



# GENERAL ORDER

## GENERAL ORDER 330.14

### Lost Person Search Incidents

#### EMERGENCY SERVICES BUREAU

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#### 1 APPLICABILITY

2 All Personnel

#### 3 POLICY

4 The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (Department) shall respond to assist the  
5 Howard County Police Department (HCPD) and other law enforcement agencies, when requested, with  
6 lost or missing person incidents and set forth guidelines that assist the Incident Commander in identifying  
7 the safest level of operational capability, and establishing operational and search criteria. The  
8 achievement of these objectives will help prevent and reduce the severity of accidents, injuries, and  
9 exposures to both Department members and the citizens served by the organization. The well-being of  
10 members or citizens shall not be risked for any activity that is not essential to the immediate protection  
11 of life. No Department member shall conduct, or participate in, an activity for which he/she is not trained  
12 and/or properly equipped to handle.

#### 13 DEFINITIONS

- 14 ➤ **Critical Missing Subject** – a person who is a child, elderly person, disabled person, mental patient,  
15 or disoriented person in need of rapid medical assistance and whose whereabouts are unknown.
- 16 ➤ **Fauna** – refers to the animal life or classification of animals of a certain region, time period, or  
17 environment.
- 18 ➤ **Flora** – refers to a group of plants, a disquisition of a group of plants, as well as to bacteria.
- 19 ➤ **Initial Planning Point (IPP)** – base datum point from which a search begins (not necessarily the  
20 physical base of operations).
- 21 ➤ **Last Known Position (LKP)** – the last substantiated (by clues or evidence) position that the missing  
22 subject was known to be. The LKP may change as more clues, direction of travel and physical  
23 evidence are discovered.
- 24 ➤ **Point Last Seen (PLS)** – point used to describe where the subject was actually seen by a witness.  
25 The PLS is expected to lend credibility and reliability to the IPP or another point for data  
26 comparison.
- 27 ➤ **Primary Search** – also known as a hasty search, searches the immediate area for the lost or  
28 missing person. Generally, the search is conducted in conjunction with the police department.  
29 Department members should always be in teams of two, documenting all areas searched.
- 30 ➤ **Probability of Area (POA)** – the chance that the missing subject (or clue) is in the identified search  
31 area or segment, and is expressed as a numerical value as a percentage.

- 32 ➤ **Probability of Detection (POD)** – the chance that the missing subject (or clues) will be detected, if  
33 present. The POD measures sensor effectiveness, thoroughness and the quality for an individual  
34 asset (i.e. hasty team, canine, etc.) in a given search segment, and is expressed as a numerical  
35 value as a percentage.
- 36 ➤ **Probability of Success (POS)** – the probability of successfully finding the missing subject or object  
37 sought (clues). POS is determined by multiplying the POA x POD.
- 38 ➤ **Runaway** – the following characteristics apply: any juvenile less than eighteen (18) years of age  
39 who purposely leaves home to escape parental custody or guidance and there is concern among  
40 family members for the welfare of the subject.
- 41 ➤ **United States National Grid (USNG)** – a nonproprietary alphanumeric location reference system  
42 derived from the Military Grid Reference System (MGRS) that is being promoted to increase  
43 interoperability of location services appliances with printed map products by providing a  
44 nationally consistent grid reference system. The National Search and Rescue committee has  
45 recommended USNG as the primary geo reference system for land-based search and rescue  
46 resources.
- 47 ➤ **Incident Commander (IC)** - is the individual responsible and accountable for managing the entire  
48 incident. There is one Incident Commander for an incident at any given time. Given the fact that  
49 lost or missing person response is a law enforcement function, a law enforcement officer on scene  
50 will maintain command; Department members are there to fill support functions within the  
51 Incident Command System (ICS).
- 52 ➤ **Search Manager** – a person from the Department or from an assisting agency, that has completed  
53 the University of Maryland Baltimore County (or equivalent), Managing Search Operations course,  
54 who has practical experience on search operations, and is authorized by their agency (AHJ) to  
55 function in this role. Typically, this person will, under the direction of the Incident Commander,  
56 plan and coordinate search operations. For the Department, this will generally be the ranking  
57 member on the scene that meets these criteria.
- 58 ➤ **Incident Safety Officer (ISO)** - is responsible for overall incident safety throughout the rescue  
59 operation, pursuant to Department policy, Incident Command System. This individual shall report  
60 directly to the Incident Commander. The individual assigned as ISO by the Incident Commander  
61 shall meet the requirements of NFPA 1521, Standards for Fire Department Safety Officer.
- 62 ➤ **Technical Safety Officer (TSO)** - a position assigned by the Incident Commander, is responsible for  
63 the safe conduct of all operations in the technical rescue group of the Incident Command System.  
64 This individual shall be a Special Operations team member or an individual who possesses  
65 knowledge, training, and experience pertinent to the type of technical rescue being conducted.  
66 The Technical Safety Officer shall report directly to the Incident Safety Officer.
- 67 ➤ **Awareness level** - of overland search training requires the Department member to size-up existing  
68 and potential conditions; identify resources necessary to conduct safe and effective operations;  
69 implement site control and scene management; recognize general hazards associated with the  
70 incident and procedures necessary to mitigate these hazards; and determine whether the  
71 emergency scene is a rescue or body recovery incident.
- 72 ➤ **Operations level** - of overland search training requires the Department member to perform all the  
73 techniques of the Awareness Level, and should be trained and equipped to operate in the  
74 wilderness environment. In addition, the Operations Level trained member will have the following  
75 capabilities:
- 76 ○ Sizing up existing and potential conditions at incidents where overland search and rescue  
77 will be performed.
  - 78 ○ Requesting and interfacing with other search and rescue resources.
  - 79 ○ Providing the specialized medical care and protocols that are unique to the search

- 80 environment.
- 81 ○ Using personal survival, body management, and preparedness skills for the specific
- 82 environments in which the rescuer could become involved.
- 83 ○ Recognizing the need for, and procedures and equipment for the provision of,
- 84 environmental protection through clothing systems applicable to the specific
- 85 environments in which the rescuer could become involved.
- 86 ○ Selecting, caring for, and using personal medical and support equipment and packing it
- 87 with due regard to how it will be carried.
- 88 ○ Traveling through various environments in which the rescuer could become involved while
- 89 minimizing threats to safety.
- 90 ○ Using land navigation techniques that use map and compass as well as any methods of
- 91 navigation and position reporting utilized by the Department with which the rescuer could
- 92 become involved.
- 93 ○ Procuring the necessary maps and navigational and topographical information.
- 94 ○ Modifying actions and urgency as applicable to a rescue versus a recovery.
- 95 ○ Acquiring information on current and forecast weather, including temperature,
- 96 precipitation, and winds.
- 97 ○ Participating in and supporting search operations intended to locate victims whose exact
- 98 location is unknown.
- 99 ○ Accessing and extricating individuals from overland environments and terrain encountered
- 100 in the response area.
- 101 ○ Recognizing, identifying, and utilizing all rescue hardware and software used by the
- 102 Department with which could become involved.
- 103 ○ Working in and around any aircraft, watercraft, and special vehicles used for Search and
- 104 Rescue (SAR) operations while minimizing threats to rescuers.
- 105 ○ Recognizing the Department's limitations regarding accessing and/or evacuating a victim.
- 106
- 107 ➤ **Technician level** - of overland search training requires the Department member to perform all the
- 108 techniques of the Operations Level, plus be able to develop and implement procedures for the
- 109 following:
- 110 ○ Evaluating existing and potential conditions at incidents where search and rescue will be
- 111 performed and determining the need for Technician Level skills.
- 112 ○ Acquiring, utilizing, and coordinating Technician Level search and rescue resources.
- 113 ○ Providing input to standard operating procedures for anticipated search responses.
- 114 ○ Initiating and, where qualified, coordinating and performing Technician Level search and
- 115 rescue operations.
- 116 ○ Writing and utilizing an operational plan for search and rescue in the extreme
- 117 environment.
- 118 ○ Technician Level responses are those responses that exceeded the capabilities of
- 119 Operations Level equipment and training.
- 120 ○ Technician Level training also requires the member to be trained to the Technician Level
- 121 for rope rescue and the Operations Level for water rescue.
- 122
- 123 ➤ **Specialist Level** - an individual who has technical expertise and practical knowledge with missing
- 124 person's scenarios. This person may augment on-scene activities by providing essential
- 125 information in their specialized field.
- 126

**128 GENERAL**

129 Each response to a lost or missing person incident shall be evaluated upon arrival by the Incident  
130 Commander to assess the risk to Department personnel.

131

132 The well-being of personnel and/or citizens shall not be risked for any activity that is not essential to the  
133 immediate protection of life.

134

135 The priority for rescue shall be:

136

- Yourself;
- Other responders;
- The victim(s).

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139

140 All operations at the scene of a lost or missing person incident shall be performed in a safe manner  
141 consistent with the identified level of operational capability. No Department member shall conduct, or  
142 participate in, an activity for which he/she is not trained, certified and/or properly equipped to handle.

143

144 When conducting a training exercise, body recovery, evidence search, incident involving animals, or other  
145 operations not essential to the immediate protection of life, the Incident Commander shall utilize the  
146 same procedures employed during an actual rescue operation but at a level of urgency commensurate  
147 with the risk/benefit analysis.

148

149 Only Technician and Specialist Level trained and certified personnel shall be allowed to participate in an  
150 overland search operation in the wilderness, *unless* Awareness trained members are accompanied by a  
151 technician and the assignment or task does not pose a significant hazard to personnel safety.

152

153 The Incident Commander should identify who will function in the role of the Search Manager for the  
154 incident. This designation can be assigned to a Department member meeting the qualifications, or a Law  
155 Enforcement member at Command's discretion.

156

157 It is the intent of this policy to follow recommendations contained within:

- NFPA 1670, Standard on Operations for Technical Rescue Incidents
- Department General Order 300.02, Accountability
- Department General Order 300.04, Mayday
- Department General Order 300.07, Incident Command System
- Department General Order 300.11, Rapid Intervention Crew
- Department General Order 330.04, Technical Rescue Incidents

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**165 GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL ACTIONS (NOTIFICATION)**

166 Upon notification to the police department's on-duty Patrol Supervisor of a search mission, the  
167 Emergency Communications Center will notify the respective on-duty field Battalion Chief and the on-  
168 duty Special Operations officer at Station 10 (this is a notification of the event, not a request for  
169 assistance). This will allow Special Operations members to start the planning process prior to dispatch to  
170 the incident (initiation of map printing of potential search areas, missing person flier generation).

171

172 The following information should be obtained from police units on location:

173

- Point Last Seen (PLS).

- 174 • Description of the missing subject.
- 175 • Circumstances related to the incident.
- 176 • Location of the law enforcement command post.
- 177 • Location of staging area.
- 178 • Law enforcement radio operational channel.

179

180 The on-duty Special Operations officer at Station 10 will utilize the above information to determine if the  
181 Department members on-duty can safely assist law enforcement with the current incident.

182

183 If the on-duty officer at Station 10 determines that there are not enough adequately trained personnel to  
184 safely assist with the incident, the Special Operations team leader (SO BC10) or assistant team leader  
185 (SO100) should be notified for further disposition.

186

187 When it is appropriate for the on-duty station ten officers to accept the mission, the Emergency  
188 Communications Center should alert Ops 10, the appropriate field Battalion Chief and the first due  
189 Suppression Company.

190

191 After evaluating the information received during the scene assessment and developing an effective  
192 incident action plan, review the resources on location and en route to determine if any additional  
193 resources are needed.

194

#### 195 **GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL ACTIONS (RESPONSE)**

196 Upon arrival at the scene, the Department ranking officer shall assess the risk to Department personnel  
197 and communicate concerns to response personnel.

198

199 The ranking Department officer should locate the law enforcement command post and begin to  
200 determine where personnel will be placed in the Incident Command System (ICS). If not already  
201 completed, the ranking Department officer should assist law enforcement in:

- 202 • Prohibiting entry of untrained personnel (and citizens) into the potential search area. All  
203 observers, citizens, and media representatives are to be kept far enough away from the incident  
204 as to not interfere with the ever expanding operation or responding units.
- 205 • Securing of any witnesses as soon as possible after arriving on the scene.
- 206 • Organizing a primary (hasty) search of the immediate area as soon as practical. *Considerations*  
207 *regarding the use of air scent canines shall be taken into account prior to executing a primary*  
208 *search.*

209

210 A Department Incident Safety Officer (ISO) should be assigned for the duration of the search incident. The  
211 ISO shall be responsible for identifying hazards and mitigating them if at all possible. Information  
212 regarding hazards that cannot be mitigated shall be communicated to the Incident Commander and to all  
213 personnel operating at the scene. Typical hazards include, but are not limited to:

- 214 • Current and expected temperatures.
- 215 • Current and expected weather conditions.
- 216 • Terrain topography.
- 217 • Flora and fauna considerations.
- 218 • Altitude changes.

219

220

221 **GUIDELINES FOR SEARCH OPERATIONS – OPERATIONS LEVEL**

222 The ranking Department officer should decide whether to operate in the Search and Rescue or recovery  
223 mode, based on the information available and the conditions and hazards present.

224  
225 If the ranking Department officer determines that the incident will be a rescue, then operations must be  
226 initiated as soon as possible with the proper equipment and qualified, trained personnel.

- 227 • All rescue operations are to be conducted in a low risk to high risk order. The risk/benefit of each  
228 task shall be considered by the Incident Commander, along with the ISO prior to implementation.
- 229 • Department personnel trained at the Operations Level can be used to assist Technician trained  
230 team members.

231  
232 If the ranking Department officer determines that the incident will be a recovery, then operations are to  
233 proceed in a manner that presents minimal risk to Department personnel.

234 Department personnel considered Operations Level personnel should be able to perform the following  
235 specific tasks/functions:

- 236 • Basic navigation utilizing a map, compass and/or handheld GPS unit.
- 237 • Function as a Hasty Team member.
- 238 • Escort canine assets during search operations.
- 239 • Flag and mark potential clues.
- 240 • Perform/assist in an evacuation of the lost person.

241  
242 **GUIDELINES FOR SEARCH OPERATIONS – TECHNICIAN LEVEL**

243 When the search operation is of long duration or extends into additional work periods, or the Incident  
244 Commander is unsure of the resources available on the scene, the IC shall consider having the Emergency  
245 Communications Center dispatch the on duty satellite Special Operations team members to the scene.

246  
247 Department personnel considered Technician Level personnel in Overland Search will be able to function  
248 at the Operations Level, have taken the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Managing  
249 Search Operations class (or equivalent), and should be able to perform the following specific  
250 tasks/functions:

- 251 • Assist the Search Management team in developing search priorities.
- 252 • Assist in map segmenting.
- 253 • Ability to utilize mapping software.
- 254 • Assist in determining the potential lost person behavior for the particular subject.
- 255 • Conduct the missing persons search questionnaire.
- 256 • Assist in completing task assignment forms.
- 257 • Manage the task assignment log.
- 258 • Conduct pre-task briefings for assets.
- 259 • Conduct post-task debriefings.

260  
261 Considerations for a rehab area to provide the rescuers with medical assessment, nutrition, and  
262 hydration during the extended operations should be made.

263  
264 **PROJECT LIFE SAVER LOCATOR DEVICE (OR SIMILAR DEVICES) FOR SEARCH OPERATIONS**

265 Special Operations maintains two Project Life Saver receivers for use in locating lost or missing individuals  
266 with a Project Life Saver transmitter. Although this program is not utilized in Howard County, many

267 surrounding jurisdictions utilize this technology.

268

269 When a call is received to report a wandering Project Life Saver client, the communications call taker  
270 should obtain the person's last known position and the assigned frequency for the missing subject's  
271 transmitter band. This information will be transmitted to Howard County Police and Department units  
272 upon dispatch. Project Life Saver trained Special Operations personnel will:

- 273 • Program the assigned frequency into both scanners and deploy one unit as a vehicle mobile  
274 locator.
- 275 • The second unit, as a handheld unit, will be used to search areas inaccessible by vehicle.
- 276 • The responding units are to report to the designated LKP or PLS to meet with police and establish  
277 further search plans.

278

#### 279 **GUIDELINES – POST OVERLAND SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS**

280 As soon as the lost or missing subject is brought to safety, an assessment shall be completed by Advanced  
281 Life Support personnel. This assessment shall be conducted in the presence of a law enforcement officer  
282 if possible.

283

284 Personnel involved in the search and rescue operation shall proceed to the rehab area for medical  
285 assessment, nutrition, hydration, and/or environmental temperature control.

286

287 Before leaving the scene, all Department personnel should be provided follow-up information as needed.

288

#### 289 **OVERLAND SEARCH AND RESCUE TRAINING AND DOCUMENTATION**

290 Search and Rescue training shall be provided to all Special Operations members. The scope of this  
291 training shall be based upon the members expected level of incident participation and responsibility.

- 292 • Minimum training for all Department operational personnel shall be the Awareness Level.
- 293 • Special Operations team members shall be expected to perform at Technician and/or Specialist  
294 level(s) and shall be trained and certified accordingly.

295

296 Annual performance evaluations (re-certification) of Overland Search and Rescue techniques shall be  
297 conducted on all operational members and equipment, pursuant to the guidelines of NFPA 1670,  
298 Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Rescue Incidents.

299

300 Master documentation for all initial training, certifications and annual re-certification shall be maintained  
301 by the Department's Bureau of Education and Training.

302

303 Documentation regarding training and certification for each member shall be available for inspection by  
304 that member and his/her authorized representatives.

305

## 306 **REFERENCES**

307 Department General Order 300.02, Accountability

308 Department General Order 300.04, Mayday

309 Department General Order 300.07, Incident Command System

310 Department General Order 300.11, Rapid Intervention Crew

311 Department General Order 330.04, Technical Rescue Incidents

312 Department General Order 410.01, Communications

313 All applicable local, state and federal laws.  
314 National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 1521, Standards for Fire Department Safety Officer  
315 National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 1670, Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Rescue  
316 Incidents  
317 The Textbook for Managing Land Search Operations (2006), ERI Publications & Training

318 **SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT CHANGES**

319 New General Order, 12/2013 gew 3059

320 **FORMS/ATTACHMENTS**

321

322 **APPROVED**

323



324

325

Deputy Chief John S. Butler

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Operations Command