



National Search and
Rescue Secretariat

Secrétariat national
Recherche et sauvetage

NATIONAL

SEARCH & RESCUE

SECRETARIAT

*The mission of the National
Search and Rescue Secretariat is
to promote an efficient, effective and
economical National Search and
Rescue Program in Canada by
co-ordinating central activities
on behalf of the operational
agencies providing search and
rescue services to people in distress
throughout Canada's areas
of jurisdiction.*



SEARCH
AND
RESCUE



RECHERCHE
ET
SAUVETAGE

Canada



“Search and Rescue comprises the search for, and provision of aid to, persons who are, or who are feared to be, in distress”

A definition of search and rescue

SEARCH & RESCUE

IN CANADA



In 1982, an epic storm off the coast of Newfoundland toppled the Ocean Ranger, a semi-submersible oil rig. Despite the best efforts of Canadian rescue resources, all 84 members of the Ocean Ranger’s crew lost their lives. The review of the tragedy led to the creation of the National Search and Rescue (SAR) Program.

The National SAR Program is the name given to all of Canada’s search and rescue activities. The program integrates and co-ordinates federal, participating provincial, territorial and municipal governments, volunteer and private search and rescue programs.



THE NATIONAL SEARCH & RESCUE SECRETARIAT



Created in 1986, the National Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS) administers the National SAR Program. The Secretariat supports the Lead Minister for Search and Rescue who is also the Minister of National Defence. The NSS co-ordinates national policy activities of other federal departments and agencies delivering search and rescue services and facilitates the national development of those services provided under provincial and territorial authority. Federal departments include the Department of National Defence (Canadian Forces), Environment Canada (Meteorological Service of Canada), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canadian Coast Guard), Parks Canada Agency, the Solicitor General of Canada (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and Transport Canada.

With a staff of about 15, the Secretariat co-ordinates activities among federal search and rescue agencies and departments, develops policy and standards on the quantity and quality of SAR services in co-operation with partners, undertakes major reviews and studies, and communicates information to Canada's search and rescue community. The NSS acts as a liaison for SAR agencies and all partners involved in search and rescue in an effort to integrate all SAR participants into the National Search and Rescue Program.

The overall result is that Canada has one of the most effective national search and rescue programs in the world despite the geographical challenges posed by size, expansive ocean areas, varied terrain and harsh climate. Each co-operative SAR effort, wherever it occurs, is a tribute to the Canadian partners who share their expertise.



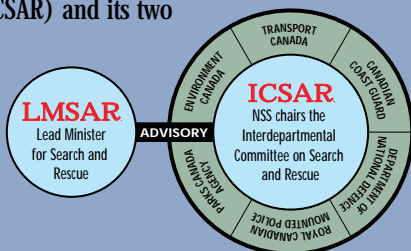


The last commercial air crash of the 20th century in Canada was also its largest – Swissair Flight 111 plunged in the Atlantic Ocean off Peggy’s Cove in 1998, killing all 229 people on board and mobilizing a gigantic rescue – then recovery – operation. The response utilized the resources of the Canadian Navy, Canadian Coast Guard, RCMP, Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, and over 1500 ground SAR volunteers.



Interdepartmental Committee on Search and Rescue

NSS co-ordinates the SAR policies of six federal departments and chairs the Interdepartmental Committee on Search and Rescue (ICSAR) and its two subcommittees. ICSAR provides leadership and policy advice to the Lead Minister for Search and Rescue.



COSPAS-SARSAT

NSS represents Canada as one of four member countries (Canada, France, United States and Russia) in COSPAS-SARSAT, the international satellite system for search and rescue, which includes seven satellites in orbit to detect emergency beacons worldwide. More than 30 countries and organizations participate in COSPAS-SARSAT to provide assistance anywhere in the world.

Canadian Beacon Registry

NSS operates the Canadian Beacon Registry, a centralized data base that registers data for aeronautical, land and maritime beacons.

Canadian Ground SAR Data Base

NSS collects data from ground SAR incidents in co-operation with major police forces. The Canadian Ground SAR Data Base provides the basis for planning at many levels – from knowing the geographic centre of incidents in a particular province or territory to identifying growing trends in incident causes.

SAR Prevention Working Group

NSS brings together experts from a variety of agencies in the SAR Prevention Working Group to assist and co-ordinate the development of effective SAR prevention programs. The goal is to reduce the number and severity of SAR incidents in Canada.



Over \$8 million is invested annually in approximately 100 projects (50 new and 50 continuing) under the New SAR Initiatives Fund. The fund was established to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of search and rescue in Canada. Projects address the following priority areas: integration of the NSP, prevention, collection of SAR data, response, volunteers, and research and development.



New SAR Initiatives Fund

NSS supports projects that improve SAR activities in Canada. Over \$8 million is allocated annually to projects through the New SAR Initiatives Fund.

Canadian Ground SAR Standards

NSS works to harmonize provincial and territorial Canadian Ground SAR Standards to ensure high quality and consistency between jurisdictions.

National Ground SAR Council of Canada

NSS acts as secretary to the National Ground SAR Council of Canada, facilitating meetings for representatives of the SAR authority of all provincial and territorial governments.

Audits of SAR Projects

NSS conducts audits on selected projects to shape future initiatives by making and implementing recommendations relating to effectiveness, efficiency and economy.

Independent Studies of SAR Programs

NSS undertakes independent studies of SAR programs to assist management decision making at all levels of SAR operations.

Partnerships

NSS forms partnerships with volunteer SAR organizations, government agencies at all levels and industry to deliver communications products that best meet the needs of the Canadian SAR community.

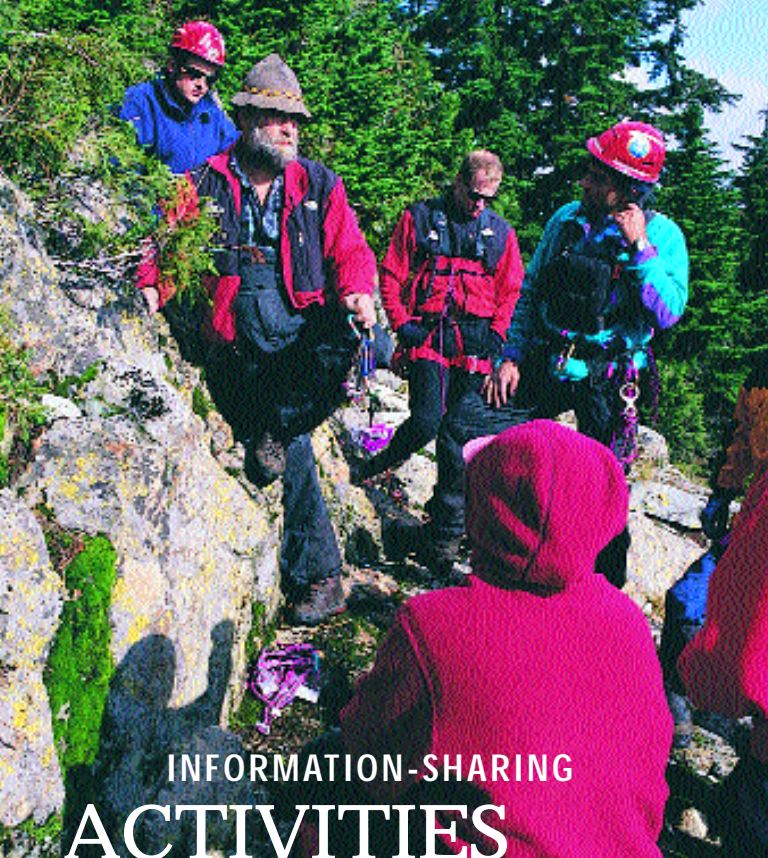
A

misstep and Marianne W. tumbled 200 feet (60 metres) down an icy mountain slope, suffering broken ribs and other internal injuries. A companion scrambled for help and, less than four hours after the fall, help was on its way. So was rotten weather. So was an avalanche that thundered by mere metres away from the rescuers. Footprints were obliterated and, at 3 am, the search was put on hold until first light when a helicopter moved in. Despite flat light, winds and down drafts, the searchers persevered. Marianne was spotted about 9 am and the rescuers flew into action. Her body temperature was 32° C, her socks were frozen to her feet but she was, in her words, “extremely grateful.”



The Logo – The common goal is to save lives. NSS is about people helping people. The logo symbolizes rescuing, helping, sharing and working together.





INFORMATION-SHARING ACTIVITIES & PRODUCTS

NSS Web site

NSS Web site provides on-line versions of the Directory of Canadian SAR Organizations, and *SARSCENE* magazine in addition to summaries of all New SAR Initiatives Fund projects, reports to Parliament and links to SAR organizations from around the world.

Resource Centre

An information and reference centre for national and international search and rescue material, with services available to the public.

Directory of Canadian Search and Rescue Organizations

The only comprehensive print and on-line listing of SAR organizations in Canada.

SARSCENE Magazine

A national, bilingual quarterly magazine providing a showcase for issues facing the Canadian and international SAR communities. Circulation: 14 000.

Canadian Ground SAR Manual

A “living” reference document on such topics as contacts for provincial and territorial GSAR policy and operations, latest developments in harmonizing GSAR standards and templates for documents such as Memoranda of Agreement between volunteer groups and police forces.

Canadian National Ground SAR Study

A four-volume study designed to provide a base for future plans and policies to improve effectiveness and cost value of ground SAR services. Among the volumes are the Ground SAR Ideas Kit and pivotal research on lost person behaviour.

SARSCENE Workshops

Canada’s national annual SAR workshop and trade show, drawing over 700 participants from the Canadian and international SAR communities.

SARSCENE Games

Challenging the skills of ground SAR teams in an annual outdoor competition, the games feature search planning, evidence detection, first aid and map and compass skills.



Outstanding SAR Achievement Award

NSS gives an Outstanding SAR Achievement Award each year in recognition of the most exceptional contribution to SAR in Canada by an individual or organization.

Certificates of Achievement

NSS Certificates of Achievement recognize individuals or groups who have made significant contributions to SAR efforts in their respective regions of Canada.

SAR PREVENTION
Education, regulation and enforcement

SAR RESPONSE

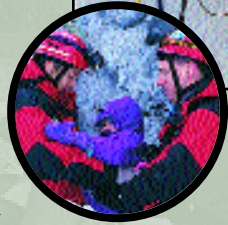
Response and aid to persons in distress



DID YOU KNOW?

- The National Search and Rescue Secretariat's Resource Centre offers over 4000 items, ranging from publications to CD-ROMs. The collection holds the answers to such diverse questions as how dogs detect human scent in water, how the human body reacts to arctic temperatures or what actions to take if you are lost. Material can be borrowed for two weeks to a month.
- Volunteers are a critical element in Canada's search and rescue network, contributing countless hours and often their own equipment to save lives. There are hundreds of volunteer search and rescue organizations in Canada working in air, marine and ground SAR.
- Rescue Co-ordination Centres respond to close to 9000 air and marine incidents each year. The Centres are located in Halifax, NS, Trenton, ON, and Victoria, BC.
- Swiftwater kills at an alarming rate because the danger is almost always underestimated by the inexperienced. Statistics show a high percentage of fatalities for relatively few calls: expect to lose both victim and rescuer(s) about 50 percent of the time.
- The Canadian Mission Control Centre in Trenton, ON, receives more than 800 beacon alerts annually in Canada through COSPAS-SARSAT. To the end of 1998, COSPAS-SARSAT had assisted in the rescue of 10 000 persons in distress in over 3201 SAR events.
- The Parks Canada Agency delivers public safety services to close to 25 million national parks visitors each year.

- Over 5000 beacons have been registered with the Canadian Beacon Registry at the NSS.
- Statistics show that 70 percent of marine SAR incidents on the West Coast and Great Lakes system occur between June and September and that 51 percent occurred on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The finding led to schedule adjustments for the Canadian Forces 442 Squadron at Comox, BC, and better response times.
- A personal locator beacon (PLB) could be your only link with the rest of the world in a life-threatening emergency. Thanks to the combined efforts of Canada and the other countries participating in COSPAS-SARSAT, distress signals are received by an international satellite system and relayed to search and rescue authorities.



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shifted cargo and 12-metre waves promised disaster for a four-member crew on a west coast fishing vessel. In the blinding rain and gale-force winds, a helicopter crew from 442 Squadron in Comox, BC, hovered and darted, time and time again, over the listing and partially submerged boat to pluck all four sailors to safety. Part of a day's work.





rapper Pat Elpakohak left his Arctic home in perfect weather conditions early one morning.

Winds picked up and quickly turned into a gale, cutting visibility to zero. Travelling blindly, he had no way of knowing that his snowmobile and sled were on thin ice. Suddenly, he and his machine plunged into the icy waters but his sled stuck on the ice. Pat managed to haul himself out of the water and used his high-frequency radio to call for help. Hunters heard his call but couldn't find him in the whiteout. A Hercules aircraft from Winnipeg set out to search but had to return to base for hurried repairs. A ground team of volunteers and RCMP were hampered by the weather. Finally, when the storm abated, 18 hours after his plunge into the icy Beaufort Sea, Pat was saved through the combined efforts of air and ground rescue teams.

There are thousands of stories such as Pat's in Canada although not all of them have happy endings. But from every incident, lessons are learned, adding to the inventory of experience which has earned Canada its international reputation for outstanding search and rescue operations.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

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