

ESF #9 Search and Rescue

Ohio Emergency Management Agency

Ohio Emergency Management Agency

2855 West Dublin Granville Road
Columbus, Ohio 43235

Mission:

To coordinate activities to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

Vision:

A safer future through effective partnerships committed to saving lives and reducing the impact of disasters.



**Department of
Public Safety**



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Agency Responsibilities

Coordinating Agencies

Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)

Supporting Agencies

Ohio Adjutant General's Department - Ohio National Guard (OHNG)

Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)

Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP)

Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA)

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA)

Ohio Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA)

Ohio Task Force One (OH-TF1)

Purpose, Scope, Situation Overview, and Assumptions

Purpose

- A. This plan provides guidance for the application of the resources of state-level agencies that are available to be activated in response to search and rescue (SAR) operations. SAR operations include, but are not limited to, the location, recovery, and extrication of victims who become lost or entrapped or otherwise endangered as of the result of a natural or human-caused incident. Additionally, SAR operations include the location, extrication, and recovery of deceased victims.

Scope

- A. This plan articulates the integrated coordination between all levels of government to locate, recover, and extricate individuals who become lost, entrapped, or otherwise endangered as a result of natural, technological, or human-caused incidents as well as facilitate the recovery of deceased victims.

Situation Overview

- A. State-level agencies will anticipate being tasked to initiate a SAR mission that may require the utilization of air, ground, and water rescue operations.
 - 1. Locally- and regionally-based SAR response equipment and trained SAR personnel are maintained throughout the state.
 - 2. Agencies that respond to and/or provide resources for SAR mission(s) could be responding to SAR missions that involve hazards such as fire, confined spaces, high-rise structures, forested areas, recreational areas/facilities, open and flowing water, and chemical, nuclear, or biological contamination.
 - 3. Responders could face added difficulties or hindrances after a disaster because of extensive damage to the local infrastructure. Such damage could create environmental safety and health hazards such as downed power lines, unstable foundations or structures, exposure to biohazards, toxins, and blood-borne pathogens.
 - 4. Responders may operate in severe weather conditions such as temperature extremes, snow, rain, and high winds.
 - 5. Access to areas impacted by a disaster could be limited or restricted.
 - 6. It is possible that initially some areas could only be accessible by aviation or maritime assets.
 - 7. Some state SAR responders have experience responding to both human-caused and natural large disasters outside of Ohio. Through these responders, the state can provide technical and/or direct assistance to local incident commanders.

Assumptions

- A. Most SAR missions may be adequately addressed by local resources and responders.
- B. When mutual-aid or state-provided resources are activated, the incident commander may ensure that those resources are integrated into established incident command system (ICS)-based structures and operations.

- C. Members of Ohio Task Force-1 (OH-TF1) may also be members of regional search and rescue teams and other local entities.

Whole Community Integration

Ohio EMA integrates a whole community approach through readiness and support, with a focus on those Ohioans most disproportionately impacted by disasters or catastrophic events; specifically, those with disabilities and other access and functional needs (D/AFN) per FEMA's guidelines and the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. Inclusion throughout disaster prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery is the goal. The approach aims to build back better, enhance community resilience and improve disaster outcomes for all.

Concept of Operations

A. General considerations

1. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is the coordinating agency for this plan, and will coordinate and report on state-level SAR missions and operations.
2. If it is determined that local response resources are or will not be able to adequately respond to a SAR mission, state and local officials will decide how to augment local response operations with appropriate federal, state, and/or regional-level resources through the State EOC.
3. If it is determined that federal, state, or emergency management assistance compact (EMAC)-centered SAR resources will be necessary to adequately carry out SAR missions within the state, a search and rescue management task force (SMTF) may be activated through the State EOC to assist in the acquisition and application of those resources.
4. SAR missions will be prioritized and directed to address missions and operations that have the greatest potential for saving lives.

B. Activation of a SAR management task force

1. The SMTF would consist of representatives from the following agencies: Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA), Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), Ohio

Department of Administrative Services (DAS), ODNR, Ohio National Guard (OHNG), Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP), OH-TF1, the State Fire Marshal's Office, and the OFCA. Other federal and state agencies may participate as it is appropriate.

2. The purposes of the SMTF will be to coordinate and provide subject matter expertise to:
 - a. The State EOC executive group.
 - b. Federal and state agencies and local authorities.
 - c. SAR mission assignments.
 - d. SAR resource acquisitions.
 - e. SAR resource allocations.
 - f. Resource assignments.
3. An additional purpose of the SMTF will be to determine the most appropriate SAR resources to address SAR missions.
4. The activation of the SMTF will be incident-dependent. Generally, incidents that call for the application of SAR resources from outside an impacted jurisdiction and/or will require higher levels of SAR oversight and technical assistance may trigger the activation of the SMTF.
5. Other factors that may lead to the activation of the SMTF could include, but not be limited to: number of SAR missions, widespread impacts, the need for extensive coordination, the need for extended periods of operational activity, and the request for and deployment of federal SAR teams and task forces.

C. Ohio search and rescue response teams

1. Ohio's search and rescue response teams are dispatched through the OFCA's emergency response system (ERS), utilizing the Ohio Homeland Security (OHS) regional map.
2. Ohio urban search and rescue response teams

- a. Ohio has a single type I urban search and rescue force – OH-TF1. OH-TF1 is available for deployment throughout the state with the approval of the State of Ohio EMA Executive Director.
 - b. OH-TF1’s response capabilities include providing response personnel and resources for: structural collapse, wide-area searches in urban and water environments; response to searches and rescues in chemical, biological, radiological/nuclear and explosives (CBRNE) environments; K-9s for both live victim and cadaver searches; engineers for building, bridge, and other structural assessments; logistics support for SAR missions as well as management of commodity receiving and distribution facilities; and communications and incident management support.
3. Ohio regional collapse search and rescue strike teams
- a. Ohio has eight local jurisdiction-based structural collapse search and rescue teams, one each in the eight OHS regions.
 - b. These teams have been typed by the state urban search and rescue technical advisory committee (TAC) and not based on FEMA collapse team standards.
 - i. Region 1 – Toledo fire dept. Ohio type III team.
 - ii. Region 2 – Cuyahoga County fire chief’s assoc. Ohio type II team.
 - iii. Region 3 – Miami Valley fire EMS alliance Ohio type III team.
 - iv. Region 4 – Franklin County fire chief’s assoc. Ohio type II team.
 - v. Region 5 – Summit County EMA Ohio type II team.
 - vi. Region 6 – Hamilton County fire chief’s assoc. Ohio type II team.
 - vii. Region 7 – There are no typed teams in this region. Supplemental urban SAR services are obtained through the Athens and Portsmouth fire departments.
 - viii. Region 8 – There are no typed teams in this region. Supplemental urban SAR services are obtained through the Ohio fire response system.
4. Ohio water-based search and rescue teams

- a. A number of local-level water-based search and rescue teams exist throughout the state and are available to respond to water-based and swift-water-based search and rescue operations.
 - b. These teams have been typed by the state water TAC per FEMA standards as type 1 teams.
 - i. Loveland Simms fire department.
 - ii. Region 2 response team.
 - iii. Region 5 response team.
 - iv. Upper Scioto response team.
 - c. Other FEMA-typed teams can be identified through the OFCA's ERS and through ESF #4.
- D. Ohio volunteer SAR teams
- 1. The Ohio special response team (OSRT) and the Ohio search and rescue association (OSARA) is able to assist in larger-scale search and rescue efforts. OSARA is an “umbrella agency” for a number of K-9 and horse-mounted SAR teams. The OSRT consists of mostly human-based search assets, although they also have the capability to resource and deploy K-9 units.
- E. Additional considerations
- 1. Staging areas will be established, as needed, to receive and support SAR resources of responding agencies that are involved in SAR mission(s) response.
 - 2. Communications resources and/or redundant systems will be established, as needed, to provide SAR mission support and coordination.
 - 3. ESF #9 agencies and incident commanders will work cooperatively with ESF #7 - Resource Support and Logistics, and other state-level resources (shelter, food supplies, fuel, and sanitation facilities) to support and sustain SAR mission(s) and meet responder needs.

4. ESF #9 agencies and incident commanders will work cooperatively with ESF #13 - Law Enforcement, and other state-level resources to support and sustain SAR mission(s) and meet responder security needs.
 5. ESF #15 - Emergency Public information and External/Public Affairs will determine the best locations for, and will establish and support state and local-level public information officer (PIO) and joint information center (JIC) operations.
 6. State-level agencies that are involved in SAR mission(s) response will maintain their jurisdictional authorities.
 7. State-level SAR mutual-aid/support requests will be submitted and managed through the State EOC.
- F. SAR resource requests that are made through the EMAC will be processed through the State EOC in cooperation with appropriate agencies.

Assignments of Responsibility

Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Coordinating Agency)

- A. Upon activation of ESF #9, coordinate and report on the assignment and status of SAR missions through the State EOC.
- B. Coordinate SAR resources, including: law enforcement and SAR-specialist personnel; fixed and rotary wing air assets; unmanned aircraft systems (UAS); mobile command and communications equipment; water-based response equipment and vessels; side-scan sonar; underwater video equipment; night vision and thermal imaging equipment; land-based vehicles to support operations, including 4x4 vehicles and all-terrain vehicles; canine units to assist in searches.
- C. Coordinate SAR activities with United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Ohio Adjutant General's Department - Ohio National Guard (Support Agency)

- A. Provide search and rescue support resources, including, but not limited to: debris removal, emergency road repairs, and emergency erosion control, demolition, and decontamination.
- B. Provide ground and/or air transportation services for food, water, and medical supplies to support SAR operations in stranded areas.
- C. Provide air reconnaissance/survey platforms, global positioning systems for accurate pinpointing of locations, the establishment of SAR grids, air transportation of victims and rescuers and serve as a communications link [multi-agency radio communication system (MARCS), ultra-high frequency (UHF), very-high frequency (VHF), and amplitude modulation (AM)]. OHNG aviation resources include fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and UAS aircraft.
- D. Provide the resources of the homeland response force (HRF), a joint service team of service members trained to assist and support civil authorities after a major catastrophic event. HRF capabilities include command and control, security, search and extraction, decontamination, and medical triage.
- E. Provide the resources of the chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) task force.
- F. Provide both land and water-based helicopter rescue hoist capability.
- G. Provide back-up helicopter medical evacuation and casualty evacuation beyond the capability of civilian helicopter emergency medical services (EMS) providers.
- H. Upon approval of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Secretary of Defense, provide and/or coordinate UAS to support SAR operations with electro-optical and infrared aerial video imagery.
- I. Facilitate communication and coordination between OSHP and the United States Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRC) as required.

Ohio Department of Transportation (Support Agency)

- A. Provide for the transportation of supplies and equipment to impacted area(s).
- B. Provide vehicles to assist in establishing access to SAR mission(s) area(s).

- C. Provide fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and UAS aircraft.
- D. Coordinate all aviation assets for the state.
- E. If necessary, ODOT will intercede with the FAA to limit or restrict the air space near the scene of the mission(s).

Ohio State Highway Patrol (Support Agency)

- A. Provide aviation support via fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and UAS aircraft equipped with special features such as “night-sun” and “FLIR” – forward looking infrared.
- B. When needed and with proper authority, provide personnel and material resources to support local jurisdictions with site security and access restrictions in impacted areas.
- C. When needed and with proper authority, provide personnel and material resources to support SAR operations and responders for force security of SAR personnel and rescued victims.
- D. If local communication resources are insufficient, provide communications resources to support local SAR operations.

Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Support Agency)

- A. Upon activation of ESF #9, the State EOC will be the central coordinating facility for federal, state, and local agency SAR information and resources that are responding to state-level SAR missions.
- B. Activate ESF #4 to support SAR operations and responders for the treatment and transport of rescued victims.
- C. Activate ESF #5 to establish and maintain complete situational awareness and develop a common operating picture of the situation.
- D. Activate ESF #7 to locate and facilitate the acquisition of SAR resources that are not organic to the coordinating or support agencies to this plan.
- E. Facilitate the request and receipt of SAR resources from the Federal Emergency Management Agency urban search and rescue (FEMA US&R) and other federal ESF #9 primary agencies.
- F. Activate ESF #10 to support SAR responders for encountered hazardous material (Haz-Mat) environments; to establish permissible exposure values during operations, provide

specialized equipment to function in contaminated environments, and to provide critical and ongoing monitoring and prediction of environmental contamination to assist SAR personnel with planning and conducting SAR operations.

- G. Activate ESF #13 to support SAR operations and responders for security of SAR personnel and rescued victims.
- H. Activate ESF #15 and joint information center(s)/joint information system(s) [JIC(s)/JIS(s)] to ensure that necessary information is produced and disseminated to the media and the general public.
- I. Facilitate the request and receipt of SAR resources from other states and territories via the EMAC.

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Support Agency)

- A. Provide consultation and recommendations on environmental factors that could impact the application of SAR resources and operations, including hazardous and/or extremely dangerous substances.
- B. Provide office of emergency response (OER) personnel, which are assigned to districts throughout the state, for on-scene assessment of potential chemical exposures during SAR missions.
- C. Provide monitoring capabilities to determine all levels of contaminants within the SAR mission area.

Ohio Fire Chiefs Association (Support Agency)

- A. Dispatch Ohio's search and rescue response teams through the ERS, including swift water rescue and underwater search and recovery (i.e., "dive") teams.

Ohio Task Force One (Support Agency)

- A. Provide up to type I SAR team-level personnel and resources to respond to structural collapse, wide-area land, K-9, urban, water, and air searches.
- B. Provide up to type I SAR team-level personnel and resources to respond to searches and rescues in CBRNE environments.

- C. Provide communications and search and rescue operations incident management support resources.
- D. Provide subject matter experts as liaisons to local incident commanders and city and county incident management personnel regarding disaster SAR operations, planning, and support.

Plan Development and Maintenance

This plan, and associated support plans, will be reviewed subsequent to incident or exercise use, at the request of coordinating or supporting agencies, but no less often than every four years. Such requests are to be directed to the planner as assigned by the Ohio EMA Planning Section. Reviews will be conducted by partner representatives with reference to after-action reports, exercise data, federal doctrine, and other appropriate laws or regulations. Revisions will be sent through the chain of command for approval and documented in the record of changes table located within this plan. The Ohio EMA Planning Supervisor and Ohio EMA EOC Manager are authorized to approve and notify partners of changes.

Record of Changes

#	Date	Section	Author	Description
001	2015	Entire plan	Ohio EMA Planning Section	Major changes were made to this plan to account for changes in the search and rescue operational environment.
002	July 2024	Assumptions	Hank Mylander	Minor revision made to statement found under subsection “C”.
003	July 2024	Entire plan	Jordan Sanderson	Formatting was revised to adhere to Ohio EMA Planning Section’s standardization of plan element format and language.
004	November 2025	Ohio Fire Chiefs Association	Hank Mylander	Clarified that Ohio’s search and rescue response teams includes underwater search and recovery “dive” teams.

005	January 2026	Entire Plan	Jordan Sanderson	Plan content placed within updated plan element format.
006	17 April 2026	Core Capabilities and Community Lifelines	Jordan Sanderson	Removed Core Capabilities and Community Lifelines sections.