

VERMONT SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL
2015 SEARCH AND RESCUE REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

MISSION STATISTICS

In 2015 the Vermont Department of Public Safety was notified of 100 incidents meeting the definition of “search and rescue” as per Title 20: Chapter 112, Subchapter 002, § 1841. 50 of these incidents resulted in a SAR response, and 51 were notifications only that were resolved before VSP SAR resources responded.

The types of subjects who were lost were as follows:

SUBJECT CATEGORY	# SAR RESPONSE	# NOTIFY/MONITOR	TOTAL
HIKING	10	18	28
SKIING/ALPINE	6	12	18
WANDERING	11	4	15
DESPONDENT	5	3	8
SKIING/NORDIC	6	1	7
RUNAWAY	1	5	6
OTHER/UNCLASSIFIED	4	1	5
WATER/BOATING	1	3	4
ATV/DIRTBIKE	2	1	3
VEHICLE	2	0	2
SNOWMOBILING	1	1	2
HUNTING	1	0	1
BIKING	1	1	2

A map showing the geographic distribution of these incidents is attached as Appendix A.

Of the above incidents, 5 resulted in fatalities. 1 is a suspected homicide, 1 was the result of a cardiac event while hunting, 2 are presumed suicides and 1 was a drowning. There is also one subject who suffered from dementia, was reported missing from her residence in Andover, and has not to date been located despite extensive search efforts.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Much of the SAR Coordinator's time in 2015 was focused on improving cooperation and coordination between all of Vermont's search and rescue partners through outreach and education.

Some highlights are listed below:

- Quarterly meetings of the Vermont Search and Rescue Working Group (15-25 people at each meeting,)
- Continue to conduct search and rescue orientation talks and more advanced training for fire departments, EMS agencies, specialized SAR groups and LEPCs around the State.
- Conducted land navigation training to F&W game wardens in their Southern and Northwest Districts (2 days each).
- Conducted and attended several SAR trainings for first responders in the Richmond/Huntington/Camel's Hump area.
- Did written and verbal outreach with all Vermont Ski Patrols, spoke at the annual Patrol Director's Meeting, and presented at seasonal orientation for the Bromley Ski Patrol.
- Worked with the US Forest Service in developing a SAR plan for a newly developed backcountry ski system of trails in Rochester.
- Met with Vermont National Guard aviation unit and Civil Air Patrol regarding cooperation for use of aviation resources to assist in search and rescue.
- Wrote an annual column in the Green Mountain Club "Long Trail News" membership newsletter on search and rescue. This reviews a selection of incidents where hikers required SAR assistance, and gives tips on safe backcountry travel.
- Advocated for and worked closely with the State EMS Medical Director on changes to Vermont's EMS protocols to better reflect current standards in backcountry EMS care.
- Presented at the annual Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference on the state's search and rescue program.
- Attended the national State SAR Coordinator's meeting and National SAR Conference in Colorado.

HIKE SAFE PROGRAM

The Vermont Dept. of Public Safety entered into an MOU with the US Forest Service and New Hampshire Fish & Game for use of the hikeSAFE public education program in Vermont. Meetings with Vermont stakeholders— Green Mtn. Club, US Forest Service and Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation were held to plan for implementation in 2016.

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

Introduction to search and rescue training is required of all newly certified law enforcement officers in Vermont. The SAR coordinator presented this class 9 times in 2015, primarily at the Academy in Pittsford, but also regionally in Windsor and Windham counties to a total of over 200 police officers.

SAR DATABASE

The State continues to use DisasterLan to track qualified search and rescue resources. The database is kept up to date by the SAR Coordinator as part of his duties. The process for inclusion of EMS agencies was formalized in 2015.

VERMONT STATE POLICE SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

2015 saw almost a doubling of involvement in SAR events from 2014. As mentioned above, 50 involved a response by at least one SAR team member, and another 50 were monitored and either handled by local resources or resolved before a response was initiated. In all cases a SAR team manager was notified and assured that an appropriate response to the incident took place.

The training program for the team this year was focused on improving SAR skills, including land navigation and computer mapping, grid searching, UTV operations, search management and lost person behavior. Having only 8 days/year allocated for training continues to create some challenges for adequate training opportunities to attain and maintain proficiency in all SAR skill areas.

The team received funding through the Homeland Security Grant Program to purchase some much needed new equipment and clothing for the team, most of which was identified in last year's report as being a need. New shell pants and jackets, insulated jackets and new GPS units were purchased and distributed to team members.

SUMMARY

There continues to be steady progress in 2015. SAR response and coordination seems to be going very well, with much positive feedback being received from the public and SAR partners. While VSP is disappointed with the one open case remaining from July, all other missions concluded with successful outcomes. The SAR Coordinator again has had personal contact with close to 1,000 first responders in the State, and several of the goals established at the beginning of the year were achieved (improved protective clothing for the VSP SAR team and providing more advanced SAR training to various organizations around the State). Public education and outreach efforts continue, and the Council looks forward to implementation of the hikeSAFE program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council encourages and supports ongoing efforts for preventative search and rescue (PSAR), and in particular would like to see financial support of the hikeSafe program. It is estimated that the cost for 250 trailhead signs is \$1000, which would be a small investment toward keeping the public safe and avoiding the need for search and rescue.

This report was reviewed and approved by the Search and Rescue Council at its meeting on January 26, 2016.

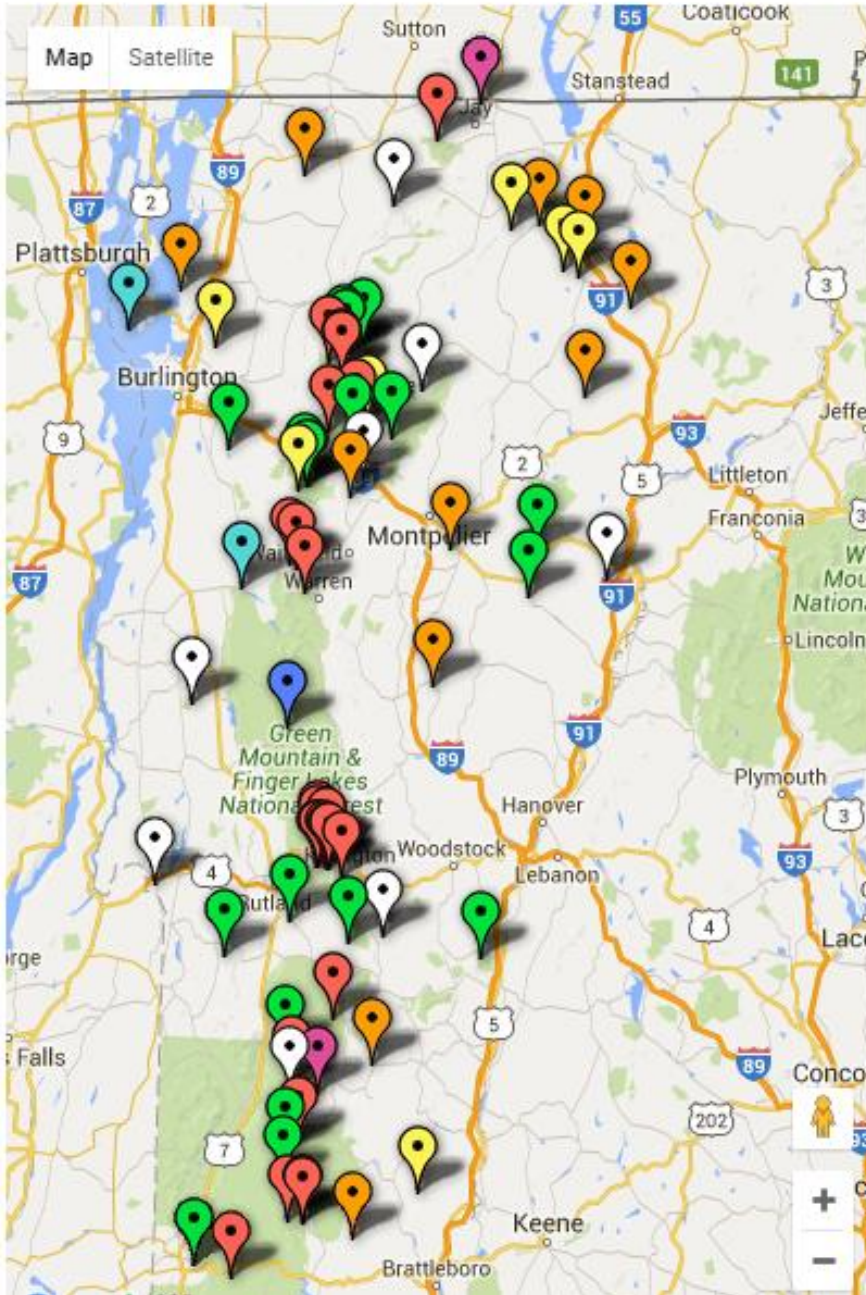
Respectfully submitted,



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Peg Doheny (Ski Patrol Representative)
Drew Hazelton (Volunteer SAR Representative)
Derek Libby (Professional Firefighter Representative)
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Lt. George Scribner (Fish & Wildlife Representative)
Neil Van Dyke (SAR Coordinator)

APPENDIX A - GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF 2015 SAR CALLS

2015 Search & Rescue Incidents



	DESPONDENT
	HIKING
	HUNTING
	RUNAWAY
	SKIING
	SNOWMOBILE
	UNCLASSIFIED
	WANDERING
	WATER/BOAT