



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command

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Air Force Rescue Coordination Center

Mission

As the United States' inland search and rescue (SAR) coordinator, the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) serves as the single agency responsible for coordinating on-land federal SAR activities in the 48 contiguous United States, Mexico and Canada.

Located at Langley Air Force Base, Va., the AFRCC operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The center directly ties in to the Federal Aviation Administration's alerting system and the U.S. Mission Control Center. In addition to the Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking information, the AFRCC computer system contains resource files that list federal and state organizations, which can conduct or assist in SAR efforts throughout North America.

When a distress call is received, the center investigates the request, coordinates with federal, state, and local officials, and determines the type and scope of response necessary. Once verified as an actual distress situation, the AFRCC requests support from the appropriate federal SAR force. This may include Civil Air Patrol, U.S. Coast Guard, or other Department of Defense assets, as needed. State agencies can be contacted for state, local, or civil SAR resource assistance within their jurisdiction. The AFRCC chooses the rescue force based on availability and capability of forces, geographic location, terrain, weather conditions, and urgency of the situation.

During ongoing SAR missions, the center serves as the communications hub and provides coordination and assistance to on-scene commanders or mission coordinators in order to recover the mission's objective in the safest and most effective manner possible. AFRCC uses state-of-the-art technology including a network of satellites for monitoring emergency locator transmitter signals. Systems such as these help reduce the critical time required to locate and recover people in distress.

The AFRCC also formulates and manages SAR plans, agreements and policies throughout the continental United States. Additionally, it presents a mobile Search Management Course to Civil Air Patrol wings throughout the United States, to produce qualified incident commanders thus improving national SAR capability.

The AFRCC also assigns instructors to the National SAR School at the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Training Center, Yorktown, Va. The instructors teach the Inland Search and Rescue Class throughout the United States and at many worldwide military locations. This joint school is designed for civilian and military personnel from federal, state, local and volunteer organizations, all of who are responsible for SAR mission planning.

Search and rescue missions include a variety of missions: searches for lost hunters, hikers, or Alzheimer's patients, sources of emergency locator transmitter signals, and missing aircraft. The center frequently dispatches rescue assets to provide aid and transportation to people needing medical attention in remote or isolated areas, for emergency organ or blood transportation, or for medical evacuations, when civilian resources are not available.

Prior to 1974, the Air Force divided the continental United States into three regions, each with a separate rescue center. In May of that year, the Air Force consolidated the three centers into one facility at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. This provided better coordination of activities, improved communications and economy of operations, and standardized procedures. The newly formed center permitted operations with fewer people, while creating a more experienced staff. In 1993, the AFRCC relocated to Langley Air Force Base, Va., when Air Combat Command assumed responsibility for Air Force peacetime and combat SAR. In October 2003, the AFRCC was realigned under the Air Force Special Operations Command.

Since the center opened in May 1974, missions have resulted in more than 13,500 lives saved.



(Current as of December 2003)