

The Call For Help and Activation of EPCSAR

Typically, search and rescue is called in response to a person who is injured, stranded, or lost; someone is calling for help or assistance. These calls almost always take the form of a call to 911. The person who makes the call for help is referred to as the "reporting party" (RP). There may be more than one RP in a given incident. Once EPSO dispatch receives a call that may require EPCSAR response, a page is sent to the coordinator group and the ODC responds to EPSO dispatch. If the situation is a rescue mission, EPSO should page the entire team with the initial call so that members may begin response. Calls for help vary drastically and do not always fall into neat categories. Sometimes the entire team is paged instead of just the coordinator group, and sometimes only the coordinator group receives a call for a rescue. Initial pages may be followed by additional pages with further information, when warranted by the situation. Once the ODC makes contact with EPSO dispatch, another page indicating acknowledgement of the initial page is sent.

The ODC will receive additional information from EPSO dispatch regarding the call. This information may or may not be complete enough to formulate a response. Examples include:

- A call from a subject's cell phone indicating the nature of the incident including extent of injuries and coordinates of the subject, or simply indicating that they are lost.
- A call from an RP who witnessed an incident and is still on scene
- A call from an RP who witnessed an incident or heard a call for help but is not on scene with the subject. (The ability of the RP to provide a location of the subject

may vary widely in these cases.)

- A call from an RP who has received a call from someone who is lost or injured
- A call reporting that someone is overdue. (In these cases, the RP may or may not know the subject's intentions.)
- A call reporting something suspicious – flashing lights on Pikes Peak or something that appears to be a downed aircraft, for example

The ODC will evaluate the information received, and, as necessary and possible, make contact with RP's to gather additional information. The ODC will then take one of the following actions:

- Send a page to the entire team to respond immediately. This page should include a request for drivers for team vehicles, instructions on where to respond (staging), and some indication of the nature of the incident.
- Send a page requesting a limited response, either in number of members or type of resource (e.g., search dogs or 4×4 POVs). Usually the page will request available members to phone the ODC or respond on the radio.
- Send a page placing the team on standby to alert the team that an immediate response page may be imminent. This occurs if the ODC is still gathering information or if the incident appears likely to resolve itself.
- Elect to take no action and send a page indicating that there is no mission. This may occur when the subject is accessible by ambulance, when the situation is outside of El Paso County and another SAR team is responding, or if the call is deemed unfounded, suspicious or inappropriate for EPCSAR.