

Pincher Creek Search & Rescue

Resource Summary

PCSAR Doc-94

This document summarizes Pincher Creek Search and Rescue as a resource supporting Tasking Agencies (police, emergency services) and other SAR organizations.

Contact Information

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Typical Operational Activities

- mountains summer (e.g. injured biker, hiker, hunter)
- mountains winter (e.g. lost snowmobilers)
- avalanche search/recovery
- rural agricultural (e.g. despondent)
- water edges and banks
- urban (e.g. lost child, Alzheimer)
- low-angle rescue (e.g. steep slopes)

In support of other organizations, PCSAR is typically willing to undertake any activity to aid public safety or survival. PCSAR can provide a cohesive group that is organized, disciplined, self supporting, equipped with its own communications, and able to work in adverse conditions.

- high-angle support (e.g. cliffs)
- swift-water rescue
- evidence search, urban/rural (e.g. for RCMP)
- critical incident stress management support
- extreme weather support/civil emergency response (e.g. tornado, wild fire)
- logistical support
- overhead team support

The time from first notification until first resources in the field is typically 45 minutes plus travel time. The initial 45 minutes includes:

- call to emergency number by requesting party
- contacting team search manager
- search manager gathers information and determines response level
- members are notified
- first members arrive, are briefed, and sent into the field.

Combining with other SAR teams, a response effort can be sustained for a continuous 96 hours.

Structure and Relationships

PCSAR is registered under the Alberta Societies Act as the “Pincher Creek Search and Rescue Society”. PCSAR is a member of SAR Alberta and operates under an agreement with the Alberta Office of the Fire Commissioner . PCSAR works closely with and is well integrated with Pincher Creek Emergency Services (fire, ambulance) .

PCSAR has a good working relationship with the Pincher Creek RCMP detachment. The RCMP typically calls in PCSAR as soon as they have information of a lost person.

PC AR has a good working relationship with its neighboring volunteer SAR groups: Lethbridge RCMP CSDA (dog group), LASARA (Lethbridge ground SAR), Crowsnest Pass SAR/Fire, Foothills SAR (South of Calgary), Calgary SAR, SEASAR (Medicine Hat). Several volunteers are members of both PCSAR and a neighboring group. We share training and rely on each other for organizational ideas. PCSAR's standard operating procedure is to give its neighbors a heads-up when a search is happening, and to ask its neighbors to be prepared to act in its core area if a second simultaneous search were to happen. Similarly, PCSAR expects most of the resources for a second operational period will be drawn from its neighbors.

Regular meetings are the first Tuesday of every month at the fire hall in Pincher Creek. The board meeting begins at 17:30. The general meeting, which is mostly composed of training starts at 19:00 and typically ends by 22:00. There is an open invitation for non-members to attend. Other training is scheduled typically for weekends.

Operational Regions

There has been no formal or informal discussion with Tasking Agencies or other SAR groups about where PCSAR would be considered a primary or secondary SAR responder. PCSAR would be willing to act in either role as requested by a Tasking Agency.

In the past, PCSAR has acted as primary SAR responder:

- in the mountains South and West of Pincher Creek
- in the southern Flathead, B.C. (by informal arrangement with the Sparwood RCMP and SAR; this area is more quickly accessed from Alberta).
- in the agricultural land around Pincher Creek
- on the Peigan Reserve
- in the southern Porcupine Hills (North of Pincher Creek)
- in the Carbondale area (West of Pincher Creek)
- in the town of Pincher Creek and surrounding villages
- in the town of Fort MacLeod
- in the agricultural land around Cardston
- on the Blood Timber Reserve

In the past, PCSAR has supported other SAR groups:

- in the Crowsnest Pass and the hills and mountains to the north
- in the City of Lethbridge
- in the areas South and North of Lethbridge
- on the Blood Reserve
- in the Nanton area
- in the Medicine Hat area
- at the High River flood
- at the Pine Lake tornado site near Red Deer

Typically there is a reduced response for travel distances over 2 hours. PCSAR will consider requests to respond anywhere, but may be limited by costs of travel.

Membership

- 50 volunteers (total)
- 15 “active” members (minimum 1 real search or 4 other activities in last year)
- 36 certified SAR Fundamentals/Basics
- 7 certified Track Aware (basic Man-Tracking)
- 6 certified Search Managers
- 3 in Crowsnest Pass area
- 3 in Lethbridge area

At a typical local search during the first operational period, PCSAR fields 10 volunteers and are joined by about 3 people from other organizations and 4 spontaneous volunteers. The numbers are limited by those who can be contacted immediately (tests indicate 30%) and have the specific skills required.

Each member operating in the field has their own ready pack and can be expected to be self-sufficient under any weather conditions for 24 hours.

Equipment

- mobile command post
- equipment trailer and truck
- briefing trailer (warming shelter)
- 2 SAR management kits
- large range of maps
- 9 portable radios (Tac 9, Mutual Aid, PC Fire & Ambulance), 2 relocatable vehicle radios
- 2 handheld satellite phones
- 1 satellite message device (inReach)
- 5 GPSs
- rescue sleigh to be towed by snowmobile
- 20 avalanche probes
- wilderness stretcher with support wheel
- various rescue stretchers
- rope rescue rigging
- swiftwater rescue kit
- first aid kits
- blankets
- generator
- exterior lighting

Other equipment/resources can be drawn from the community for local needs.