



Shropshire

Fire and Rescue Service

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Part 9

**Request for
RAF search and
rescue assistance**

Part 9 Request for RAF Search and Rescue Assistance

Purpose

The purpose of this brigade order is to supply guidance to personnel with reference to requesting assistance from the Royal Air Force (RAF) in relation to its availability for assisting with search and rescue and assisting with Fire Service operations.

Strategic aims and objectives

Strategic aim 1 “Reduce the risk to life and material loss from fire, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in the community”

Strategic aim 2 “Protect life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies”

Strategic aim No 3 ‘Secure the highest level of safety and welfare for staff by providing effective supervision, training and systems of work.’

The delivery of this order will support this aim by ensuring our staff are able to operate safely.

Roles, responsibilities and review

The **Head of Operational Response** is responsible for ensuring this Order is implemented across the Brigade.

Level One, Two and Three Incident Commanders will be responsible for the day to day operation of the Order.

The **Head of Operational Response** will review this Order biennially in **August** and as and when organisational changes take place.

Introduction

The SAR squadrons provide 24-hour cover around the UK 365 days a year. Each of the 6 Squadrons maintains a 15-minutes readiness state during daylight hours and a 45-minutes readiness state during the hours of darkness. The Royal Air Force (RAF) operates alongside four civilian coastguard teams and two Royal Navy (RN) teams to form a Unified National Search and Rescue Service. All agencies work together to ensure that no area in the UK is more than one hour's flight away during daylight hours and no more than one and a half hours during the night.

The primary role of the SAR Squadrons is to recover RAF personnel, but in peacetime, the majority of callouts attended by the SAR Squadron are to civilian incidents. In an average year, the Search and Rescue teams can expect to respond to more than 1700 callouts. Like all emergency services, the type of incident varies tremendously. It could be anything from rescuing a group of lost hill walkers to large-scale operations such as the floods at Boscastle, Cornwall, in 2004.

More than 50 percent of all SAR operations happen overland so there is a possibility that in the future that our county of Shropshire may need to request assistance from a SAR helicopter team.

In addition to SAR helicopter support there is also the RAF Mountain Rescue Service (MRS) our closest team is located at RAF Valley, this team specializes in Search Management, Technical Rescue, casualty recovery and post aircraft crash management, so this is an option worth considering if we had a civil or military aircraft crash in a remote area of the county.

This Brigade Order has been produced as a means of informing control room staff and operational crews of the resources that are available if required to assist with fire ground operations.

Capabilities of the Sea King 3/3A search and rescue helicopter

Operating by day or night and in most weather conditions, the helicopter has a crew of four. Two pilots, a radar/winch operator and a paramedic qualified winch man.

The helicopter is fitted with a variety of radio and navigational aids that provide pinpoint accuracy. It has an impressive suite of search equipment, including processed radar, night vision goggles and a powerful infra-red camera and colour TV camera. The medical equipment carried by the helicopter is extensive and similar to that carried by both the road and air ambulance. This includes 2 stretchers, oxygen and a defibrillator.

The Sea King's traditional role is search and rescue. However it is a very flexible helicopter and can be used in a variety of other roles. Once on scene, the helicopter can maintain its position and height automatically if needed, and can finely manoeuvre to land in confined areas or if required deliver and recover the winch man

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to a precise spot using its hydraulic winch, which is capable of lifting 3 adults simultaneously.

Types of incidents

The Sea King helicopter is an extremely practical and capable resource that we have available to use if required. Listed below are some of many uses and incident types at which this resource can be utilised:

Rescue and recovery

Airlifting people trapped on hill tops, cliffs, high rise buildings, rooftops, bridges and flood waters.

Medical and casualty evacuation

The Sea King helicopter is capable of accommodating 2 stretcher bound casualties plus several less severely injured casualties.

Mass evacuation

A maximum of 17 passengers can be airlifted on any one trip meaning that relatively large numbers of people can be evacuated in a short time to a place of safety

Logistic transport

Personnel and equipment can be rapidly moved to the scene of an incident when roads are blocked or impassable. Maximum load on the external hook is 5000lbs

Aerial survey

During large scale incidents it may be useful to survey the incident and monitor progress, in the absence of police helicopters then SAR Helicopters could be called for.

RAF Mountain Rescue Service (MRS)

The Royal Air Force is tasked to provide a land based, all weather search and rescue capability. There are a total of 36 crewed mountain rescue teams (MRTs) who are available 24 hours a day 365 days a year. The closest team to Shropshire is based at RAF Valley (North Wales). The MRS has the unique capability of being able to operate at short notice in difficult terrain inaccessible to other SAR resources particularly when severe weather inhibits helicopter operations.

Requesting the assistance of SAR services

The agency responsible for mobilisation of SAR within the United Kingdom lies with the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre (ARCC). The ARCC role is to coordinate and control military and civilian SAR aviation assets, particularly helicopters and the RAF MRT in response to requests for military aid to the civilian community.

Any emergency service can request assistance and for immediate lifesaving tasks, at no cost to the authority where life is deemed to be at risk. This includes responding to Road Traffic Collisions and lifting rescue teams to the site of an incident.

The procedure for requesting SAR assistance being either Helicopter or MRT is as follows:

- As part of the analytical risk assessment the Incident Commander must consider the benefits of requesting SAR.
- Contact Control and request SAR Assistance. Have available information such as location, type of incident, number of casualties/persons in need of rescue and any time scales that need to be met.
- The Senior Fire Control Operator must inform the Principal Officer that a request has been made for SAR assistance prior to contacting the ARCC.
- The Principal Officer must decide whether to approve the request.
- If approved Fire Control must contact the ARCC and forward all details relating to the request, including location and nature of assistance required.

Points of reference

Specific Incident Procedures (SIP)

Aircraft Incidents off Airport
Assistance at Aircraft Landings

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service Specific Incident Procedures

Aircraft incidents off airport

Action on arrival:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send major incident aircraft message (if appropriate). • Dynamic risk assessment. • Pass information to Control, including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aircraft type (fixed wing --rotary) Location - O S map ref Hazards - fuel, debris area covered, cargo, Chemicals. Number of casualties Access - routes, rendezvous points
Safety considerations;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Safety Officers. • Identify potentially hazardous cargo (chemicals) and fuel. • If Engines still running keep clear of jet intakes, exhausts, propellers and rotor blades. • Military aircraft may be armed. • Ejector seats may be armed. • Always wear protective clothing, gloves, eye protection etc.
Main risks;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explosion, fragmentation, weapons, ejector seats, chemical contamination.

Operational considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disturb as little debris as possible.• Dynamic risk assessment.• Cover fuel spills with foam blanket - (foam supplies).• Establish casualty handling area.• Position jets to cover main fuselage - (water supplies).• Use BA when working in or near smoke.• Chemical protection suits (decontamination).
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Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service Specific Incident Procedure

Assistance at aircraft landing

Helicopter (air ambulance)

Action on arrival:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact ground crew / ambulance personnel (If in attendance). • If not, contact Fire Service Control who will relay any messages to aircraft via ambulance control. • Dynamic risk assessment
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Safety considerations\	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear landing site of any loose objects. • Do not mark site with blankets or other loose items. • Report any obstacles e.g wires, poles, etc, to pilot via Control. • Full Fire kit to be worn including eye protection. • All personnel should move well clear of landing site.
Main risks;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury from rotor blades, flying objects, manual handling, uneven ground.

Operational Considerations,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate an area approx 25m x 25m unobstructed and close to incident. • Dynamic risk assessment. • Only approach aircraft with flight crew's permission. Wait for Thumbs Up. • Only flight crew to operate aircraft doors. • Incident Commanders to ensure route used to and from aircraft is safe. • Only approach helicopter from the front.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never approach Helicopter from an uphill slope.• Do not walk near tail rotor blade.• No running within 30m of helicopter.• No objects to be lifted above head height.• No motor vehicles within 60m of helicopter.• Close appliance doors during helicopter take off and landings.
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