

## FACT SHEET

# GROUND AND INLAND WATER SEARCH AND RESCUE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ground and Inland Water Search and Rescue (SAR) in the province of British Columbia has evolved into a highly responsive community of 93 individual SAR groups made up of well-trained and dedicated volunteers.

Many SAR groups have obtained sophisticated tools and equipment to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. Organized SAR in B.C. originated during the 1950s and 60s as part of civil defence preparedness. When the threat of the cold war diminished, a transition from an urban rescue focus to a ground and inland water search and rescue focus took place. Over the past 15 years, there have been over 11,000 SAR responses, with approximately 15,000 people being found and rescued.

SAR volunteers are asked to respond to a complex diversity of emergency situations including: missing person searches, rescues, evidence searches, evacuations and flood monitoring. In addition to requests for assistance from RCMP, municipal police, B.C. Ambulance and the Coroner, mutual support is often provided to and received from agencies responsible for marine and air search and rescue including Canadian Coast Guard, Department of National Defence and Parks Canada.

The 4,700 SAR volunteers are a key component of the 13,000 volunteers involved in B.C.'s Public Safety Lifeline. This includes Emergency Radio Communications, PEP Air, Emergency Social Services, and Road Rescue, with coordination, emergency management training and support from the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP).

The number of Ground and Inland Water SAR incidents has continued to rise, with over 900 now reported each year on average. More than 1,200 people have been located and/or rescued annually, over the past 3 years.

To reduce the number of incidents, SAR volunteers are significant contributors to a variety of public education and prevention programs. A good example is AdventureSmart™, a provincial prevention initiative, which is funded by the National Search and Rescue Secretariat New Initiatives Fund and the B.C. Search and Rescue Association along with corporate support.

*For more information go to:*

Provincial Emergency Program <http://www.pep.bc.ca>

British Columbia Search and Rescue Association <http://www.bcsara.com/>