



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Division of Law Enforcement

## SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

GENERAL ORDER	EFFECTIVE DATE	RESCINDS/AMENDS	APPLICABILITY
34	June 10, 2020	July 21, 2008	All Members

### References

## 1 POLICY

- A** It is the policy of the Division to conduct search and rescue operations.
- B** It is the policy of the Division to conduct search and rescue operations in order to minimize loss of life, personal injury, and property damage.
- C** It is the policy of the Division to conduct search and rescue operations in a manner that minimizes member risk during search and rescue missions.
- D** It is the policy of the Division to coordinate search and rescue operations with the United States Coast Guard or with those jurisdictional agencies that can contribute resources.
- E** It is the policy of the Division to support cooperation and coordination among state and local agencies, federal agencies and others who have an interest or responsibility in search and rescue matters.

## 2 RESPONSIBILITIES

### A Sworn Members

- (1) Sworn members shall respond to any notification of distress, even if suspected to be a false call or a hoax. A distress shall be considered to exist until closed, suspended, or downgraded by a sworn supervisor.
- (2) Sworn members may assist in search and rescue operations outside of state waters with supervisory approval.

### B Sworn Supervisors

- (1) A sworn supervisor shall suspend search and rescue operations at any time when environmental conditions, operational concerns or equipment failure seriously jeopardize the safety of the sworn member or others involved in the operation.

### C Regional Commanders

- (1) Regional Commanders shall maintain a copy of the United States National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS) to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (formerly known as the National Search and Rescue Manual) as well as the U.S.C.G. Addendum to the National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS).

### 3 PROCEDURES

#### A Receiving Distress Calls

- (1) The following information shall be documented when a distress call is received:
  - (a) Time, date, and reporting source (radio call sign or phone number).
  - (b) Nature of distress/type of assistance needed.
  - (c) Vehicle/Vessel/Individual location and description.
  - (d) Weather/sea conditions.
  - (e) Number and descriptions of persons.
  - (f) Name, address, date of birth, medical concerns, and gender of occupants.
  - (g) Communications, navigational and survival equipment.

#### B Overdue Situation:

- (1) In an overdue situation, the following additional information shall be obtained:
  - (a) Time and location of departure, and hours overdue.
  - (b) Intended destination and route.
  - (c) Last communications with overdue person.
  - (d) Did the person, vehicle or vessel stop over anywhere or is habitually late?

#### C Notification Procedures

- (1) The Duty Officer shall immediately advise the nearest on-duty sworn member(s) of the situation. When information received indicates that life may be in imminent danger, the Duty Officer shall immediately notify all appropriate rescue organizations.
- (2) The appropriate sworn supervisor shall be immediately notified of all distress or overdue situations and shall determine the type and level of response. A sworn supervisor shall respond to the scene and act as the on-scene coordinator in those cases that require significant effort.
  - (a) The coordinator shall ensure that documentation of the search and rescue operation is completed.
- (3) The Division Director shall be notified via the chain of command when a sworn member is confirmed to be missing while on patrol.

#### D Search Procedures

- (1) Searches in navigable waters shall be coordinated with the United States Coast Guard. The United States Coast Guard need not be notified when the search area is not a navigable waterway. Navigable Waters includes bays, sounds, rivers, canals, and lakes which are connected with the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean.
  - (a) Division patrol vessels operating in a marine environment conducting search and rescue operations should be equipped with an operating VHF radio with a minimum of channel 16, 21 and 23 capabilities.
- (2) A sworn supervisor shall assign and deploy the appropriate resources.
- (3) All other searches in other jurisdictions shall be coordinated with the appropriate agencies.
- (4) Determine if the vehicle, vessel or subject is at the last known location. If practical, leave a note asking the subject to contact the nearest communications center upon return.
- (5) Keep chain-of-command informed of search status.

- (6) An Incident Summary Report is required to be completed for each search and rescue operation. A sworn supervisor shall ensure that the total number of hours worked, vessel hours, aircraft hours and vehicle miles are documented.

#### 4 FORMS

FORM NUMBER	FORM TITLE
	Incident Summary Report