



MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION PACK

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West Mercia Search & Rescue

Charity No: 1122651

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION PACK

Please take the time to read carefully all of the following information; you should also give consideration as to whether or not you are able to give the commitment required.

To become a member of WMSAR requires a significant commitment of your time and effort. Any application to the team should not be taken without due thought and respect for your family / spouse / partner / employer etc.

We strongly advise all applicants to visit the team to fully understand what is required of individuals and to talk to the membership secretary.

INTRODUCTION:

WMSAR is a voluntary organisation which works in partnership with the Police, Fire and Rescue Services, Ambulance Services and other Statutory Agencies.

It is a formally recognised Civil Contingency Responder under national frameworks.

WMSAR is dedicated to the search, location and recovery of any person in need of help either in water or in Lowland areas. Mountainous terrain response is covered by mountain rescue.

WMSAR is a registered charity, and a member of the Association of Lowland Search and Rescue (ALSAR); the governing body for all Lowland Search and Rescue teams, and a DEFRA National Flood Resource team. Primarily we operate throughout the counties of Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire, but we offer and provide support to other SAR teams in adjacent counties/areas and to the DEFRA Flood Rescue National Enhancement Project (FRNEP).

WMSAR operates an as-needed intake for new members; you will be advised of the next date after you have indicated that you can comply with the commitment required.

We welcome volunteers from all walks of life, regardless of skills as full training will be given. However, you must be able to meet the following requirements:

- Must be willing to abide by the WMSAR constitution, rules, regulations, policies and procedures;
- Be able to sign a commitment contract to the team;
- Be in good health;
- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be reasonably fit and able to walk 5 miles in under 2 hours over mixed terrain carrying your personal kit (assessed annually);
- Be willing to attend an interview with the Membership Secretary and another member of the WMSAR Executive. WMSAR reserve the right to refuse membership without reason;
- Have your own driving licence and unhindered access to a motor vehicle;
- Have a mobile telephone which has reception at places you frequently visit (home, work etc.) remains charged, switched on and accessible at all times, and that you are able to answer whenever possible ;
- You will require a private email address and unrestricted access to it (for team communications);
- Able to attend 50% of weekly training events.
- Able to attend some fundraising and team promotional events held throughout the year, largely at weekends (fundraising is the only means for team to move forward and survive);
- Have a CRB/DBS certificate; See also CRB/DBS section below. If you have a criminal conviction you maybe considered but will require a further interview to discuss.

AIMS OF WMSAR:

Our principle aims are to provide a 24 hour per day, 365 days per year cover for an emergency call out team to assist:

- West Mercia Police (and other Police forces nationally) with searching for missing persons in rural and urban areas.
- Fire and Rescue Services across the regions of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and the West Midlands Conurbation with 999 Water Rescue.
- National Flood response under the National Flood Response Coordination Centre (NFRCC – London Fire Brigade)
- Other Category 1 Emergency Services in whichever way we can;
- The Local Resilience Forums with cross country transport and medical assistance to casualties in areas where normal land based ambulances cannot reach. Backup to the emergency services conducting evacuations due to inclement weather, terrorist attacks or for any other events they request. 4x4 vehicles to provide cross country and on road transport for members of the emergency services and voluntary sector personnel including their equipment.

WMSAR ORGANISATION:

WMSAR, the Charity, is managed by Trustees who are elected annually by members.

The operational team is managed by an Operational Management Team (OMT).

CHARITY MEMBERSHIP:

Once prospective members have attended an introduction evening, signed and returned the Standard Operating Procedures and Commitment Contract, and applied for a Disclosure & Barring Service check for the Charity, they may be invited to become a Probationary Member for 3 months.

Probationary Members are not members of the Charity, and have no voting rights at meetings. This period is designed to allow the Probationary Member to become involved with the team, and get a better understanding of the commitment required. But moreover it is designed to allow the Trustees to thoroughly assess potential Charity Members for commitment, character, and any issues which could conceivably become a problem.

At the end of these three months, the Trustees will vote to Accept, Reject or Defer for a period of time (i.e. extend the probationary period for members with poor attendance, temporary ill health or other good reason) the Charity Membership of an individual, in line with the Charity Constitution.

If Membership is Accepted, you will become a Trainee Member, with voting rights at general meetings of the charity. The word Trainee, in this case, is a reference to Operational Status and is used to reinforce that Operational Status and Charity Membership are mutually exclusive. Only Members of the Charity can become Operational – Probationary Members cannot.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS:

For the safety of yourself, other team members and the public it is paramount and thus it is a requirement that the Operations Officer is made aware of ANY medical condition(s) which may affect your ability to fulfil your role. This information may be shared with the Search Managers or Team Leaders if it is likely to have a bearing on your safety.

Similarly you MUST declare any serious life threatening illness or condition past or present. (These may not exclude you from operational aspects)

Our work regularly brings us into contact with contaminated water and so we ask (insist) you to have all vaccinations up to date. These include Hep A & B, Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio.

TRAINING:

Trainees will be expected to attend at least 50% of training sessions. Some core courses are compulsory in order to become an active crew member and competence is required to be maintained. Operational status will be granted by the Operations Officer as, and when members have been assessed as competent in all subjects, and can be revoked for non-attendance or lack of competence at any time.

Training is organised on a regular basis and all members are required to participate in the core subjects/courses. As far as possible they are conducted locally but it may be necessary to travel out of the immediate area.

Supplementary to our training, the Emergency Services insist on regular exercises. As well as refreshing our skills, these events enable members to get to know each other and sometimes members of the Emergency Services. These exercises are normally held within our operational area.

QUALIFICATIONS and SKILLS:

We welcome volunteers from all walks of life, regardless of skills as full training will be given. If you decide to join then it is very useful for you to include any skills /experience/ qualifications that you may have e.g. involvement with outdoor pursuits, First Aid organisations, Emergency Services, Police, Military, other Rescue Services, Radio Operations, Training Skills, and Team leadership etc.

Just as important are the skills of Marketing, Public Relations and dealing with the media, Fund Raising and Sponsorship, Graphic design, IT etc. The more we know, the better the use of your skills can be made. We strive to develop excellence in our our skills and would be interested to hear from anyone with existing expertise in search dogs, technical/high rope work, swiftwater work etc

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING or POLICE SERVICE CHECK:

A security check is compulsory for all members and a failure to produce or submit to one will make your position in the team untenable. The Trustees will assess each volunteer on a case by case basis if you have any issues with CRB or DBS, but since the Charity deals with vulnerable persons, we reserve the right to refuse membership where a conviction has been indicated or admitted. You must provide WMSAR with a copy of your DBS check as soon as it has been sent to you.

DONATIONS:

If after reading this you decide not to join us, we would be grateful for any donation large or small. These can be made by cheque or postal order sent to the address below and made payable to; 'West Mercia Search and Rescue'.

INSURANCE:

WMSAR crew are trained to internationally recognised standards. Crew are covered by appropriate insurance at all times they are operating in an official capacity. However, we would like to advise you that you are responsible for insuring your own person, personal equipment, personal vehicle and its contents.

You are strongly advised to inform your car insurer that you are a member of WMSAR so that in the event of an accident to or from a callout, your insurer is aware of all of your circumstances. You are not insured under the WMSAR policy until you are either on scene or at base.

BLUE LIGHTS and SIRENS

WMSAR do not drive on blue lights or two tones unless instructed by the Police to do so.

WMSAR do not allow members to use the WMSAR logo on private vehicles without authority. Small stickers and alike showing support for WMSAR acceptable, as is display of the Lowland Rescue member's sticker by full Members.

The usual rules of the road apply and you are expected to comply with these. We are not allowed to break the speed limit even when on an urgent callout.

ID CARDS:

On joining as a Trainee Member (post probation) you will be issued with an ID card. This remains the property of WMSAR and must be returned when you leave the Team. A digital photograph will be taken for our records and ID card.

NEXT OF KIN:

We are required to hold Next of Kin details by the Emergency Services. This information is solely for use in the unlikely event of an Emergency.

Training and Commitment Contract Details

Please see the last 2 pages of this document for a contract which all prospective members must sign

PREAMBLE

The purpose of West Midlands Search & Rescue (WMSAR) training is to develop your mental, physical and emotional abilities as a Search and Rescue team member to enable you to become a competent WMSAR team member.

Whilst WMSAR recognises that all members act upon a voluntary basis, in order to become a competent team member certain personal sacrifices must be made. Sacrifices show a commitment towards the WMSAR training and the WMSAR team. These commitments include:

- To work consistently towards higher individual techniques and team goals;
- Complete dedication to the team as a whole;
- Wholehearted participation in training sessions and callouts;
- Obtaining the requisite number of credits or points in order to be an active crew member as decided by the executive committee

ATTENDANCE

You will use your best endeavours to be present at all training sessions and team callouts. You agree to inform WMSAR if you are unavailable for training or callouts at the earliest opportunity on our D4H online system.

ATTITUDE

As WMSAR works closely with the emergency services, you must always exhibit a positive and professional attitude. You must agree to abide by the rules and regulations of WMSAR and any other relevant governing body at all times

RESPONSIBILITY

You agree to act responsibly and not bring WMSAR into disrepute. You agree that WMSAR cannot be held responsible for any actions you take as an individual.

KIT

You agree to reasonably maintain any and all WMSAR kit that you may be issued with.

WMSAR reserve the right to recall any kit at any time. If WMSAR recall kit, you agree to deliver this up to WMSAR at the earliest opportunity. You agree to pay for kit that WMSAR deem is damaged unreasonably. You understand that WMSAR own all kit at all times unless kit is purchased privately.

PRIVACY

You agree not to discuss or disclose any information deemed of a confidential nature with any person outside WMSAR. You agree not to contact the media (including all forms of social media or social networking) about training or callouts involving WMSAR. You agree not to discuss any element of training or callouts with any person who is not a member of WMSAR.

You agree to uphold the confidentiality of WMSAR at all times and understand that you may see or hear matters of a confidential nature.

All callouts are highly confidential and you agree to respect patient confidentiality at all times.

MISCELLANEOUS

Participation in WMSAR training is costly and should be treated as a privilege.

Becoming a member of WMSAR involves a great deal of commitment and if you agree to this contract you will be expected to adhere to these principles and policies and realise that they crucial to a sound team. Failure to follow these principles and policies may result in disciplinary action, suspension or exclusion from WMSAR.

FUNDRAISING

WMSAR is a voluntary organisation. Nobody is paid and we do not receive any direct government funding. Fund raising is a vital activity and all members are expected to play their part by attending collection days, shows, fun days etc. throughout the year. The minimum commitment for attendance of Fundraising days will vary, dependent on need, but you must agree to abide by it.

It has been calculated that to keep WMSAR afloat through the year, the amount spent on running costs are considerable, the basic cost is in excess of £15,000 a year. This covers costs such as liability insurance, maintenance costs, kit replacement etc

If you have any fundraising ideas, please let a member of your team know.

GENERAL INFORMATION

TRIM – TRAUMA INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

You must remember that not every search results in finding a live person. We often have to deal with the deceased. We have expert counsellors in place if you need to speak to somebody about what you may have seen or heard.

CALLOUTS WHILST TRAINING

Should we have a live callout whilst you are training, you will only be able to attend as an observer until a team leader arrives on scene to take command. West Mercia Police does not allow any untrained volunteers onto a live search site.

FORUM AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA

WMSAR use social media such as twitter, facebook and D4H. You will be given access to these in due course. Everybody is expected to log into D4H at least once a week to keep updated with news, events and upcoming fundraising.

Whereas we recognise the value of Social Media as a communication tool, it can also inadvertently act as a channel for 'sensitive' information, which may cause undue distress or upset to family members or relations of a casualty or those involved in an incident. No details of call out or our organisations involvement will be permitted on either the WMSAR account or personal accounts without the express permission of the Chair person. You must abide by the Social Media Guidelines which form part of the SOP, and by the Code of Conduct.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO NOW....?

PRACTICALS

- Before jointing WMSAR, ensure you can meet the commitment requirements needed
- Ensure you are fit and healthy – let us know of any medical conditions
- Let us know of any special skills you have and can bring to the team
- Attend our monthly meetings
- Check our groupspaces website for events and fundraising
- Ensure your details of the team contact sheet are correct
- Find out who your mentor will be
- Ensure you have enough credits to be considered for “live” searches
- Read over (via groupspaces) our risk assessments and grievance procedure
- Read over (via groupspaces) our child protection and vulnerable adults policy

PAPER PUSHING...

1. Provide us with a copy of your driving licence and two utility bills
2. Complete the CRB/DBS form and hand this in
3. Sign the declaration to say that you have read and understood the SOP and hand this in
4. Sign the training and team commitment contract and hand this in

Finally, please enjoy being a member of West Mercia Search and Rescue!

WMSAR Standard Operating Procedure

You are required to read through the SOP and sign a declaration to confirm your understanding of the SOP and confirm that you are happy to abide by this at all times.

You need to sign the signature sheet below and hand this in to us.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – Signature Sheet

I confirm that I have read and understood the WMSAR Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

I (Name)..... have read and fully understand the content of the SOP document and will abide by its instructions at all times whilst on duty with WMSAR

Signed.....

Date.....

Print.....

West Mercia Search & Rescue (WMSAR)

Training & Team Commitment Contract

This Agreement is made on (date):.....

BETWEEN:

West Mercia Search & Rescue (WMSAR)

-and-

Name In Full:.....

Declaration: I confirm that I have read and understood the WMSAR training and team commitment contract terms set out below.

I agree to commit to the minimum training attendance in order to build and maintain competence in SAR practice.

And I agree to attend the minimum required number of Fundraising events per year, as directed by the Trustees.

Signed: