

MARIN COUNTY SEARCH AND RESCUE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Many people have expressed an interest in knowing more about the Marin Search and Rescue Team and what it means to be a member. Typical questions about the applications, interview and membership process and about time commitments are presented below with answers.

General

What does Search and Rescue involve?

Most of our callouts involve wilderness searches in rugged terrain. At times, Marin Search and Rescue responds to searches, through Mutual Aid, throughout the state. A number of those searches occur during extreme weather conditions and at night. This requires members to have above average endurance and to feel comfortable in the great outdoors. Searching can be very rewarding, but also draining, both physically and emotionally. Our unit is also called upon to conduct evidence searches for major crimes, including homicides. Our members are trained in emergency medical systems, rope rescue, map and compass navigation, search techniques, man tracking, etc. These are, however, only a small part of our overall training and operational requirements.

How often are meetings held?

General meetings are on the first and third Monday of each month, and are from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Meetings are cancelled if it coincides with a holiday. Additional meetings are held for members of the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and Mountain Rescue Association (MRA) teams. These additional meetings are optional for general members. Prospective members are invited to attend general meetings.

How much of my time will I need to devote to SAR if I am to be a productive and active member in the unit?

If you already have a busy lifestyle with little free time on your hands, you should probably reconsider joining. While the time commitment varies, you generally can count on spending **one weekend day per month training and the first and third Monday evenings for general meetings**. You will be **on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year**, and should be able to **respond in person to a search callout within one hour**. Your time commitment at a search will be between 12 and 24 hours depending on the location. While we recognize that you will not always be available, your lifestyle, work and other commitments should be somewhat flexible to allow you to participate in searches. **Members are required to attend 50% of the meetings and trainings and 30% of searches** to maintain proficiency in the wide variety of skills needed to be an effective team member. This is also the attendance level required in order to remain as an active member of the unit. As it takes almost a year to train new members, **you must give a two-year commitment to SAR**.

How often would I be called out?

Members of the Search & Rescue unit are the first responders for search emergencies in the County of Marin, carry a pager, and are **on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year**. While we understand that school, work, sport teams, and family commitments are priorities, being a member means making every effort to respond to incident call outs, even if you must leave or not attend a planned event. You may be called or paged for a search when you may be at work, school or anytime during the middle of the night.

Recruitment Process

How old do I have to be to join Marin Search and Rescue?

You must be 14 years of age by the application deadline to apply for membership.

What is important to include in the application?	Include any and all outdoor, SAR-related or leadership experience you may have. You may also describe additional experiences in the essay portion of the application.
What does the interview involve?	All perspective members will be asked several questions by a panel of interviewers. The questions will cover your background, outdoor experience and activities as well as a rescue situational question. The interview will last about twenty minutes.
What are my chances of being accepted into the unit?	Your chances will depend on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, your previous experience, the number of people being interviewed, how you present yourself and the number of new members we are able to accept into the team at the time of the interview.
I can attend most of the scheduled Boot Camp Training dates, but I have a conflict on one of the afternoons. Can I miss part of Boot Camp?	No, you must attend 100% of the Boot Camp Training, without exception. These 50+ hours of intense training will enable you to be mission ready. Most Search and Rescue Teams require months of training before new recruits are eligible for missions. If you are unable to make all the dates we encourage you to reapply at a later date.
Will my background be investigated?	Yes. All prospective members who have been selected after interviews will have a confidential background investigation done by the Marin County Sheriff's Department, including a DMV and criminal history check. For applicants over the age of 18, a Live Scan (fingerprinting) and a Computer Voice Stress Analysis (CVSA) test is also required. There is no cost to the applicant for the background check. It is important to the Sheriff's Department that all members are of sound character and show good judgment in their personal conduct. Members will often be involved in sensitive situations requiring trust and the ability to respect confidentiality. They will also be expected to consistently maintain a personal lifestyle of an upstanding, law-abiding citizen. Note that recent drug use, including medical marijuana, will likely disqualify you. Older drug use situations are considered on a case by case basis.
What are the physical requirements?	You must be physically fit. Physical regulations have been designed to outline the minimum level of physical ability a member must possess in order to be an effective search resource. Many operations will require significantly more agility and strength. Members will be screened to ensure they are able to perform operations beyond minimum requirements.

Training

What kinds of training will I receive?	Over the course of a year, you will receive training in wilderness survival, map, compass and orienteering skills, 40 hours of medical training, man-tracking, search tactics, rope rescue and helicopter operations. New members also receive a full weekend of basic search skills. You will be expected to attend almost all trainings.
I just want to do EMT skills and Communications. Do I have to participate in other activities?	Yes. All members, regardless of age, start at the same rank and have equal access to promotion and responsibility based on attendance and performance. All members must complete the same training requirements and must be prepared to carry out any task assigned during an exercise or search.
Will I have to provide my own personal equipment?	Yes. You will need to purchase (if you do not have them already) good hiking boots, a backpack, rain gear and uniform clothes. A more complete list will be given to you if you are selected as a member. You will be expected to have <u>all equipment after six months</u> . You must have all the above equipment prior to going on searches. The SAR unit will provide such items as radios, patient first aid equipment, rescue equipment, etc. You must have an active cell phone subscription (preferably smartphone) for receiving callout pages.
How often are trainings held?	Twice a month combined with each general meeting there will be a training session.

There is also a monthly training that takes place on the Saturday following the second meeting of the month. These trainings are mandatory. If you participate in USAR or MRA there will also be additional trainings scheduled throughout the year.

Is there a probationary period?

Yes. New members are in a probationary status for the first-six months in the unit. At the end of this period, cadets will be evaluated on attendance, uniform, training, professionalism, and ability to carry out assignments and the ability to work with and get along with other members of the unit. A written test based on your training and an equipment check is also required. Successful completion of this probation period and requirements will result in promotion to full membership.
