

## **Changing Provincial Requirements of PCSAR Members**

### **SAR is a Community Effort**

Search and Rescue in the Pincher Creek area has always been a community effort. It combines the efforts of paid professionals such as the RCMP and Emergency Services (fire, ambulance), trained responders (PCSAR members), and individuals (quaders, sledders, outfitters, spontaneous volunteers) that each bring their own abilities and support to the search effort.

Since its inception Pincher Creek SAR has operated under a "big tent". We know that our members are limited on how much time they can give and we know that every little bit helps and is needed by our community. Having a big tent helps keep everyone involved. So PCSAR has accepted members with whatever level of commitment they've been able to offer. We keep an eye on your skills and abilities and use you on searches in ways that are appropriate.

### **Changes**

Over the last couple of years the Government of Alberta and Search and Rescue Alberta have changed the rules for being a SAR group within the Alberta system. Now SAR groups can no longer operate under a "big tent". SAR groups cannot have members that don't meet minimum requirements set by the province. These requirements currently are:

- SAR Basics
- ICS 100
- SAR Alberta ID card
- Criminal Records and Vulnerable Sector check
- a signed a Letter of Commitment to SAR Alberta

Not strictly required, but pretty much needed

- having e-mail, Internet and basic computer skills for online training and records management

### **Future Changes**

The government and SAR Alberta are continuing to expand their requirements. They are working towards ever higher standards of professionalism. These are bringing with them increased expectations of individual SAR volunteers and teams. Both in actual skills but also in documentation, process and bureaucracy.

We anticipate the next couple years will continues to have additional training and process requirements. Each of these are likely to require action and increasing time from PCSAR members.

The provincial organizations believe that most SAR groups will be able to handle this as most SAR groups already have a large capacity. They draw volunteers from a large community (cities rather than small towns). These volunteers are ones most able to dedicate time, much like a hobby or unpaid second career. They are able and willing to spend time towards meeting government needs and building the confidence of other agencies.

## **Board Recommendations**

The PCSAR Board has brought these issues to the province and SAR Alberta. We are not expecting them to change direction. So PCSAR must adapt.

The Board is recommending two strategies. We're presenting them now to the membership and asking for your feedback.

First we want to have as many of our members as possible meet the provincial requirements. We would provide encouragement and support as those members that don't already meet the requirements work towards them over the next few months.

Second we anticipate that there will be some members that cannot or do not wish to undertake the commitments required by the province. For these members we propose to create a second organization, a "Community Response Group" that does not have the higher commitments required by the Government of Alberta and SAR Alberta. Membership in the Community Response Group would feel much like membership in the SAR group. Our training opportunities would be shared; everyone would still be invited to our regular training. We would work closely together.

## **SAR still a Community Effort**

Search and Rescue in the Pincher Creek area would still be a community effort. It would continue to combine the efforts of the RCMP, Emergency Services, trained responders in PCSAR and the new Community Response Group. Anytime PCSAR was requested, we would evaluate whether we have enough responders (usually not the case) and recommend that members of the Community Response Group be tasked much as we currently do for individual quaders and sledders.

It's unlikely that members of the Community Response Group will be requested to searches in *other* communities. Typically PCSAR does not send these members anyway when responding as mutual aid to other SAR groups.

## **Your Thoughts**

Right now, the PCSAR Board is recommending the above course of action in response to the requirements created by the province.

Do you agree? What are your thoughts?

We want to hear from you before committing on a direction. Please let us know what you think. You can

- talk to any board member
- answer the online survey we'll be mailing out shortly
- e-mail [pcsar-board@castrov.cuug.ab.ca](mailto:pcsar-board@castrov.cuug.ab.ca)
- come out to a special general meeting, June 28 (4th Tuesday), 19:00 (7pm) at the fire hall

If the sense of the membership is matches the board's proposal, we anticipate starting work in July and having things ready by early fall.