

**EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION #9—SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**LEAD AGENCY**

Pierce County Sheriff's Department (PCSD)

**SUPPORT AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS**

German Shepherd Search Dogs  
Greenwater Fire and Rescue  
Northwest Disaster Search Dogs  
Northwest Bloodhounds  
Pierce County Explorer Search and Rescue  
Pierce County 4x4 Search and Rescue  
Pierce County SORT  
Sheriff's Mounted Posse  
SPART  
Tacoma Mountain Rescue Unit  
Pierce County-Tacoma Police Dive Unit  
Orting, Central, and East Pierce Fire Districts  
WASART

**STATE AND FEDERAL LEADS**

Washington Military Department-Emergency Management Division  
Washington State Department of Transportation  
Federal Forest Service Law Enforcement  
Mount Rainier National Park  
United States Coast Guard

**I. INTRODUCTION**

A. Purpose

To provide guidance, coordination, and management of Search and Rescue (SAR) operations involving a person in distress as a result of an emergency or disaster, and to provide coordination of resources for rescuing animals when possible.

B. Scope

1. This ESF addresses emergency and disaster search and rescue operations within Pierce County. "Search and Rescue" (SAR) means the acts of searching for, rescuing, or recovering by means of ground, marine, or air activity any person who becomes lost, injured, or is killed while outdoors or as a result of a natural, technological, or human caused disaster, including instances involving searches for downed aircraft when ground personnel are used.
2. This ESF should be used as a guideline for those in command of search and rescue operations and should not be viewed as a prescribed action plan.

C. Core Capabilities and Actions

The following table lists the core capabilities that ESF #9 most directly supports along with the related ESF #9 actions. In addition to the core capabilities listed in the table,

all ESFs support the following core capabilities: Planning, Operational Coordination, and Public Information and Warning.

Mission Area	Core Capability	Description and Actions
Response	Mass Search and Rescue Operations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver traditional and atypical search and rescue capabilities, including personnel, services, animals, and assets to survivors in need, with the goal of saving the greatest number of endangered lives in the shortest time possible.</li> <li>2. Conduct search and rescue operations to locate and rescue persons in distress.</li> <li>3. Initiate community-based search and rescue support operations across a wide geographically dispersed area.</li> <li>4. Ensure the synchronized deployment of local, regional, national, and international teams to reinforce ongoing search and rescue efforts and transition to recovery.</li> </ol>

**II. POLICIES**

- A. Volunteer SAR teams are organized into specialty-based units. Units are expected to ensure members meet minimum training standards for the appropriate type of mission they deploy members to. Each unit is responsible for their members registering with the Washington State Emergency Worker Program with approval through the Sheriff’s Department (Chapter WAC 118-04 and Chapter RCW 38.52).
- B. Pierce County Sheriff’s Department (PCSD) is responsible for SAR operations in the unincorporated areas of Pierce County and may, by agreement or upon request, support SAR operations in the incorporated cities and towns (RCW 38.52.400).
- C. SAR operations will be managed under the incident command system under the authority of the responsible jurisdiction (RCW 38.52.400 (1)).
- D. Air-based SAR for missing or downed aircraft is the responsibility of Washington State Department of Transportation (RCW 47.68.380). Once an aircraft has been located, the operation transitions to the local jurisdiction as a land-based rescue mission.
- E. When possible, in addition to the rescue of individuals, both service animals and pets will be rescued. Livestock and other animals will also be considered.

### III. SITUATION

#### A. Emergency/Major Disaster Conditions and Hazards

- Refer to the Pierce County Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (published separately) for a full list of hazards which may be expected to impact the County within the near future.

#### B. Planning Assumptions

- People or animals will be lost, injured, or killed while outdoors, requiring SAR assistance.
- Natural and human-caused disasters and/or acts of terrorism may create the need for structural collapse search and rescue as well as wide area search operations.
- The emergency or disaster conditions may put search and rescue personnel in situations that may threaten their safety.
- An emergency or disaster may overwhelm volunteer and local SAR agencies and may require the technical skills of a FEMA Urban Search and Rescue task force.
- Large numbers of local residents and volunteers will initiate activities to assist SAR operations and will require coordination. Convergent (spontaneous) volunteers will require coordination and direction within the local incident command structure.
- Access to damaged sites and/or wilderness locations may be limited. Some sites may be initially accessible by only air, water, or special vehicles.
- Evacuees requiring rescue may include individuals subject to judicial and/or administrative orders restricting their freedom of movement, such as those under community supervision.
- Some individuals may have Durable Medical Equipment (DME) and/or service animals that will need to be rescued with them.
- Individuals with Access or Functional Needs may compound the normal problems associated with Search and Rescue, specifically:
  1. Individuals with an access or functional need may not be able to, be resistant to, or refuse to evacuate themselves, when requested.
  2. Individuals with mobility needs or cognitive impairments may be resistant to or elect not to evacuate when advised and later, as the incident develops, require rescue.
  3. Individuals with mobility or access problems may have difficulty navigating around or through debris, especially with durable medical equipment and service animals or may have difficulty using standard search and rescue equipment to evacuate by air (such as an obese individual with a standard basket/harness rig).

4. Incidents with environmental issues may impact individuals with compromised immune systems, or other serious health issues like asthma or emphysema requiring extra assistance or care from rescuers.
5. Language barriers, or auditory or visual impairment may complicate communications.

#### **IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

##### **A. General**

1. When the Tacoma-Pierce County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)—hereafter called the “EOC”—is activated for emergencies or major disasters, this will be the focal point for resource management. Representatives from impacted districts, departments, and political jurisdictions and subdivisions, will liaise with the EOC to assist in resource prioritization and in the coordination, management, distribution and conservation of supplies and resources necessary to meet fundamental human needs and maintain essential services (see Support Annex 3—Resource Management and Logistics).
2. All SAR deployments are coordinated and lead by Pierce County Sheriff's Department with support from a number of organizations to carry out mission needs.
3. Appropriate resources are requested from the County Coordinator through the Duty Officer and respective volunteer SAR units as well as special technical teams, are expected to organize their members for response.
4. Pierce County SAR volunteers work under the guidance and direction of local law enforcement specializing in search and rescue operations and are required to be registered Emergency Workers through the Emergency Worker Program, sponsored by WMD-EMD, and administered by DEM.
5. Pierce County Fire Districts special operations teams are responsible for organizing and deploying their respective resources including personnel and equipment for response in coordination with the Pierce County Sheriff's Department for urban search and rescue efforts, confined space rescues, and technical rescues that volunteers do not conduct.
6. Animal rescue is requested through direct contact or by a government agency. WASART volunteers are registered Emergency Workers through the Emergency Worker Program, sponsored by the WA EMD.
7. Aerial search for missing or downed civilian aircraft is the responsibility of the State Department of Transportation (WSDOT-Aviation). Pierce County Sheriff's Department is responsible for conducting ground search operations within Pierce County and coordination of other operations with WSDOT-Aviation.

8. All water search and rescue operations are coordinated through the Pierce County Sheriff's Department with additional appropriate resources requested considering the mission needs. Water SAR resources include:
    - a. Marine Operations: United States Coast Guard, West Pierce, and Pierce County Sheriff's Department.
    - b. Swiftwater: PCSORT, Pierce County Sheriff's Department, Greenwater Fire and Rescue, Pierce County-Tacoma Police Dive Unit, and Tacoma Mountain Rescue.
    - c. Dive: Pierce County-Tacoma Police Dive Unit.
  9. Durable Medical Equipment, service animals, pets and, when possible, livestock will be included in an evacuation or rescue.
  10. Information flow of both location and condition of subject(s) begins as soon as a subject has been located. Training and protocols require frequent and consistent monitoring and reporting of field activities including both the location and well-being of the subject. If a person requires evacuation, the necessary resources are coordinated through the Incident Command Post and may require additional help beyond the current resources actively engaged. Distress level and location of evacuee is monitored and reported during the evacuation process until the subject is in professional medical care.
  11. If local resources do not exist or are inadequate, requests will be made through the DEM Duty Officer to the SEOC for additional resources from surrounding counties and partners, as well as state resources. Resources can also be coordinated directly by the County Coordinator with the SEOC or other jurisdictions.
  12. Support agencies must assign a designee as an agency representative/liaison to operate from the EOC—when activated—to coordinate agency activities within the overall disaster response and into disaster recovery.
- B. Response Mission**
1. Each volunteer organization is responsible for training and tracking certifications that meet the Washington State minimum qualifications.
  2. Volunteer organizations are responsible for acquiring, maintaining, and deploying their own resources.
  3. Additional mental and physical training beyond Washington State minimum qualifications.
  4. Outreach and education surrounding wilderness survival and preparedness.
  5. Fire Districts and Police units provide appropriate training to certify their own employees.

**V. RESPONSIBILITIES**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>ESF Responsibilities</b>
Pierce County Sheriff's Department	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lead agency for SAR operations within the county and agreed-upon cities and towns, when requested.</li> <li>2. Approves all applications for the Emergency Worker Program.</li> </ol>
Pierce County Sheriff's Department <i>(continued)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Coordinate needed SAR teams and other resources with the DEM duty officer or with the EOC, when activated.</li> <li>4. Conduct operations in accordance with NIMS/ICS.</li> <li>5. Participate in unified command when the scope of the incident warrants this command structure.</li> <li>6. Provide the following search and rescue capabilities:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. swift and marine water and dive</li> <li>b. mobile</li> <li>c. all land-based search types</li> <li>d. air</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. Evaluates volunteer Search and Rescue units.</li> </ol>

<b>Support Agencies/ Organizations</b>	<b>ESF Responsibilities</b>
Pierce County Search and Rescue Volunteer Units	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish membership standards in accordance with county and state policy and keeps the DEM informed of latest membership lists and call-out procedures.</li> <li>2. Respond to SAR missions upon request by PCSD as resources allow.</li> <li>3. Provide required training to meet Washington State SAR standards for all members.</li> <li>4. Provides support for out of county search and rescue requests.</li> </ol>
Pierce County SORT, West Pierce Fire, Pierce County-Tacoma Police Dive Unit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support SAR operations within the county and respective jurisdictions, when requested, especially when structural rescue, confined spaces, high angle, dive, and marine and swift water rescue capabilities are needed.</li> </ol>
WASART	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provides technical rescue response for livestock and companion animals.</li> </ol>

**PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

<b>State or Federal Leads</b>	<b>ESF Responsibilities</b>
Washington Military Department-Emergency Management Division	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinates resource requests from local jurisdictions</li> <li>2. Coordinate multi-jurisdictional searches</li> </ol>
Washington State Department of Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lead for coordinating searches for locating missing aircraft</li> <li>2. May coordinate with local jurisdiction(s) in rescue/recovery mission once aircraft is located</li> </ol>
United States Coast Guard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Responsible for conducting search and rescue events in marine waters</li> </ol>
Federal Forest Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate search and rescue operations on Federal Forest land</li> <li>2. Has snow and mobile capabilities</li> </ol>
Mount Rainier National Park	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinates search and rescue operations on National Park Land</li> <li>2. Has air assets and wilderness search capabilities</li> </ol>

**VI. AREAS OF COORDINATION CROSSWALK**

The following table describes the typical functions concurrently active during incidents involving ESF #9. Other ESF annexes are listed as a reference to guide coordination.

<b>Function</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>ESF Annex</b>
Feeding and Hydration	Salvation Army American Red Cross Soup Ladies Washington State DNR Washington State DOC	ESF #6
CBRNE SAR	PC-HIT, 10 <sup>th</sup> CST	ESF #10
Sheltering and care of injured, displaced, or rescued companion animals	Humane Society of Tacoma and Pierce County	ESF #6 and ESF #11

**VII. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES**

- Chapter 118-04 WAC: Emergency Worker Program, as amended.

**VIII. TERMS AND DEFINITONS**

- (See Appendices I and II)
- DOC: Washington State Department of Corrections

**IX. ATTACHMENTS**

- Table 1. Pierce County Search and Rescue Capabilities.