

## OQ Emergency and Search Procedures

**A copy of these procedures should be laminated and made available at all events (eg: clubs should maintain a copy with equipment and each event organiser should ensure they have a copy).**

It is essential that ONE person coordinate a search. If there is no predetermined “search coordinator” the Event Organiser, Controller and/or Course Planner should designate one as soon as the possible requirement is recognised.

### 1. When to Commence a Search

If a competitor (especially an early starter) is reported overdue, the Search Coordinator shall decide in view of the course length, weather conditions, time overdue and particularly the age and experience of the competitor, if an early search should commence. The Search Coordinator will be particularly influenced in this decision if the number of competitors on the course is low, or if the report is made after the last start time and no further competitors are going out on the course. In this regard it is important for Finish officials to monitor overdue competitors and to inform the Search Coordinator of any concerns at the earliest reasonable time.

A search must, at the latest, be commenced ONE HOUR after the nominated time for control pick-up/course closure, though a shorter time must be considered for a late starting event, cold wet conditions, overcast etc. It should be understood that the mounting of a search then has priority over the normal closure of an event eg: removal of tents etc.

### 2. Initial Procedure

If the Search Coordinator has determined a search must commence before course closure, or if any participants have not returned when it is nearly course closure time, they must

- Ensure that sufficient experienced persons remain at the event should a search be required.
- Advise people designated to collect controls of any people known to be still out after course closure.
- Ascertain and check that the participant has not returned, and a search is warranted by:
  1. Double checking start lists with finish lists
  2. Checking with family, friends and colleagues
  3. Calling participant’s phone/mobile phone if available
  4. Checking whether car has gone
- Gather as much information as possible about the participant and collate on “*Search and Rescue Log*”.
- Obtain a copy of the course and compare actual completion times and estimated completion time for the participant. Ensure sufficient maps available for searchers.
- Narrow the possible search area by asking if anyone has seen the participant while competing.
- Consider likely points of error/hazards and estimate likely distance travelled.
- Consider likely perimeters that the participant might have made their way to if lost-bordering roads, tracks etc.
- If SportIdent is being used, it is possible to establish from the SI units on their course which controls were last visited. Retain the services of a SI expert to carry out this task once SI stations have been collected.

- Consider daylight remaining .
- Commence “*Search and Rescue Log*” (Appendix 5).

### 3. **Essential Preparations for Search**

- Locate a search base (eg. event tent, vehicle) to which all searchers will report.
- Plan search (See Preliminary Search Section). • Search personnel identified and assembled (preferably six).
- Appoint search team leaders (preferably three).
- Brief leaders and other search personnel. (see Briefing section)
- Record names of all searchers.
- Control Collectors who are not working in search area should also be provided with all relevant information and their names and planned locations also recorded
- If mobile phone reception is available, set up a mobile network (swap numbers) between the search base and as many of the search teams as possible.
- Ensure base remains staffed.
- Record all search actions on “*Search and Rescue Log*” (Appendix 5).
- Event organiser to provide emergency contact information to search coordinator

### 4. **Preliminary Search**

Suggested search pattern:

Team 1: Perimeter and road search (by vehicle) - maintained until an agreed time unless advised.

Divide map into sectors and allot vehicles to accessible tracks in each sector.

Team 2: Sweep of the course of missing person in direction of course following likely route choices and 'possible' areas, or on basis of any reported sightings. Report back to search base on completion.

Team 3: Sweep of course of missing person in reverse direction and 'probable' areas. Report back to search base on completion.

If the event is using full SportIdent the information on the control units can be used to determine the last control that the lost person(s) visited.

### 5. **Briefing**

Details to be covered:

- Information relevant to the missing person –name, age, sex, clothing, fitness, medical conditions, time out on course, experience
- Area to be searched – have maps prepared
- Recommended search pattern.
- Allocated time for initial search.
- Command and communication system.
- Any special instructions.
- Searchers must be advised that any effects found and suspected of belonging to the lost participant must not be touched or relocated but their position carefully noted and reported (should search dogs be used at a later stage).

- Searchers should be instructed to pause frequently, looking ahead, back and side to side while using voice, calling out person's name. Searchers should not use whistles to avoid confusion except as directed in the two points below.
- Instruct teams that, in the event of finding a participant and requiring further assistance, use normal whistle call for help: 6 one second whistle blasts at one second intervals; repeated at one minute intervals.
- If search is over, or called off, then use 10 short whistle blasts every minute.
- Each team must carry water, and an emergency first aid kit (at least a compression bandage), and extra clothing or space blanket, and possibly a torch in winter.
- If participant is found and cannot be moved, at least one searcher remains with participant, and one reports to the search base.
- All searchers must return to the search base by the predetermined time.
- The recommended signal for searchers to return to base is 10 short blasts of a car horn every 1 to 2 minutes.
- The search procedure remains in place until the lost participant is accounted for and all searchers have reported back.

#### 6. **Termination of Search**

The search will be terminated on the recovery of the missing person. If the initial search fails to locate the missing person, the search co-ordinator must re-assess the situation and decide to extend the initial search and/or inform the police.

#### 7. **Extension of Search**

The Search Co-ordinator shall take the following into consideration when determining when to contact the police:

1. Daylight remaining
2. Amount of time search has taken so far.
3. If the participant has been found and is injured.

If the Event Search Co-ordinator decides to take this step, (s)he shall:

1. Notify the police that a search is required.
2. Notify an available emergency contact for the missing participant (eg. home telephone number)
3. Ensure that all information is on hand and up to date for the briefing of the police
4. Support the search as required by the police.

#### 8. **Police Search**

1. On arrival of the police, the Search Co-ordinator provides all recorded information and gives a verbal report to the police.
2. Police assume full control of search from that point.
3. Co-ordinator co-operates with police, and if requested helps organise search personnel and resources from orienteering members.

## 9. Contact Numbers

In the case of serious injury or the need to organise a police search the following phone numbers are used. For serious injury or life threatening situation: **Dial 000**

You will be directed to the emergency service you require. Be ready to provide **VERY CLEAR** directions on how to get to the area. Consider arranging for an experienced Orienteer to meet emergency service personnel at an easy place to find if there is any possible confusion where they should go.

For police assistance: **131 444** or emergency contact phone numbers relevant to the map area determined by the event organiser prior to the event.

## 10. Aftermath

As soon as possible after the search, the Search Coordinator shall prepare a report detailing procedures actually undertaken, reasons for extraordinary actions taken and any other considered relevant information. This report must be submitted to organising body (club or OQ).

If applicable, after consideration by the responsible club, the report should be provided to the OQ Executive Committee.