
National Search and Rescue Plan

" To provide an over-all Search and Rescue Plan for effective utilization of all available facilities to include provisions for the control and coordination of all types of search and rescue. "

— Civil Air Policy, May 1954, page 44.

THIS PLAN was developed and approved
by the Air Coordinating Committee
in implementation of Recommendation 2
of the Civil Air Policy quoted above.

THE PRESIDENT'S AIR COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MARCH 1956

NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE PLAN

1. Purpose. The purpose of this Plan is to insure the effective utilization of all available facilities in all types of search and rescue missions.
2. Definition. Search and Rescue is defined as the employment of available personnel and facilities in rendering aid to persons and property in distress.
3. Objective. To establish a National Search and Rescue Plan which will integrate into a cooperative network available U. S. SAR facilities which will be coordinated in any one area by a single federal agency in order to afford greater protection of life and property of citizens of the United States and insure greater efficiency and economy. It is not the intent for the plan to contravene or conflict in any way with SAR responsibilities agreed to by ICAO Contracting States.
4. Scope. The provisions of this National Search and Rescue Plan are applicable to all Federal agencies signatory hereto. Established state search and rescue organizations may wish to retain their established SAR responsibilities within their boundaries which result from activities which are primarily local or intrastate in character. In such cases, appropriate agreements will be made between the Regional SAR Coordinator and the respective state organization to accomplish this end.
5. Facilities. The United States Coast Guard has statutory responsibility for developing, establishing, maintaining, and operating, rescue facilities for the promotion of safety on and over the high seas, and waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The other Armed Services provide search and rescue facilities in support of their own operations; these facilities are used to meet civil needs on a basis of non-interference with military missions.

The Civil Aeronautics Agencies (CAA and CAB) of the Federal Government have broad statutory responsibility in the field of air safety. In addition, the Civil Aeronautics Administration has air traffic control and communication facilities available for search and rescue purposes. Other Federal agencies such as the FCC, through its long-range DF network, cooperate in SAR Operations. Certain states, local governments, and civil organizations have organized facilities which contribute to the effectiveness of the over-all SAR network.

6. The Plan:

a. Designation of interdepartmental Committee: The President's Air Coordinating Committee will, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders, especially Executive Order 10655, dated January 28, 1956, coordinate implementation of the Plan. It will review search and rescue matters affecting more than one participating agency, including recommendations presented by participating agencies for revision of the Plan and will make appropriate recommendations.

b. Definition of SAR Regions: SAR Regions are defined as follows:

- (1) Inland Region: The inland areas of Continental United States, except waters under the jurisdiction of the United States.

- (2) Maritime Region: The waters subject to jurisdiction of the United States; the territories and possessions of the United States (except Canal Zone and the inland area of Alaska) and the high seas, as shown on the attached chart.
- (3) Overseas Regions: Overseas unified command areas (or portions thereof) not included within the Inland Region or the Maritime Region as defined above.

c. Designation of Regional SAR Coordinators: The below-named Federal agencies are separately designated Regional SAR Coordinators for the SAR Region indicated:

The Inland Region: The Air Force

The Maritime Region: The Coast Guard

The Overseas Regions: The overseas unified command in each Overseas Region as defined above.

d. Organization of Basic SAR Network:

- (1) The Regional SAR Coordinator will, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders, undertake to organize existing agencies and their facilities through suitable agreements in a basic network for rendering assistance both to military and non-military persons and property in distress and to carry out the United States' obligations under the ICAO Convention within such SAR Region.
- (2) Agreements between a Regional SAR Coordinator and the Army, Navy, Air Force, JCS Unified Command, or Coast Guard will provide for the fullest practicable utilization of the facilities of such agencies in regional SAR missions under the Regional SAR Coordinator, consistent with the statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned functions of such agencies, and will provide that such agencies delegate to the Regional SAR Coordinator authority for the coordination of their facilities committed to such missions.
- (3) Agreements between the Regional SAR Coordinator and civil agencies of the Federal Government will provide for the fullest practicable cooperation of such agencies in regional SAR missions under the Regional SAR Coordinator, consistent with the statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned functions of such agencies, and will provide for such coordination by the Regional SAR Coordinator of their facilities committed to such missions as may be necessary and practicable.
- (4) Agreements between the Regional SAR Coordinator and state, local, and private agencies will provide for the fullest practicable cooperation of such agencies in SAR missions under the Regional SAR Coordinator, consistent with the willingness and ability of such agencies to engage in SAR, and will provide for such coordination by the Regional SAR Coordinator of their facilities committed to such missions as may be necessary and practicable.

- (5) The Regional SAR Coordinator will maintain files of such agreements and lists of such agencies and of the location of their SAR facilities.
- (6) The Regional SAR Coordinator may sub-divide the region for the advantageous execution of this Plan and will designate an appropriate officer of his service or, by mutual agreement, an officer of any other participating agency, to be SAR Coordinator in the region or each sub-division thereof. U. S. SAR region or sub-division boundaries should coincide with the boundaries of any pertinent ICAO SAR Area boundaries; where technical or operational requirements make this impossible or impracticable appropriate amendments to the ICAO boundaries will be proposed to ICAO.

e. Conduct of SAR Operations:

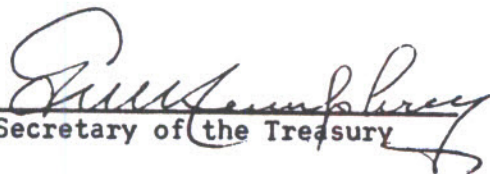
- ✓ (1) The Regional SAR Coordinator will develop plans and procedures for the effective utilization of all available SAR facilities in the region or sub-divisions thereof. The Regional SAR coordinator will develop plans and procedures to carry out the objectives of this plan in the event military forces are withdrawn from the region because of a military emergency or a change in the military missions.
- (2) The Regional SAR coordinator may be assisted by, or may request assistance from interested Federal Agencies having SAR capability within the region.
- (3) Rescue Coordination Centers having ICAO responsibilities will conform to the SAR Procedures which have been established as standards through ICAO unless differences have been filed by the U. S. pursuant to Article 38 of the Chicago Convention.
- (4) The SAR Coordinator in a region or sub-division thereof, through an appropriate Rescue Coordination Center, will coordinate and, as appropriate, direct the operations of SAR facilities committed to any SAR mission therein, consistent with the provisions of sub-paragraphs d. (2), (3), and (4) above, and will otherwise act to implement the plans of the Regional SAR Coordinator.
- ✓ (5) The SAR Coordinator may delegate "on-scene" coordination and direction to any appropriate unit participating in a particular incident under his cognizance.
- (6) SAR Coordinators of adjacent regional sub-divisions of the same or different SAR Regions will maintain liaison with and will support each other in SAR operations as necessary and practicable. Liaison and cooperation in SAR will be afforded to the SAR forces of other nations as necessary and feasible.

f. General Provisions:

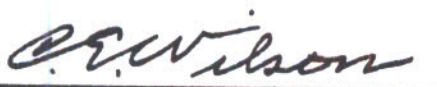
- (1) The Regional SAR Coordinator will encourage the development and maintenance of proficiency in SAR techniques and procedures by participating agencies and will assist therein as appropriate and practicable.

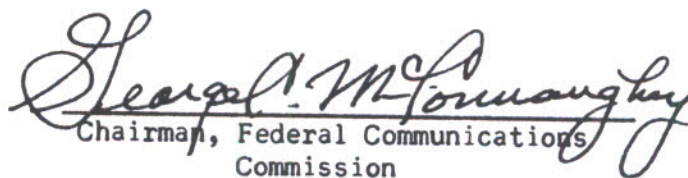
- (2) The Regional SAR Coordinator will encourage the continued development of state and local SAR facilities as appropriate.
- (3) Boundaries of SAR regions established by or under this Plan are not to be construed as barriers to effective SAR operations or to the exercise of initiative and judgment.
- (4) No provision of this Plan or of 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.
- (5) No provisions of this Plan or any supporting plan are to be construed in such a way as to contravene the responsibilities and authorities of any participating agency as defined by statutes, executive orders or international agreements, or the established responsibilities of other agencies and organizations which regularly assist persons and property in distress resulting from activities of a local nature.
- (6) This plan does not encompass SAR for such activities as: salvage operations, submarine rescue, special or unusual operations of the Armed Forces, emergencies affecting public welfare occurring as a result of enemy attack, insurrections, civil disturbances, earthquake, fire, flood, or other public disasters or equivalent emergencies which endanger life and property or disrupt the usual process of government. However, the SAR organization and its facilities should be utilized to the maximum extent feasible in connection with the above activities.
- (7) Although Federal leadership in the search and rescue field may generally be recognized, the Federal Government holds no mandate to compel state, local, or private agencies to conform to a national search and rescue plan. The desires of state and local agencies to direct and control their own facilities in SAR Missions resulting from intra-state or local activities within their boundaries must be respected and insured. Cooperation, therefore, must be sought through liaison and agreements.
- (8) Agreements cited in sub-paragraph d. (2) and (3) above, will be negotiated so as to come into force on or before July 1, 1956, and will supersede existing agreements which may be out of alignment therewith or contrary thereto.

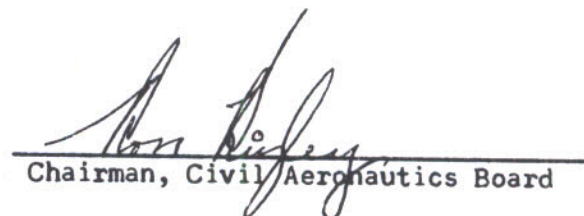
- (9) This Plan is effective for planning purposes immediately. It shall be implemented as soon as practicable and not later than July 1, 1956.


Secretary of the Treasury


Secretary of Commerce


Secretary of Defense


Chairman, Federal Communications
Commission


Chairman, Civil Aeronautics Board

March 30, 1956

CHART—NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE PLAN

