

VERMONT SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL
2016 SEARCH AND RESCUE REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

MISSION STATISTICS

In 2016 the Vermont Department of Public Safety was notified of 111 incidents meeting the definition of “search and rescue” as per Title 20: Chapter 112, Subchapter 002, § 1841. 36 of these incidents resulted in a Vermont State Police SAR response, and 50 were notifications only that were resolved before VSP SAR resources responded.

The types of subjects who were lost were as follows:

SUBJECT CATEGORY	# TEAM RESPONSE	# NOTIFY/MONITOR	TOTAL
HIKING	14	33	47
WANDERING	5	14	15
OTHER/UNCLASSIFIED	3	6	9
DESPONDENT	6	2	8
RUNAWAY	3	4	7
HUNTING	2	4	6
SKIING/ALPINE	1	4	5
WATER/BOATING	0	4	4
VEHICLE	0	3	3
SKIING/NORDIC	2	0	2
CLIMBING	0	1	1

Of the above incidents, 10 resulted in fatalities. 6 are presumed suicides, 1 fell through the ice on Lake Champlain, 1 was a fall from heights, 1 was a drowning and 1 a missing person from St. Johnsbury who was located deceased in the woods. There is also one subject who is missing in the Waterbury area and presumed despondent and deceased. The investigation and limited searching is ongoing in that case. The highest profile and most rewarding search of 2016 was finding a lost hunter in Holland who had been missing for four days.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Outreach continues to be a focus of the SAR Coordinator's time in 2016, though a bit less than in previous years as many departments and organizations have already received a search and rescue orientation and basic training.

Some highlights are listed below:

- Quarterly meetings of the Vermont Search and Rescue Working Group.
- September training organized by the SAR Working Group in Randolph with 35 participants.
- Continue to conduct search and rescue orientation talks and more advanced training for fire departments, EMS agencies, and specialized SAR groups around the State.
- Conduct SAR training to all seasonal Green Mtn. Club employees.
- Continued outreach with all Vermont Ski Patrols, and conducted joint training with Jay Peak.
- Assisted in organizing a two day joint training with Civil Air Patrol.
- Continue writing a 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.

HIKESAFE PROGRAM

This preventative hiker safety program was fully implemented in 2016, with cooperation from the US Forest Service, Vermont Forests Parks & Recreation and the Green Mountain Club. Funding was procured for manufacturing trailhead signage which is being placed in many locations around Vermont.

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

Introduction to search and rescue training is required of all newly certified law enforcement officers in Vermont. The SAR coordinator continues to present this class on a regular basis.

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.

VERMONT STATE POLICE SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

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. Four new team members were brought on at the end of the year (to replace four who had left the team).

The team received some funding through the Homeland Security Grant Program to purchase a few remaining critical items for the VSP SAR team. The team is now properly outfitted for effective and safe operation with relatively minor needs going forward.

SUMMARY

Responses to lost and missing persons in Vermont's backcountry now seems to be working very smoothly. There are still occasions when the notification process gets delayed or bogged down for a bit, but those are rare and have been quickly rectified. Relationships between all of the various SAR parties and partners around the state seem to be positive and cooperative resulting in many successful SAR operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

When the SAR Council was established it was done so with a 6/30/17 date to be repealed. The Council would like to recommend to extend the term of the Council for another 4-year period (6/20/21) and to change the number of required meetings from quarterly to three times per year. The chair should continue to have the ability call additional meetings if needed.

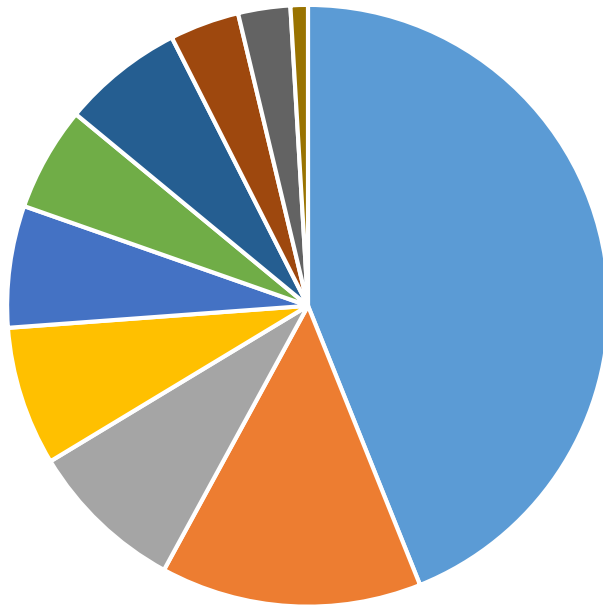
This report was reviewed and approved by the Search and Rescue Council at its meeting on January 24, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marge Fish".

Marge Fish, Chair (Public Representative)
Peg Doheny (Ski Patrol Representative)
Drew Hazelton (Volunteer SAR Representative)
Derek Libby (Professional Firefighter Representative)
Lt. Matthew Nally (VSP SAR Team Leader)
Maj. George Scribner (Fish & Wildlife Representative)
Neil Van Dyke (SAR Coordinator)

2016 SEARCH & RESCUE NOTIFICATIONS BY TYPE



- HIKING
- WANDERING
- OTHER
- DESPONDENT
- RUNAWAY
- HUNTING
- SKIING
- WATER
- VEHICLE
- CLIMBING

2016 SEARCH & RESCUE NOTIFICATIONS BY MONTH

