

**A MEMORANDUM
OF
UNDERSTANDING**

between

**AVON AND SOMERSET
CONSTABULARY**



and

**AVON AND SOMERSET
SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM**



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up between the Avon and Somerset Constabulary (ASC) and the Avon and Somerset Search and Rescue Team (ASSRT). It describes the working relationship between the two parties, including the arrangements that are implemented when the ASSRT provides a search and rescue capability at the request of the Police.

This document does not create a legally binding contract or agreement. However, both parties will seek to work together on a best endeavour basis for the benefit of the community. Either party may terminate all or some of the arrangements or procedures which are set out in this Memorandum at any time although the party terminating will endeavour to give the other reasonable advance notice.

THE HISTORY

In the early days of mountain rescue, it was often left to a local Police Officer to gather a team of volunteers together to mount a search and rescue operation, and it was from this point that the link with the Police developed. As the process matured local volunteer search and rescue teams were established. These teams are now recognised as 999 emergency services (staffed by volunteers) and operate as such via the co-ordination of Mountain Rescue England & Wales and UKSAR. It was the Police that arranged insurance cover against death or personal injury for team members. This insurance cover is still activated for training exercises and for search and rescue operations. Guidance for the level of insurance cover is set by the Association of Chief Police Officers' Emergency Procedures Group.

Initially the ASSRT was known as the Avon and Somerset Cliff Rescue Team. It was formed some 30 years ago when the Rocks Rescue Team of the Bristol Constabulary was disbanded and it has worked closely with the Police since that time. The team changed its name recently in order to reflect its wider capabilities. The Avon and Somerset Constabulary was formed in 1974. The Bristol Constabulary was one of the constituent Forces.

THE LEGAL BASIS

The Civil Contingencies Act of 2004 places certain duties on Category One Responders to work with the voluntary sector, including building them into planning, training and exercising in order to respond to emergencies as appropriate.

The Police have a duty at Common Law to protect life and property. Traditionally the Police co-ordinate search and rescue activities on land that is above the high water mark.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND WORKING PRACTICES

The Police

The Police will provide insurance cover (as described above) for team members when

- a they are engaged in training exercises which have been notified to the Police in advance.
- b when they are involved in search and rescue operations at the request of the Police.

This insurance cover for death and personal injury will also operate when team members are responding at the request of either the Avon Fire and Rescue Service, the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, the Great Western Ambulance Service or the South Western Ambulance NHS Trust, so long as the Police are notified before team members are deployed. The cover will also apply in situations where the teams respond at the request of the Police to an incident outside the Avon and Somerset area, so long as the Avon and Somerset Constabulary has been notified before deployment.

The Police will co-ordinate the response in large scale search and rescue operations and will provide logistical support where appropriate. The police will also co-ordinate the response to the media in such operations and will lead in the debrief process where appropriate.

The Police will from time to time, plan and implement exercises which will involve the ASSRT and other agencies and the Police will also make available certain items of surplus equipment and vehicles as appropriate. Where members of the ASSRT require welfare support as a result of their participation in a search and rescue operations, this will be provided by the Police with the agreement of the team member. From time to time, the Police will arrange and chair a Blue Lights and Volunteer Rescue Team Working Group to

- i discuss matters of mutual interest and
- ii to resolve any inter-agency issues.

The Avon and Somerset Search and Rescue Team

The ASSRT will endeavour to provide a 24-hour response for 365 days a year. This response will include the following –

- a Cliff rescue and rescue from high and difficult locations, such as high structures, bridges, tower cranes etc.
- b Land search for missing persons and assistance with search management.

- c Searches of water margins – that is the edges of ponds, lakes, ditches etc
Note – this does not include any water borne activity (other than that which may be required to effectively facilitate a, b or c).

Team members will always drive safely to an incident and in accordance with the Highway Code and will endeavour to arrive within a reasonable amount of time. The ASSRT will ensure that the appropriate vehicle insurance is in place.

Training and equipment will be to recognised standards and to regulatory requirements where these exist. The ASSRT will advise the ASC of their training programmes, Standard Operating Procedures together with their management structure and call-out details.

When engaged in either training or as part of the response to an incident, team members will work under the direction of their managers. The ASSRT will use its own expertise and will be responsible for conducting a risk assessment of all activities and to reduce any identified risk to a minimum. The team's activities will at all times reflect the requirements and/or the spirit and intention of Health and Safety legislation.

In situations where team members become aware of the personal details of those persons who have been the subject of search and rescue operations, they will deal with that and all other incident information sensitively and in confidence.

Signed on behalf of Avon and Somerset Constabulary

..... Date.....

Signed on behalf of Avon and Somerset Search and Rescue Team

..... Date.....

Prepared by David Jones
Avon and Somerset Constabulary
26 September 2007