effective civil SAR services;
- Improve cooperation among the various SAR communities for the provision of effective services; and
- Determine other ways to enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of SAR services, and to standardize procedures, equipment, and personnel training where practicable.

### **SAR SERVICES COVERED BY THIS PLAN**

40. This Plan covers civil SAR operations such as:

- Maritime (involving rescue from a water environment);



- Aeronautical (including SAR assistance in the vicinity of airports);
- Land (including SAR operations associated with environments such as wilderness areas, swift water, caves, mountains, etc.)
- Provision of initial assistance at or near the scene of a distress situation (e.g., initial medical assistance or advice, medical evacuations, provision of needed food or clothing to survivors, etc.);
- Delivery of survivors to a place of safety or where further assistance can be provided; and
- Saving of property when it can be done in conjunction with or for the saving of lives.

*NOTE: Outside national parks, state and local authorities or SAR units often accept responsibility for providing domestic land SAR services.*

41. Civil SAR does *not* include operations such as:

- Air ambulance services which did not result from a rescue or recovery operation;
- Assistance in cases of civil disturbance, insurrection or other emergencies which endanger life or property or disrupt the usual process of government;
- Rescues from space (although rescue of persons returned from space can be included);
- Military operations, such as combat SAR or other types of recovery by military operations to remove military or civilian personnel from harm's way;
- Salvage operations;
- Overall response to natural or man-made disasters or terrorist incidents; and
- Typical disaster response operations such as locating and rescuing victims trapped in collapsed structures or other assistance provided under the scope of the Federal Response Plan.

*NOTE: No provision of this Plan or any supporting plan is to be construed as an obstruction to prompt and effective action by any agency or individual to relieve distress whenever and wherever found.*

## **EXTENT OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE**

42. The Participants agree to cooperate as follows:

- Support each other by pooling relevant facilities and support services as appropriate for operations within their respective SRRs, and consistent with each participant's relevant legal authorities;
- Make, and respond to, requests for operational assistance between the designated RCCs, RSCs, or comparable command centers (CCs) of the Participants as capabilities allow;
- Develop procedures, communications, and databases appropriate for coordination of facilities responding to distress incidents, and for coordination between the RCCs, RSCs or CCs of the Participants;

- Normally follow applicable guidance of the IMO, ICAO, or other relevant international bodies regarding operational procedures and communications; and
- In areas where more than one authority may respond to distress situations, agreed procedures should be in place, which balance concerns for saving lives and for jurisdiction.

43. The Participants may also enter into other collaborative efforts with each other such as:

- Mutual visits, information exchanges, and cooperative projects for support of SAR;
- Joint training or exercises;
- Cooperation in development of procedures, techniques, equipment, or facilities;
- Establishment of groups subordinate to the National Search and Rescue Committee as a means for more in-depth focus on matters of common concern; and
- Carry out cooperative efforts similar to those indicated above on an international level.

### **GENERAL TERMS**

44. Cooperative arrangements between a Participant with operational responsibilities and state, local, and private agencies should provide for the fullest practicable cooperation of such agencies for operational missions, consistent with the willingness and ability of such agencies to act, and for such coordination by the responsible RCC, RSC, or CC of their facilities as may be necessary and practicable.

45. Participants with operational responsibilities may request assistance from other federal agencies having capabilities useful for a mission.

46. The federal government does not compel state, local or private agencies to conform to this Plan; such entities can direct and control their own facilities within their boundaries, and cooperation will be pursued through liaison and consultation.

### **CHARGING FOR SAR SERVICES**

47. Each Participant will fund its own activities in relation to this Plan unless otherwise arranged by the Participants in advance, and will not allow a matter of reimbursement of cost among themselves to delay response to any person in danger or distress.

48. The Participants agree that SAR services that they provide to persons in danger or distress will be without subsequent cost-recovery from the person(s) assisted.

49. In accordance with customary international law, when one nation requests help from another nation to assist a person(s) in danger or distress, if such help is provided, it will be done voluntarily, and the U.S. will neither request nor pay reimbursement of cost for such assistance.

### **PRINCIPLES ACCEPTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

#### **General**

50. Participants coordinating operations should, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders, organize existing agencies and their facilities through suitable agreements into a basic network to assist military and non-military persons and property in actual or potential danger or distress, and to carry out obligations under customary international law and international instruments to which the U.S. is a Party.

51. The Participants will seek to keep political, economic, jurisdictional, or other such factors secondary when dealing with civil lifesaving matters, i.e., where possible, what is best for lifesaving will govern their decisions.
52. Consistency and harmonization will be fostered wherever practicable among plans, procedures, equipment, agreements, training, terminology, etc., for the various types of lifesaving and recovery operations, taking into account terms and definitions adopted internationally as much as possible.
53. Terminology and definitions used throughout the U.S. SAR community will be standardized to the extent possible, and be as consistent as possible with usage in pertinent international conventions and the IAMSAR Manual.
54. If a distress situation appears to exist or may exist, rescue or similar recovery efforts will be based on the assumption that a distress situation does actually exist until it is known differently.
55. Assistance will always be provided to persons in distress without regard to their nationality, status, or circumstances.
56. Generally, cost-effective safety, regulatory, or diplomatic measures that tend to minimize the need for U.S. SAR services will be supported.
57. Close cooperation will be established between services and organizations, which may support improvements in lifesaving functions in areas such as operations, planning, training, exercises, communications and research and development.
58. Recognizing the critical importance of reduced response time to the successful rescue and similar recovery efforts, a continual focus will be maintained on developing and implementing means to reduce the time required for:
  - Receiving alerts and information associated with distress situations;
  - Planning and coordinating operations;
  - Facility transits and searches;
  - Rescues or recoveries; and
  - Providing immediate assistance, such as medical assistance, as appropriate.

### **Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue**

59. All SAR personnel should be generally familiar with the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue of the IMO, the Convention on International Civil Aviation, Annex 12 (“Search and Rescue”) of ICAO, the joint ICAO-IMO IAMSAR Manual, the National SAR Supplement, and other primary directives or information applicable to their work in civil SAR.
60. Local cooperative arrangements within the U.S. should be made in advance between SAR, air traffic, and airport authorities for close coordination in handling aircraft emergencies, unless the same authorities hold all the involved responsibilities.
61. The SAR principles and procedures of relevant customary international law and international Conventions and the IAMSAR Manual will serve as the framework for coordination of any SAR operations, and especially those involving multiple countries, organizations or jurisdictions;

U.S. organizational or operational SAR plans and provisions of the National SAR Supplement will be consistent with these international provisions to the extent practicable.

62. The U.S. Coast Guard will sponsor a global voluntary ship reporting system for maritime and aeronautical SAR and offer pertinent information from the associated database to recognized RCCs worldwide. (This system will be used only for SAR, with its information being treated as "commercial proprietary" as promised to the ships reporting. Continuation of this system as just described will be reconsidered if need for the reporting system changes, or acceptable alternative international systems develop.)
63. Operational responsibilities for maritime and aeronautical SAR will generally be associated with internationally-recognized geographic maritime and aeronautical SRRs, and a single federal agency will be given primary responsibility for coordinating SAR operations within each SRR, with other agencies and organizations providing support as appropriate. However, in some specific sub-areas, such as within national parks, other federal authorities may be responsible.
64. Distress situations involving airborne aircraft will normally be handled by the maritime or aeronautical SAR authorities responsible for the SRR concerned once the distressed aircraft is down, and cooperatively between these authorities and air traffic service authorities as long as the aircraft remains airborne.

*NOTE: Land SAR services may include aeronautical SAR operations. Involvement of Participants in such operations may be governed by agreements between SAR coordinators and various state and local authorities. Participants will support such operations as appropriate, bearing in mind the provisions of paragraph 7 of this Plan.*

### **Coordination of Operations**

65. Each agency responsible for operations under this Plan will:
  - Keep information readily available on the status and availability of key SAR facilities or other resources which may be needed for operations; and
  - Keep each other fully and promptly informed of operations of mutual interest, or which may involve use of facilities of another Participant;
66. SAR Coordinators will delegate to their RCCs the authority to:
  - Request assistance via other RCCs/RSCs including those of other nations;
  - Promptly respond to requests for assistance from other RCCs/RSCs, including those of other nations as discussed below;
  - Grant permission for entry into the U.S. of SAR facilities of other countries; and
  - Make arrangements with appropriate customs, immigration, health or other authorities to expedite entry of foreign SAR facilities as appropriate
67. SAR Coordinators will authorize their RCCs to arrange promptly or in advance for entry of foreign rescue units into the U.S. should it ever become necessary. Such arrangements should involve appropriate U.S. authorities as well as proper authorities of the nation or SAR facility involved with the entry. Such entry may include overflight or landing of SAR aircraft, and similar accommodation of surface (land or water) SAR units) as circumstances dictate for

fueling, medical, or other appropriate and available operational support, or delivery of survivors, or it could also be in response to a request from a U.S. RCC to the RCC of another nation for assistance of those facilities.

68. Establishment of JRCCs, and of jointly sponsored and staffed RCCs or RSCs, are encouraged where appropriate.
69. Operations of SAR facilities committed to any SAR mission normally should be coordinated, and, as appropriate, directed, by an appropriate RCC or RSC consistent with the provisions of this Plan.
70. On scene coordination may be delegated to any appropriate unit participating in a particular incident under the cognizance of the SAR mission coordinator at an RCC or an incident commander.
71. No provision of this Plan or any supporting plan is to be construed as an obstruction to prompt and effective action by any agency or individual to relieve distress whenever and wherever found.
72. If an RSC is established by any agency, it must operate under the oversight of an RCC, and be responsible for certain tasks or for portions of the RCC's SRR, as determined by the agency concerned.
73. SAR Coordinators shall arrange for the receipt of distress alerts originating from within SRRs for which they are responsible, and ensure that every RCC and RSC can communicate with persons in distress, with SAR facilities, and with other RCCs/RSCs

#### **Incident Command System**

74. A coordination system often used in local areas, and for emergency response scenarios involving multiple agencies and multiple jurisdictions, is the Incident Command System (ICS).
75. When SAR forces become involved in situations where ICS is being used, an on scene incident commander will be in charge of coordinating operations overall. In such cases the SAR mission coordinator or person designated by the SAR mission coordinator will normally serve as a SAR Agency Representative to the incident commander.
76. RCCs should normally use the coordination procedures of the IAMSAR Manual and the National SAR Supplement, but should also be familiar with the ICS system, and may use or support ICS as the situation warrants.

#### **Military Roles and Military-Civilian Relationships**

77. Arrangements between federal military and civil agencies should provide for the fullest practicable cooperation among themselves, consistent with statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned SAR functions.
78. Cooperative arrangements involving DOD and Coast Guard commands should provide for the fullest practicable use of their facilities for civil SAR on a not-to-interfere basis with military missions, consistent with statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned agency functions.

79. Participants with operational responsibilities should develop plans and procedures for effective use of all available SAR facilities, and for contingencies to continue civil SAR operations if military forces are withdrawn because of another emergency or a change in military missions.
80. DOD responsibilities under this Plan include support of civil SAR on a not-to-interfere basis with primary military duties, in accordance with applicable national directives, plans, guidelines, agreements, etc.

### **Resources**

81. To optimize delivery of efficient and effective services, and, where practicable and consistent with agency authorities, provide the organizations and persons interested in supporting these services the opportunity to do so, all available resources will be used for civil SAR. Certain state and local governments, civil and volunteer organizations, and private enterprises have facilities, which contribute to the effectiveness of the over-all SAR network, although they are not Participants to this Plan.
82. To help identify, locate and quantify primary SAR facilities, Coast Guard and DOD commands may designate facilities which meet international standards for equipment and personnel training as "SAR units" (SRUs). (Such facilities do not need to be dedicated exclusively to the associated type of operations, and this designation is not intended to preclude use of other resources.)
83. Recognizing the critical role of communications in receiving information about distress situations and coordinating responses, and noting that such responses sometimes involve multiple organizations and jurisdictions, the Participants will work aggressively to develop suitable SAR provisions for:
  - Interoperability;
  - Means of sending and receiving alerting;
  - Means of identification;
  - Effective provisions for equipment registration and continual access to registration data by SAR authorities;
  - Rapid, automatic, and direct routing of emergency communications;
  - High system reliability; and
  - Preemptive or priority processing of distress communications.

### **Technical and Support Services**

84. The Participants will strive together to:
  - Apply the most effective systems to save the most lives at the least operational risk and cost; and
  - Foster innovation in technical, administrative and informational systems, which will improve the ability of the Participants and associated non-governmental organizations to carry out their civil SAR duties.

85. Management, operational, and support personnel of the Participants will be partners, assisting each other with the goal of maximum operational effectiveness.

86. Priority goals of the Participants shall include:

- Make distress alerts and associated data available to operational personnel as quickly, comprehensively, and reliably as possible;
- Provide communications systems which are highly reliable, simple, problem-free, interoperable, and as functionally effective as possible; and
- Enable operational personnel to be as highly effective in planning and conducting operations as possible, by providing them with the training, equipment, procedures, facilities, information, and other tools necessary to carry out planning and operational duties in a consistent, highly professional, and effective manner.

87. Participants should:

- Encourage development and maintenance of proficiency in SAR techniques and procedures by other agencies participating in civil SAR, and assist them as appropriate;
- Encourage continued development of state and local SAR facilities as appropriate; and
- Enter into agreements, as appropriate, with State, local, and private organizations to provide for the fullest practicable cooperation in civil SAR consistent with their capabilities and resources, and to account for use of federal facilities in SAR missions with which these organizations are involved.

### **Suspension or Termination of Operations**

88. SAR operations shall normally continue until all reasonable hope of rescuing survivors or victims has passed.

89. The responsible RCC/RSC concerned shall normally decide when to discontinue these operations. If no such center is involved in coordinating the operations, the OSC or IC may make this decision. If there is no OSC or IC involved, the decision will be made at an appropriate level of the chain-of-command of the facility conducting the operations.

90. When an RCC/RSC or other appropriate authority considers, on the basis of reliable information that a rescue or recovery operation has been successful, or that the emergency no longer exists, it shall terminate the SAR operation and promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified.

91. If an operation on-scene becomes impracticable and the RCC/RSC or other appropriate authority concludes that survivors might still be alive, it may temporarily suspend the on-scene activities pending further developments, and shall promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified. Information subsequently received shall be evaluated and operations resumed when justified on the basis of such information.

### **ENTRY INTO FORCE, AMENDMENT, OR TERMINATION**

92. This Plan:

- shall enter into force effective January 1, 1999;

- may be amended by written agreement among the Participants; and
- may be terminated or superseded by a new Plan or by written agreement among the Participants.

An individual Participant may terminate its status as a Participant to this Plan by notifying the other Participants in writing at least six months in advance of such termination. Since the National Search and Rescue Committee sponsors this Plan, and it is intended that the Participants to this Plan correspond to the member agencies of that Committee, such termination will be deemed to also terminate the Participant’s membership on the Committee.

For the Department of Transportation

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Department of Defense

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Federal Communications  
Commission

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Department of Commerce

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Department of Interior

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For the National Aeronautics  
and Space Administration

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_