

Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Search and Rescue

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1 Introduction

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and various state agencies, offer a course, G489, on “Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters”.¹ That course focuses on disasters where possibly thousands of untrained volunteers arrive unannounced at the scene of the disaster expecting to help. If the organizations handling the disaster are unprepared for such contingencies, they can become overrun by a mob, creating “a disaster within a disaster”.

Although the difference between managing a disaster and managing a search for a missing subject is large, the SAR community can learn from a course such as G489.

The purpose of this document is to suggest possible ways to manage large numbers of people who are not affiliated with a SAR organization, but who want to help in a search incident. These “spontaneous volunteers” are usually well motivated and want to help, but if their efforts are not coordinated effectively their presence may be counterproductive and place a strain on managing the SAR incident.

This document is loosely based on the G489 course and other online materials, together with the experiences of SAR personnel in Arizona and Utah.

The process suggested here describes a situation where many Spontaneous Volunteers (SVs) arrive at a SAR incident. However, as with any event using the Incident Command System, this process is flexible, and should expand and contract as the situation dictates.

In this document we think of SVs aiding the search effort in the broadest possible ways, not just by being assigned to the field, but also by helping in non-searching roles in operations, planning, logistics, and finance. It is important to keep this in mind when reading this document.

Volunteers

A volunteer is an individual who, without remuneration, contributes time and services to assist in the accomplishment of a mission. Volunteers can be divided into two broad categories: Affiliated and Unaffiliated Volunteers, often called Spontaneous Volunteers.

Affiliated volunteers are those who are attached to a recognized voluntary agency that has trained them for a SAR incident and has a management structure in place to use them on an incident. They are often covered by workers’ compensation insurance.

Spontaneous Volunteers (SVs) are volunteers who can be local or come from outside the impacted area. They may have skills and may have some training, but they are not currently affiliated with a recognized SAR organization.

In SAR, SVs fall into two categories—those who self-deploy and those who arrive on the scene and want to assist the organized search incident run by professionals. This document concentrates on the latter. However, the former, with usually no search experience, often destroy clues, making the finding of the missing subject by professionals much more difficult.

To quote Aaron Dick: *“One challenge for SAR is that the Spontaneous Volunteers may be on scene before the official responders because family may be out searching and may have recruited other campers or outdoors-people in the area. It is often hard to get your arms around that activity in my experience. I think a missing child case that goes beyond a few hours of ‘official’ response is likely to draw the most spontaneous volunteers and a plan should be in place to manage that issue.”*

If SVs are on scene and searching before the official responders arrive, the SVs should be debriefed before they leave. Most of the time they cannot be contacted while in the field. If they can be contacted, attempts should be made to convince them to return as part of the official search.

There is no consensus in the SAR community as to whether SVs should be used on a search incident. That decision is made by the Incident Commander. However, expect pressure from the family and the community if these volunteers are not used, especially if there are insufficient trained resources available.

If an agency accepts an SV, it is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to ensure the safety of that SV. The goal should be to minimize any risk of harm to the SVs.

To assist in a SAR incident, **all Spontaneous Volunteers must be registered and must be supervised.**

¹When an emergency event is of such great magnitude that it overwhelms a local community’s capacity to respond, the event becomes a disaster.

Advantages in Using SVs

- SVs can be a valuable resource when they are trained and supervised.
- SVs can be used so SAR personnel are freed to go into field.
- After this experience, an SV may become an affiliated volunteer.

Disadvantages in Using SVs

- Typically they are untrained. Searching requires training.
- They are unprepared for the environment.
- They are unfamiliar with command structure.
- They might destroy authentic clues and create false ones.
- They require constant supervision.
- They may be available only for a short time.
- They may have unknown health or physical conditions.
- If used, the agency in charge of the search may be legally liable for their actions and welfare.
- SVs referred to work with vulnerable populations (children, elderly, or people with disabilities) will need background checks.
- SVs, in large numbers and unplanned for, can hinder the incident by entering the search area without the resources they need to sustain themselves. Supplies intended for trained volunteers are then needed for untrained volunteers.
- The failure to use SVs could bring negative publicity to local government.
- They can create a SAR incident within a SAR incident.
- There have been situations where SVs were used who then worked against the agency, even trying to convince the family that a terrible job is being done.

Guidelines for Managing Family Members as SVs

The use of family members as SVs is a special case and the decision of whether or not to use any individual family members must be made by the Incident Commander.

- Family members may be used as guides to particular sites such as showing teams to a fishing camp.
- Family members must be processed as SVs and given clear instructions as to their role.
- Family members should be assigned a “family liaison” to maintain contact between the family and the Incident Commander.
- Family members must not hinder search operations.
- Family members must always be escorted by a family liaison, and, while working in the field, should be under the supervision of a Team Leader.
- Family members should normally not be assigned to search activities.

It may be extremely difficult to keep family members from searching. It may be helpful to encourage them to participate in assignments where they are easily contacted to help authenticate clues (for example, containment/attribution assignments). Another hazard to having family members as searchers is that if they find the subject, and the subject is deceased, they could destroy evidence by handling the deceased subject in their grief.

Guidelines for Managing Organized Groups of SVs

It is possible that an organized group of SVs (for example, a church group, a civic club, a jeep club, ...) may arrive to volunteer for a search. These groups are often involved in humanitarian relief efforts including disaster recovery operations. The advantage to this situation is that the group may have a leadership structure that could make organizing them more efficient.

However, registering a group does not negate the requirement that every SV in the group must meet all background restrictions, the same as every other SV.

It is important that any internal leadership structure is identified and, as much as feasible, teams of volunteers from a group that are assigned to a specific task have a leader from that group to help direct the activities and retain the cohesiveness of the group. These groups, while having some organization, are unlikely to have search experience, but may have other experiences that are useful during a SAR incident.

2 VRC-SAR

VRC-SAR (Volunteer Reception Center—Search and Rescue) is a means of organizing the volunteer response. It is also a location where unaffiliated volunteers are interviewed, data and information are processed and stored, and assignments are made. It is not designed to recruit SVs.

2.1 Where Does VRC-SAR Fit in ICS?

Because the primary job of VRC-SAR is to supply resources, it belongs either in the Supply Unit or as a separate Unit in the Support branch of the Logistics Section. See Figure 1, which shows both options, only one of which is activated at any particular time. So the person in direct charge of VRC-SAR is either a Manager or a Unit Leader.

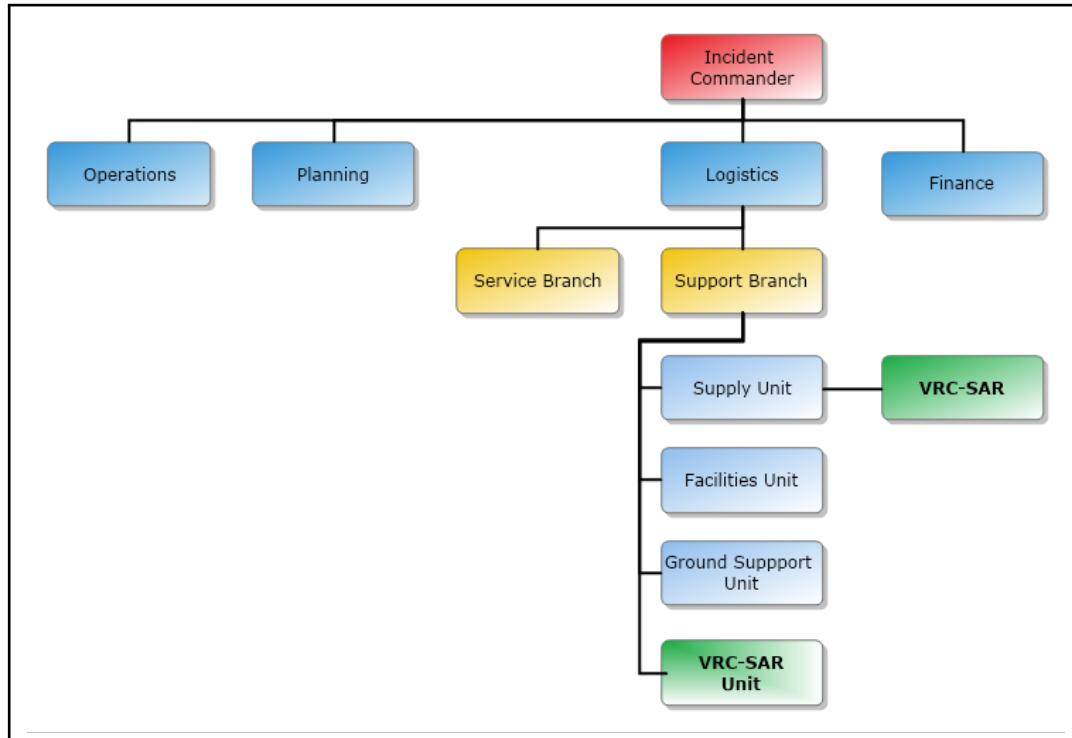


Figure 1: Both options of locating VRC-SAR in ICS

2.2 SVs and the VRC-SAR

There are a number of steps that every SV needs to follow, in strict order, at the VRC-SAR.

1. Enter VRC-SAR.
2. Shown STOP, a document explaining why someone with certain legal problems may not be allowed to participate. See Page 21.
3. Pick up three forms at Registration.
 - (a) Registration form—see Page 22.
 - (b) Waiver form—see Page 23.
 - (c) Volunteer Instructions—see Page 24.
4. Complete registration form and sign waiver.
5. Have forms and photo ID checked.
6. Attend a SAR Presentation where the SVs learn about SAR and what activities an SV might perform in a search incident (Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance, or VRC-SAR).
7. Have their backgrounds checked. Typical things to check for (see Page 21) are:
 - (a) Any felony conviction.

- (b) A conviction of any crime against a child.
- (c) A conviction of a misdemeanor for drugs or controlled substance in the last 5 years.
- (d) A conviction of a misdemeanor for unlawful sexual conduct or physical threat/violence.
- (e) A conviction of a minor crime—other than a traffic violation—that occurred during the last year.
- (f) An outstanding warrant.
- (g) Respondent on a protective order.

8. Be interviewed. Possible questions to ask as Interviewer:

- Why have you decided to volunteer?
- Are you under 18?
- What skills or training do you have which may be useful as a SAR volunteer?
- Do you speak any language other than English?
- What type of volunteer work would you like to do? What are you willing to do?
- Have you ever volunteered for a SAR incident before?
- Do you have your own transportation?
- Do you have any limitations, physical or other, that restrict the type of volunteer work that you can safely perform?
- How long can you volunteer?
- What equipment do you have?
- If volunteering for a field assignment do you have at least the Ten Essentials in a pack?
 - (a) Water.
 - (b) Food.
 - (c) Extra Clothing for the environment.
 - (d) Map, Compass, GPS.
 - (e) Headlamp/Flashlight.
 - (f) First Aid Kit.
 - (g) Shelter Material/Space Blanket.
 - (h) Fire Starting Kit/Matches or Backpacking Stove.
 - (i) Pocket Knife/Multi-tool.
 - (j) Whistle/Signal Mirror.
- Are you related to, or do you know, the missing subject?
- How many hours can you be self-sufficient in the field?
- Do you have a ham radio license? If yes, do you have a ham radio?
- Do you have a cell phone? If so what is the phone number and the cellular provider?
- Do you have any questions?

9. Be given an assignment. Comments to make on Assignments.

- Not everyone can go into field.
- There are many important assignments that must be accomplished that are not field assignments. Please know that you are making an impact even if you are not going into the field.

Possible Assignments for SVs

- Supporting ICS-Operations

Note. When an SV is engaged in active searching, a team leader or designate must closely and constantly supervise them. The final decision on accepting a spontaneous volunteer on a field team rests with the team leader.

 - Searcher.
 - Containment/Attraction.
 - Patrolling roads.
 - Distributing Missing Person Flyers.
- Supporting ICS-Logistics
 - Distributing Food and Water to personnel.
 - Transportation of personnel and supplies.
 - Radio operator.

- Translator.
 - Security.
 - Cooking or other logistical support.
 - Runner.
 - Traffic control.
 - Managing donations.
 - Supporting ICS-Planning
 - Assist with GPS downloads.
 - Assist with IAP copying.
 - Check people In and Out of incident.
 - Assist with data entry.
 - Runner.
 - Scribe.
 - Supporting ICS-Finance
 - Assist in gathering receipts for documentation and reimbursement.
 - Assist in keeping track of volunteer hours on a mission including Affiliated and Spontaneous Volunteers.
 - Supporting VRC-SAR
 - Runner.
 - Registration.
 - Parking Attendant/Traffic Control.
 - Crowd control.
10. Be given a completed Volunteer Referral form (Page 23).
 11. Be given a SAR-ID wrist band (color-coded by type of assignment).²
 12. Check In on ICS 211.
 13. Attend a safety briefing. See Page 24.
 14. Be given job training. See Page 25.
 15. Be directed to their assignment supervisor.
 16. Exit VRC-SAR.

See Figure 2, which also shows the type of people needed to help the SVs at each of their steps.

²An alternative means of identification are numbered traffic vests.

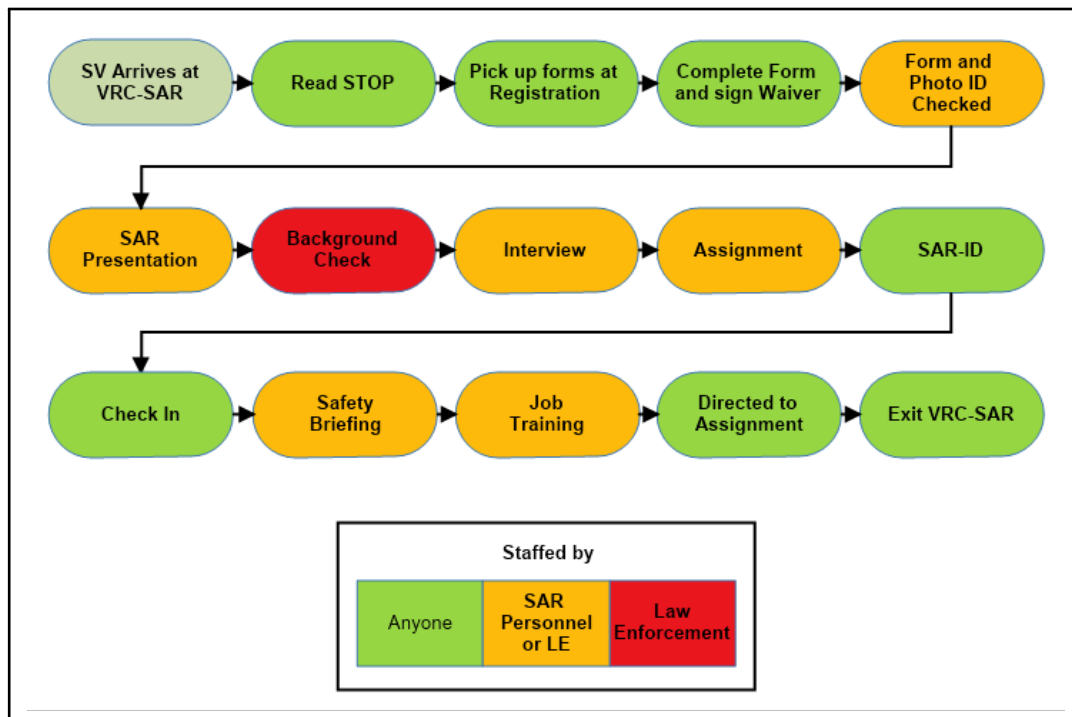


Figure 2: SVs and the VRC-SAR

3 Processing a Few Spontaneous Volunteers

In a small-scale operation, one person can perform multiple roles, taking on the responsibility for more than one station. The physical requirements for the VRC-SAR are quite minimal, perhaps a few tables and chairs.

A One-Person VRC-SAR

If only a handful of SVs arrive at the incident, they might be handled by just one person—a law enforcement officer equipped to do background checks, or a law enforcement administrative staffer that is capable of accessing NCIC files. See Figure 3.

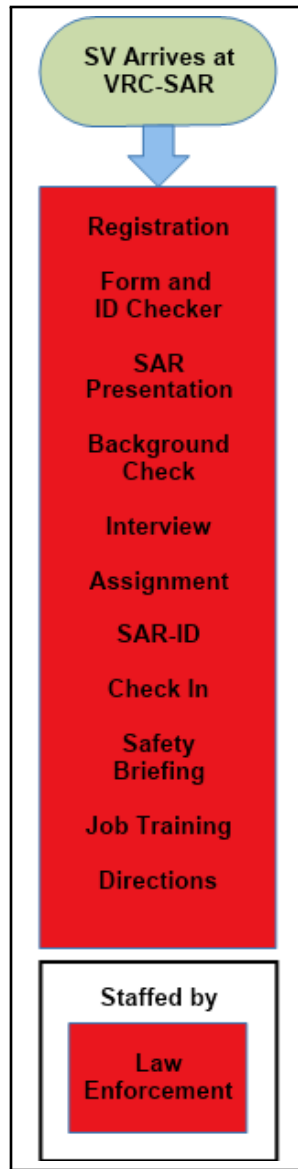


Figure 3: One Person VRC-SAR

A Two-Person VRC-SAR

As the number of SVs who present themselves at a search incident increases, the VRC-SAR process could be staffed by two people: one law enforcement (required for background checks), and a seasoned SAR volunteer. This may also be a location to use agency administrative staff or United Way personnel who are familiar with handling spontaneous volunteer resources.

The process could look like the following.

1. Enter VRC-SAR.
2. **Registration.** The law enforcement officer shows STOP, gives out the registration forms and waiver, and then checks them and the photo ID after being completed. When a number of SVs have been processed, LE sends them to the SAR Presentation, item 3, and LE proceeds to Background Check, item 4. Incoming SVs wait for LE to return.
3. **SAR Presentation.** The SAR Volunteer gives the SAR Presentation and proceeds to Safety Briefing, item 6. The SVs proceed to Interview, item 5.
4. **Background Check.** Meanwhile the LE runs background checks before seeing SVs.

5. **Interview.** After the SAR Presentation, LE interviews SV, gives an assignment, a SAR-ID wrist band (color-coded by type of assignment), and SV checks in on ICS 211. Then returns to Registration, item 2, to process the next batch of SVs.
6. **Safety Briefing.** Meanwhile the SAR Volunteer gives the safety briefing, the job training, and directions to assignment supervisor. Then returns to SAR Presentation.

See Figure 4, which also shows the forms needed.

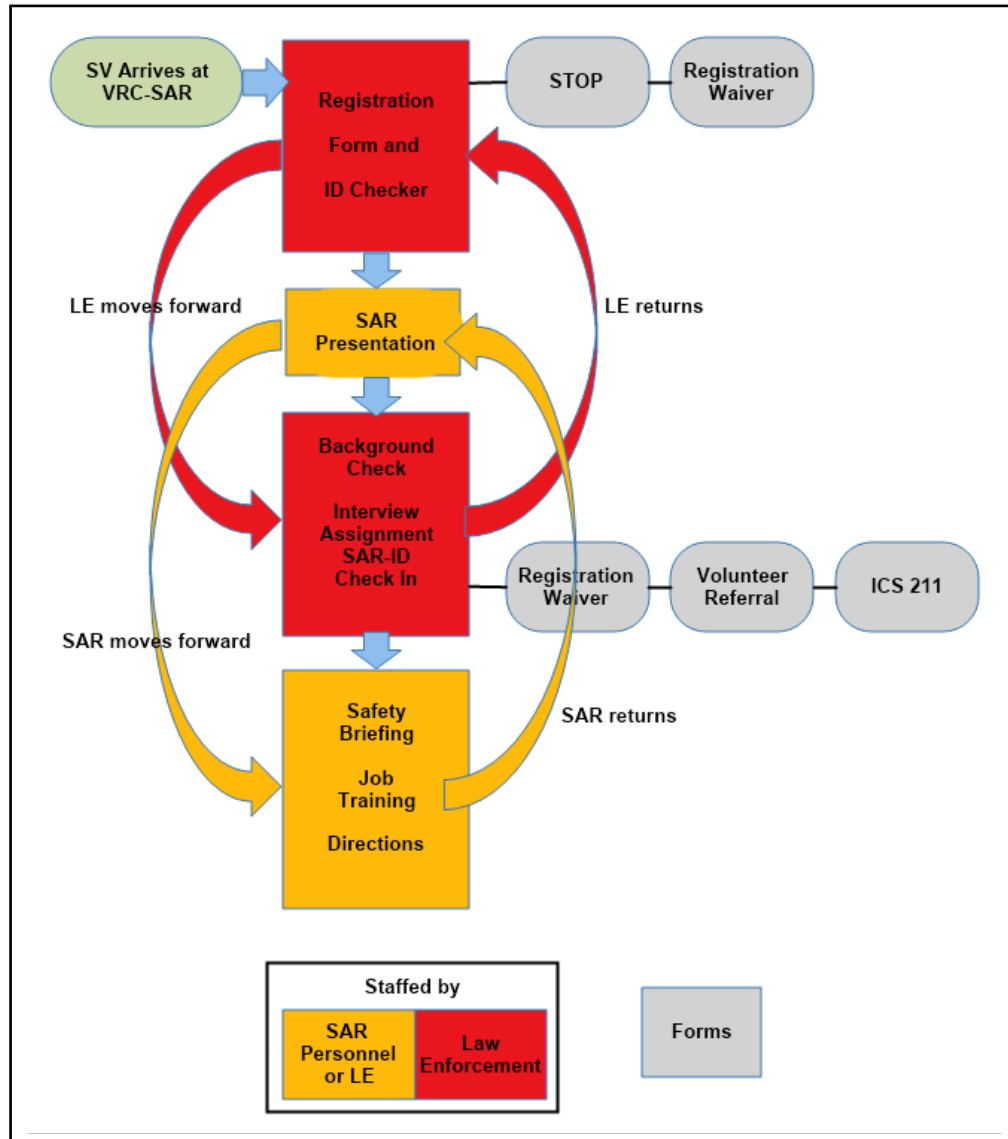


Figure 4: Two Person VRC-SAR

Figure 5 shows a possible floor plan for a two person VRC-SAR. Figures 5 through 8 show the progression of an SV, as well as the movements of the Law Enforcement officer and the SAR volunteer.

1. In Figure 5 the Law Enforcement officer greets the SV, gives out the forms and checks them. The SV is then sent to the SAR Presentation.
2. In Figure 6, once there are enough SVs, the SAR volunteer gives the SAR Briefing. Meanwhile the Law Enforcement officer moves to the adjacent table and does background checks on the SVs in the SAR Presentation.
3. In Figure 7, the Law Enforcement officer interviews SVs and gives them their assignments.

4. In Figure 8, the Law Enforcement officer returns to the adjacent table and continues with the registration, while the SAR volunteer has moved from the SAR presentation, to give the Safety Briefing, and so on. After the SAR volunteer finished the briefing, they return to the SAR presentation area
5. Then the whole process starts over again.

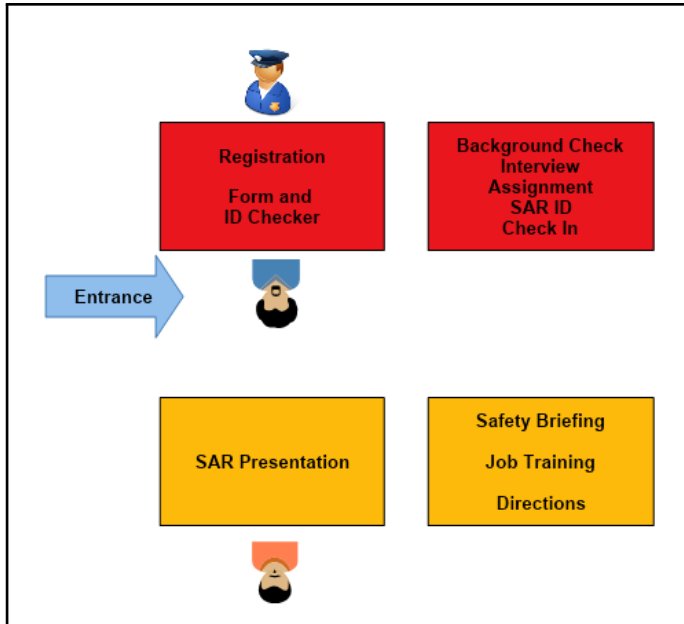


Figure 5: SV at Registration. Law Enforcement accepting SVs. SAR Presentation waiting to herd cats

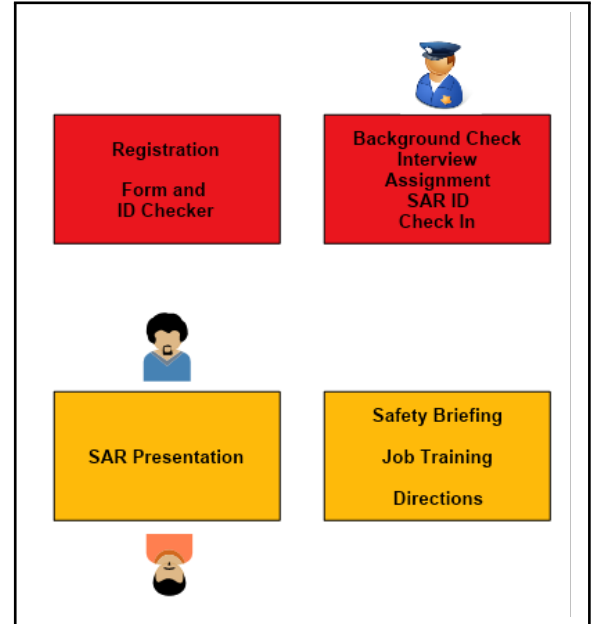


Figure 6: SVs at SAR Presentation. Law Enforcement checking background

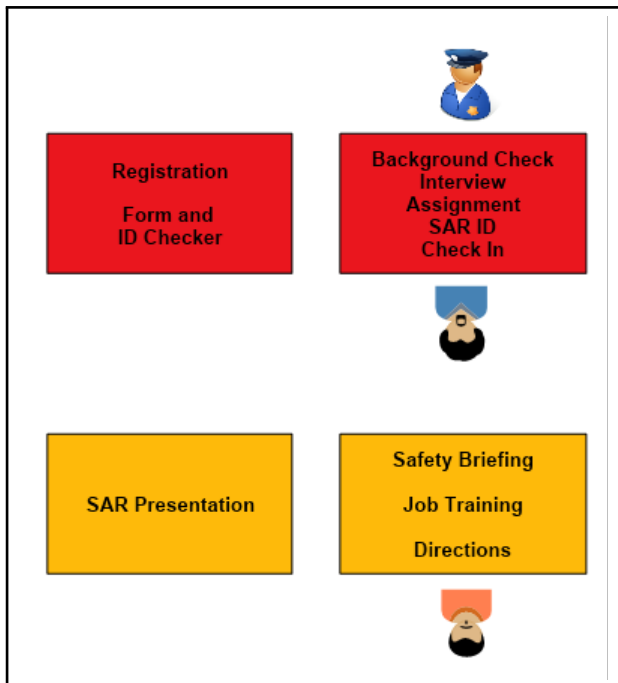


Figure 7: Law Enforcement interviewing SV. SAR presenter moves to Safety Briefing

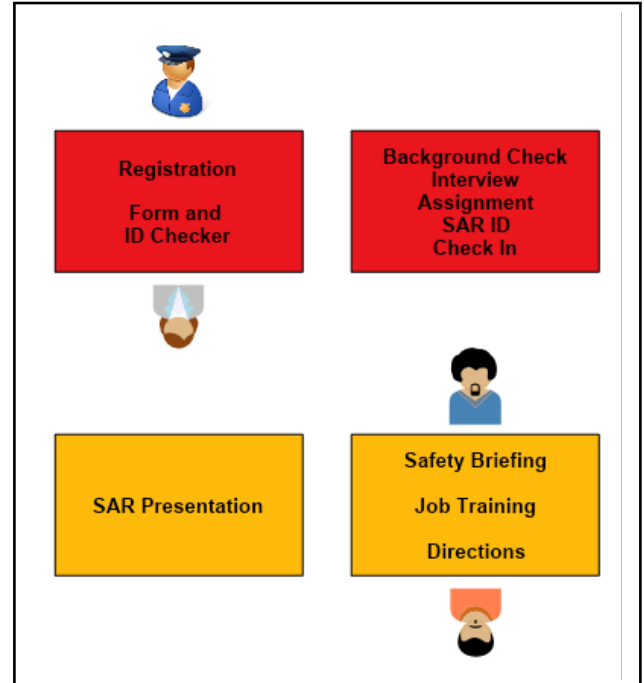


Figure 8: SVs getting briefing. Law Enforcement back at registration with new SV

A Four-Person VRC-SAR

As more SVs arrive two more staffers might be added—a volunteer and a seasoned SAR volunteer—bringing the total to four. In this case the process could look like Figure 9.

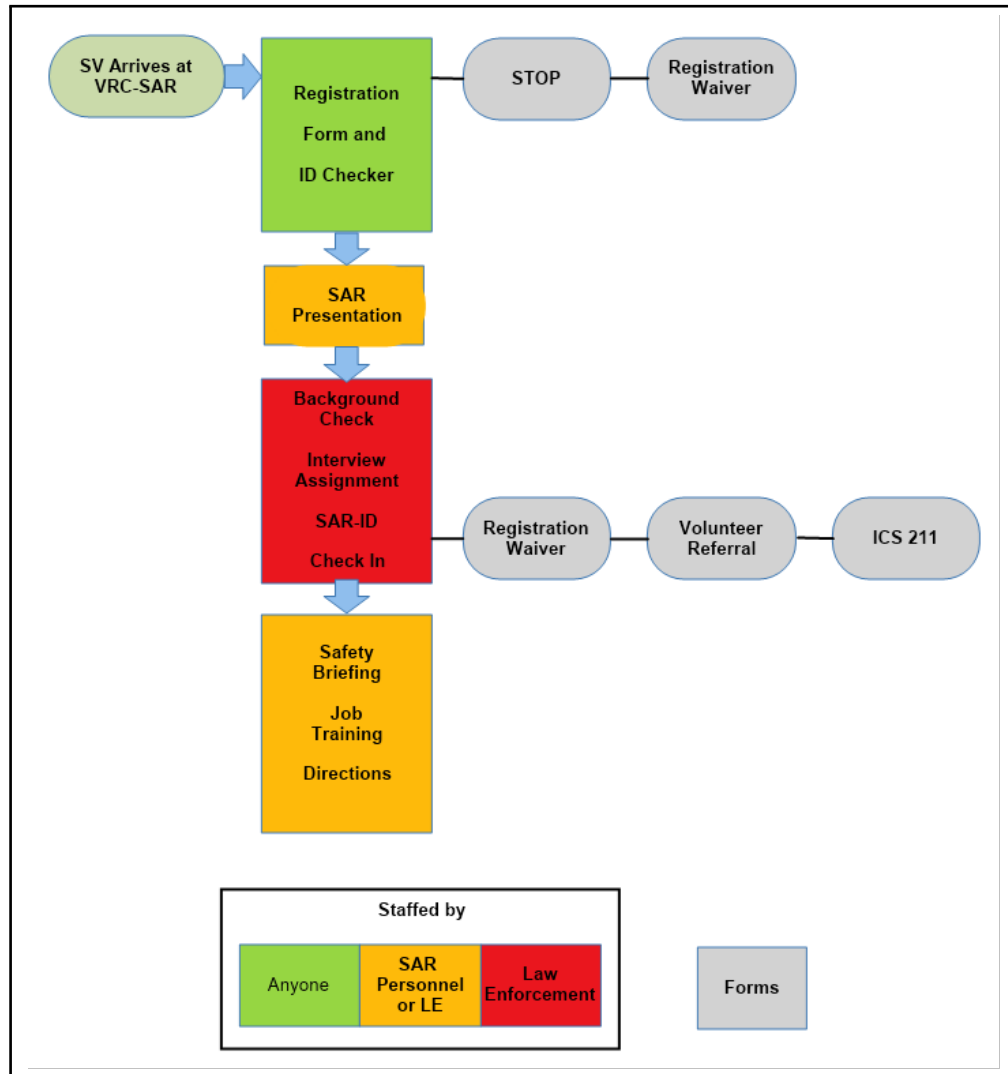


Figure 9: Four Person VRC-SAR

As the number of SVs increases further so does the number of staffers required. The various functions shown in Figure 9 can be split. For example, if there is congestion at the Registration, Form and ID Checker table, then the two functions—Registration, and Form and ID Checker—could be split into two stations. Or, perhaps the Safety Briefing might be split off. An abbreviated version of the Volunteer Instructions, see Page 24, may be needed and distributed at Registration.

However, if this splitting continues, the physical requirements of VRC-SAR will increase from a few table and chairs to something much more substantial, which is discussed in the next section.

4 Processing Many Spontaneous Volunteers

In this section we look at what might be the requirements for the operation of a full-scale VRC-SAR, if many SVs present themselves. In this case, most of the functions in Figure 9 will be separated. This is a major transition and requires careful planning, ranging from where to house the VRC-SAR to the selection of a VRC-SAR Manager, or the creation of a VRC Unit with a Unit Leader.

4.1 Site Requirements for VRC-SAR

Some general VRC-SAR site requirements include:

- Adequate space: Preferably a large indoor room with smaller adjoining rooms for training or waiting.
- Access to tables and chairs: Several tables will be needed for each stage of the process. Extra chairs will be needed for a large waiting and reception area as well as for training rooms.
- Access to Persons with Physical Disabilities: Entering, exiting, and traveling within the VRC-SAR should be accessible to all persons with physical disabilities.
- Access to Restrooms: There should be enough restrooms to accommodate a large number of SVs.
- Signs: All stages and locations should be marked clearly with signs. Signs should also be placed outside the VRC-SAR and on the roads to help direct people to the site.
- Parking availability: A VRC-SAR location should be able to accommodate a large number of cars with spaces to park without hindering traffic or blocking roadways.
- Accessibility and proximity to search area: A VRC-SAR should be located away from the command post, although in close proximity so as to allow for easy travel to and from assigned volunteer locations. It is important to maintain control and separation of SVs from the Incident Operations and Support Activities until the SVs are properly processed and assigned to the incident.
- In more remote or rural locations, tents or pop-up shade shelters may need to be used.

4.2 Possible Locations for VRC-SAR

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| • Church. | • Federal building. | • Rotary Club. |
| • Fire station. | • Volunteer Centers. | • Elks. |
| • School—school gymnasium. | • Red Cross. | • Casino. |
| • County building. | • Salvation Army. | |
| • State building. | • VFW. | |

4.3 Possible Floor Plan for VRC-SAR and SV Flow

A possible layout for the VRC-SAR is shown in Figure 10. The stations with orange-shirted people are staffed by SAR personnel, while the stations with green-shirted people could be staffed by anyone. Law Enforcement personnel are required at Station #4. The blue-shirted person carrying a package from Station #2 to Station #4 represents a runner (see Page 17), who could be anyone. The SV follows the yellow arrows around the perimeter of the room.

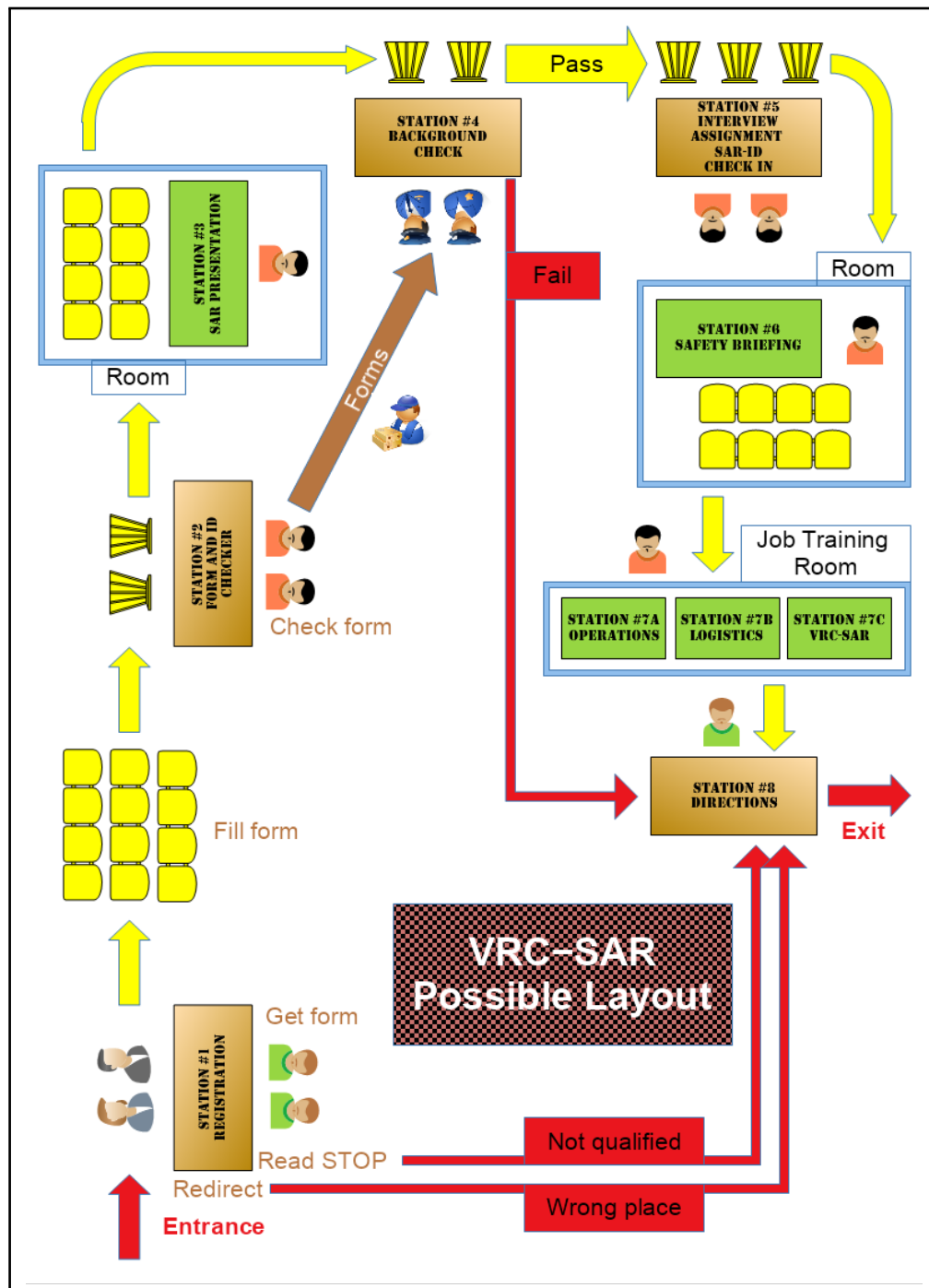


Figure 10: Possible Floor Plan for VRC-SAR

Here is an explanation of how the logistics might work from the SV's point of view. The SV

1. Enters VRC-SAR.
2. Goes to Station #1: Registration.
3. Here to volunteer? If not, goes to Station #8: Directions.
4. Reads STOP. If does not qualify, leaves via Station #8: Directions.
5. Receives registration form, waiver, and instructions.
6. Proceeds to seating area to complete registration form and sign waiver.
7. Proceeds to Station #2: Form and ID Checker, to show photo ID and have form checked.
8. Proceeds to Station #3: SAR Presentation, to watch the SAR Presentation.

9. Proceeds to Station #4: Background Check, to find outcome of background check. If fails, goes to Station #8, Directions.
10. Proceeds to Station #5: Interview, Assignment, SAR-ID, Check In, for interview, receive assignment, get SAR-ID bracelet, and Check In.
11. Proceeds to Station #6: Safety Briefing, for safety briefing.
12. Proceeds to Station #7: Job Training, for assignment-specific training.
13. Proceeds to Station #8: Directions, exits reception center and proceeds to assignment as directed.

4.4 VRC-SAR Flow of Forms

Table 1 shows the flow of the forms as the SV proceeds through the VRC-SAR. They surrender the Volunteer Referral Form to their final assignment supervisor, who delivers it to the VRC-SAR.

Table 1: Flow of Forms

	Registration/Waiver	Volunteer Referral	ICS 211
Station #1	✓		
Station #2	✓		
Station #3	↓		
Station #4	✓		
Station #5	✓	✓	✓
Station #6	↓	✓	↓
Station #7	↓	✓	↓
Station #8	↓	✓	↓
Assignment Supervisor	↓	✓	↓
VRC-SAR/Documentation	✓	✓	✓

Figure 11 shows who should staff the various stations, and the forms available.

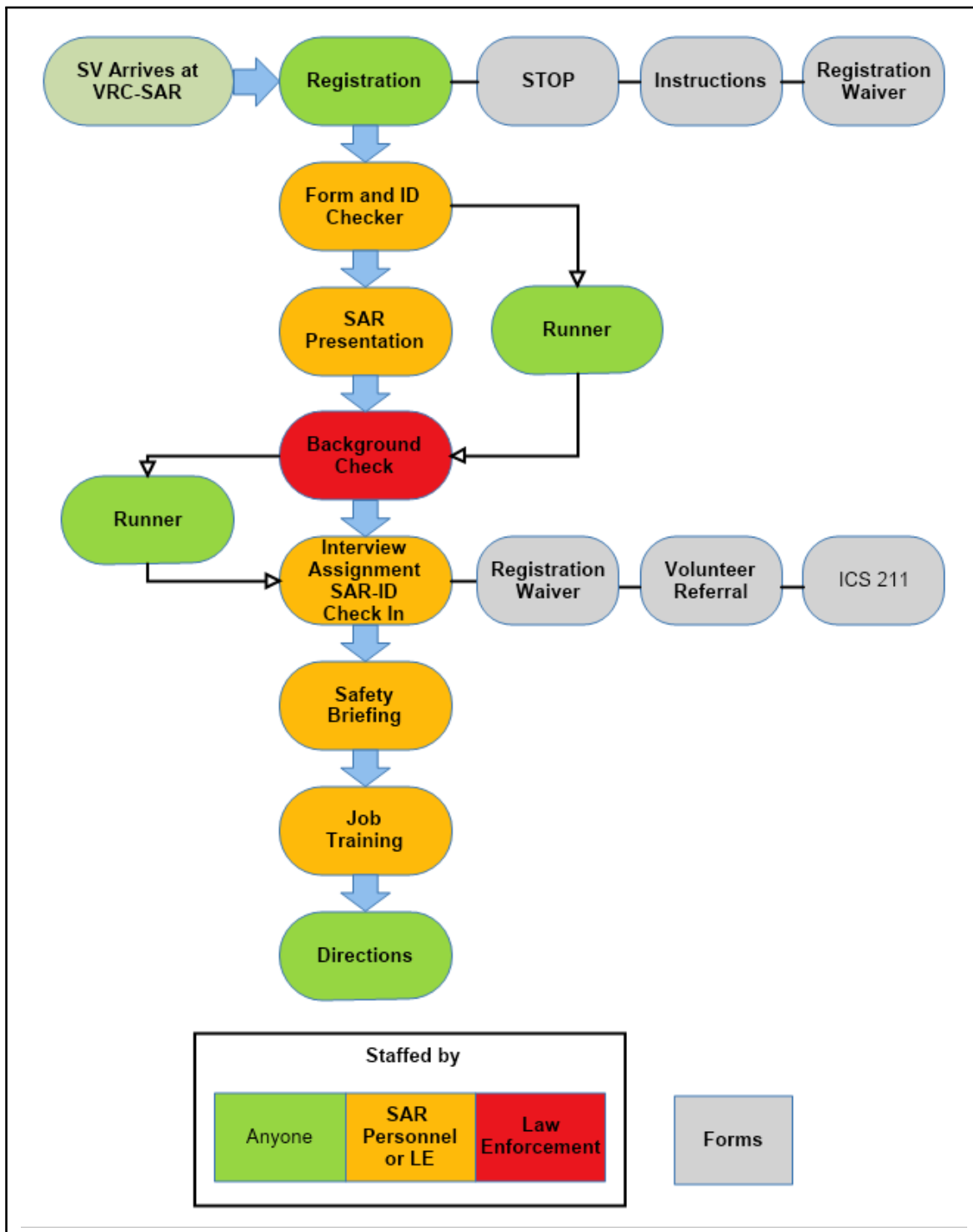


Figure 11: VRC-SAR staffing

5 VRC-SAR Staff Tasks

5.1 VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader

The job of the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader is to oversee the operation of the Volunteer Reception Center. They will:

- Clearly designate one entrance and one exit.

- Arrange VRC-SAR Station tables and chairs for smooth flow of people.
- Distribute pre-packaged envelopes of materials needed at each Station.
- Tape signs on walls over the VRC-SAR Stations.
- Place a hat or flag (to summon Runners) at each station.
- Brief and assign tasks to staff and volunteers of the center.
- Receive a list of potential SV jobs generated during the Tactics Meeting, to be forwarded to Station #5: Interview, Assignment, SAR-ID, and Check In.
- Monitor the operation and make staffing changes when necessary.
- Maintain all records of safety and job training provided to volunteers, and hours worked in the VRC-SAR by employees and volunteers.
- Turn all records in to Logistics at end of the activation.
- Conduct After Action Review to discuss the forms, procedures, . . . , to determine whether changes need to be made to improve future operations.

Qualifications. Needs to be knowledgeable about all aspects of the VRC-SAR. Also, needs to have some management experience and effectively be able to run the entire VRC-SAR.

Commitment Required. Full time participation when the VRC-SAR has been activated.

They should meet and thank all volunteers who help in the VRC-SAR and instruct them to sign in and out on the Volunteer Sign-in/Sign-out Record.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Tables and chairs (see sample room layout for details, Figure 10).
- “Go Box/Kit” containing office supplies and forms to stock your VRC-SAR for the first 2–3 days.
- Items on the Supplies and Equipment list.
- Computer or other means to run background checks.
- Printer/Copier.

Go Box/Kit “Go Kit” to include all office supplies, forms, checklists, maps, etc. See Table 2 and Table 3. Also, identify any additional resources that might be required during the response operations, such as special equipment, tables, chairs, etc.

Table 2 shows possible items to go in the Go Kit.

Table 2: Go Kit Items

Items Needed	Where needed
Staff ID tags	Everyone
Runner signal flags	All stations
Registration and waiver forms	Station #1
Clipboards	Station #1
Pens	Station #1, 4, and 5
STOP notices	Station #1
Name and SAR ID forms	Station #5
Volunteer Referral forms	Station #5
SAR-ID wristbands, hospital ID bracelets	Station #5
Computer	Station #4
Staff “uniform” (scarf, armband, . . .)	Everyone

Table 3 shows possible signage. All signs should be laminated and large enough to be read from across the VRC-SAR room.

Table 3: Go Kit Signs

Signs Needed	Where to post
Volunteer Reception Center (2)	On street visible from either direction
Enter	Volunteer Entrance to VRC-SAR
Station #1 Registration	Registration area
Station #2	Form and ID Checker area, visible from Station #1
Station #3	SAR Presentation area, visible from Station #2
Station #4	Background Check area, visible from Station #3
Station #5	Interview, Assignment, SAR-ID, and Check In area, visible from Station #4
Station #6	Safety Briefing area, visible from Station #5
Station #7	Training area, visible from Station #6
Station #8	Directions area, visible from Station #7
Exit	Exit area, visible from Stations #1, #4, and #8.

Closing VRC-SAR

- Coordinate plans to close the VRC-SAR with Logistics in advance of the actual closing.
- Assign staff to coordinate the following tasks:
 - Removal of VRC-SAR signage.
 - Collect all paperwork and forward to the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.
 - Inventory supplies and return “Go Box” to original location. Forward inventory to Manager/Unit Leader.
 - Complete an inventory of any supplies owned by the facility that were used by the VRC-SAR, and forward to Manager/Unit Leader.
 - Collect all receipts for reimbursement; forward information to Manager/Unit Leader.
 - Return all rented or borrowed equipment.
 - Arrange for cleaning of the facility if necessary and return furniture and equipment to pre-occupancy condition.
 - Review and submit to Manager/Unit Leader any invoices or pending financial commitments. Tell any suppliers to send final bills to the Volunteer Reception Center
 - Prepare a list of staff, other voluntary organizations, and vendors to be thanked or recognized.
 - Collect any other names and addresses for acknowledgments; forward information to Manager/Unit Leader.
- Conduct an After Action Review with staff to collect “Lessons Learned”.
- Prepare a narrative report on what went well, what needs improvement, and any challenges faced and how they were handled. Include information on position descriptions that worked well and what did not work well.

5.2 Runners

The Runner’s job is to carry information from one station to another within the VRC-SAR. When a station needs a runner to transport forms, restock their supplies, or escort an SV from one place to another, they will be summoned by raising a flag or putting on a hat at their station.

For example, a runner might

- Return clipboards and pens from Station #2 to Station #1.
- Pick up any clipboards and pens from the seating area between Stations #1 and #2.
- Take completed forms from Station #2 to Station #4.
- Take completed forms from Station #5 to Documentation.

The runner should watch carefully for a signal and respond promptly, in order to keep the information and SVs moving smoothly through the registration and referral process.

Items needed:

- ID Badge/ICS Vest.

- Map of VRC-SAR.
- Location of additional supplies.

5.3 Station#1: Registration

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

Ideally, a person at this station will be working with a partner, orienting SVs inside and outside the VRC-SAR entrance. Their job is to greet people with a friendly and firm demeanor, determine the purpose of their visit and direct them accordingly.

- If they are media personnel, send them to Station #8: Directions, for instructions to the Public Information Officer.
- If they are donating send them to Station #8: Directions, for instructions to an agency that is accepting donated goods.
- If they are there to volunteer, thank them, and show them the STOP document. See Page 21.
- If they are not disqualified, give them a Volunteer Instructions sheet (Page 24), registration form (Page 22), waiver (Page 23), clipboard and pen.
- Ask them to move to the seating area to fill out the registration form and sign the waiver. When the form is completed, they should go to the next available person at Station #2, Form and ID Checker.
- If there is a long wait, some SVs may not understand the reason and may become impatient. Please thank everyone for volunteering, briefly explain the process and ask everyone to be patient or, if they prefer, to come back later.
- Most spontaneous volunteers want to get to work right away. It is important to impress upon them that, while they are urgently needed, without this VRC-SAR process their work will not have the greatest impact and they may endanger themselves and others.

Qualifications. Have a friendly demeanor and be able to approach people and talk with them.

Commitment Required. 8-hour shift preferred.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Sign (Station #1 Registration).
- Table and chairs for volunteers to use for filling out their forms.
- Supply of Volunteer Instructions handouts.
- Supply of Volunteer Registration Forms.
- Pens and clipboards.
- Flag or hat to summon runners.

5.4 Station#2: Form and ID Checker

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

When a new SV approaches, ask for their registration form, waiver, and photo ID. With the SV, verify its completeness and accuracy, and check that they have signed the consent form.

Keep the SV paperwork and send the SV to Station #3, the SAR Presentation.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Flag or hat to summon runners.

Have a runner take the SV documents to Station #4, to run a background check. If there is concern that the Runner, especially an SV recruited to be a Runner, may have access to sensitive personal information about prospective SVs, then the forms could be sealed (taped) in an envelope that could be initialed, before they are transported between stations.

5.5 Station#3: SAR Presentation

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

Thank the SVs for volunteering. Give a talk on SAR, including what activities an SV might perform in a search incident (Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance, VRC-SAR).

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Presentation.

5.6 Station#4: Background Check

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

Manned by law enforcement officer or a law enforcement administrative staffer that is capable of accessing NCIC files.

They should receive an SV's documents via a runner from Station #2: Form and ID Checker. Run a background check.

Typical things to check for (see Page 21) are:

1. Any felony conviction.
2. A conviction of any crime against a child.
3. A conviction of a misdemeanor for drugs or controlled substance in the last 5 years.
4. A conviction of a misdemeanor for unlawful sexual conduct or physical threat/violence.
5. A conviction of a minor crime—other than a traffic violation—that occurred during the last year.
6. An outstanding warrant.
7. Respondent on a protective order.

After checking, ask the SV to come in and sit.

If the SV fails the check, mark and keep their document, and advise them to leave via Station #8: Directions.

If the SV passes the check, photocopy their ID onto the back of their registration form, sign the form, and return it to them. They should then proceed to Station #5: Interview, Assignment, SAR-ID, and Check In.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Ability to do background check—computer with NCIC access.
- Ability to copy SV's ID onto back of registration form—a copier, either standalone or connected to computer.
- Pens.

Comment: It might be prudent to photograph the SV for the following reasons.

- If an SV does not return from an assignment there is a recent photo for a missing person flyer.
- If an SV acts suspiciously there is a photo for a photo lineup.

5.7 Station#5: Interview, Assignment, SAR-ID, and Check In

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

This person's job is to interview the prospective volunteer, one-on-one, and find them an assignment appropriate to their ability and interest.

When a new SV approaches, greet them and ask for their registration form. Use it as a guide from which to inquire more about the SV's skills. When the SV accepts an assignment, complete a Volunteer Referral form (Page 23), filling in all information requested, sign or initial it and give it to the SV. Keep their registration form.

Give SV a SAR-ID—a color-coded wristband to denote assignments. Stress that the SAR-ID needs to be returned when they check out at the end of their assignment.

Have SV Check In.

Instruct them to report to the Safety Briefing (Station #6).

Before signaling to a runner for another interview, take a minute to jot down, in the “Notes” section of their registration form, anything important about the SV that was not included on their registration form (a special skill, an obvious physical limitation, etc.)

Key points to remember are:

- Each SV should be given an ideal assignment.
- Be sure to watch for SVs who would work well in the VRC-SAR.
- The VRC-SAR process may seem impersonal and unnecessary to SVs, especially if they are unfamiliar with SAR volunteering and just want to get out and work. But an effective interview lets SVs know they are being treated as individuals whose needs and uniqueness are valued.

Qualifications. Must have good communication skills and be able to interview people to find out their skills.

Commitment Required. 8-hour shift preferred.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Sign (Station#5: Interview, Assignment, SAR-ID, and Check In).
- Receive a list of potential SV jobs from the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.
- Supply of Volunteer Referral Forms.
- Color-coded wristbands.
- ICS 211s.
- Flag or hat to summon runners.
- Pens.

5.8 Station#6: Safety Briefing

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

This person’s job is to brief all new SVs on what to expect at their job sites, how to be safe while volunteering and how to take good care of themselves after their experience. When a small group has gathered, thank the SVs for offering to help.

Qualifications. Must be able to talk to groups about safety issues. Also, must be able to answer questions volunteers might have about safety.

Commitment Required. 8-hour shift preferred.

Read the entire Safety Message (Page 24) slowly, emphasizing the importance of following supervisors’ instructions at the worksite. Encourage everyone to attend a debriefing, if available, at the end of their shift. Ask if there are any questions. If a question arises to which you do not know the answer, summon a runner. Ask the runner to summon the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader or other VRC-SAR staff to answer the question. At the conclusion of the briefing, sign their Volunteer Referral Form, and direct volunteers to Station #7: Job Training.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Sign (Station#6: Safety Briefing).
- Flag or hat to summon runners.

5.9 Station#7: Job Training

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

Different job training stations are required depending on assignment, for example, Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance, VRC-SAR. Give out SV Job Sheets, if available. See samples on Page 25.

It should be stressed that, at the end of the SV’s assignment, they must hand in paperwork, return their SAR-ID bracelet, attend a debrief, and check out.

The SVs should be advised of the agency’s policies about the use of social media and the release of information to the media.

Sign off Training on Volunteer Referral Form, and direct volunteers to Station #8: Directions.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Sign (Station#7: Job Training).
- SV Job Sheets.

5.10 Station#8: Directions

A person who is on duty at this station should not leave it for any reason. If they require assistance, they should wave their flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC-SAR Manager/Unit Leader.

Directs people to appropriate location (PIO, donations, Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance, VRC-SAR).

Using maps and other aids, assist the volunteer with locating their assignments.

Items needed:

- ID badge/ICS Vest.
- Sign (Station#8: Directions).
- Maps.
- Recycling bin for discarded documents.

5.11 Assignment Supervisor—Not in VRC-SAR

Receives Volunteer Referral Form and checks that all is in order. Keeps form and eventually sends in to VCR-SAR/Documentation. Makes sure SV is assigned and supervised.

6 Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following for their very useful suggestions: Andrew Lamb (SARA), Mark Miraglia (AIMT-SAR) and John T. Perchorowicz (SARA).

Appendices

A Sample Forms and Messages

Sample STOP Form

<p style="text-align: center;">STOP</p> <p>If you have any of the following, you will not be allowed to participate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any felony conviction. 2. A conviction of any crime against a child. 3. A conviction of a misdemeanor for drugs or controlled substance in the last 5 years. 4. A conviction of a misdemeanor for unlawful sexual conduct or physical threat/violence. 5. A conviction of a minor crime—other than a traffic violation—that occurred during the last year. 6. An outstanding warrant. 7. Respondent on a protective order.
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Sample Registration Form

Registration Form	
1. Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss.	_____
2. Name (last, first, middle)	_____
3. Previously Used Name(s) (maiden, etc.)	_____
4. DOB (MM/DD/YYYY), age	_____
5. Place of birth	_____
6. State Issued Photo ID? [Y/N]	_____
7. Driver's license # and State	_____
8. Vehicle: Make, Model, Year, Color, Plate	_____
9. Email	_____
10. Physical Address	_____
11. Phone Numbers (Cell and Carrier, Home, Work)	_____
12. Emergency Contact (name, relationship, and phone number)	_____
13. Limitations (health, mental health, injuries, etc.)	_____
14. Are you related to the missing subject? How?	_____
15. Do you know the missing subject? How well?	_____
16. Names of any SAR units you have been associated with, including dates, and reasons for leaving	_____
17. Read basic ground rules on waiver form? [Y/N]	_____
18. Signed and dated waiver form? [Y/N]	_____
For official use only:	
• Pass background	_____
• Assignment	_____
• SAR-ID number	_____
• Notes	_____

Sample Waiver Form³

Waiver Form
<p>NOTICE: Your service is appreciated. However, it is essential that you follow some basic ground rules. By signing below you are agreeing to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I WILL follow any and all instructions given by designated personnel.2. Personal safety is a priority for everyone. I WILL NOT attempt a task for which I am not physically or emotionally prepared.3. I WILL NOT leave the team or area to which I am assigned.4. I WILL check in each time I return from a field assignment and account for any special equipment issued.5. With this type of effort, there is an element of risk. I agree to be responsible for my own safety and conduct. Should I be injured, no individuals or groups connected with this effort will be held liable.6. I agree that any information acquired during my service will not be used for any personal gain and will be held confidential.7. I understand that my involvement in this effort in no way allows me to ignore or violate any local, state, or federal laws.8. I give my permission for any and all images or voice recordings obtained by any and all media format or audio means to be used as the organization sees fit for promotion, publication, or advertisement.9. I hereby make application to review my Arizona Computerized Criminal History record and release any found to the Law Enforcement Official. By signing this form, I authorize _____ to access and review state and federal criminal history records and make reasonable efforts to determine whether I have been convicted of, or are under pending indictment for a crime that bears upon my fitness to be a volunteer in the search efforts. I do hereby release _____, all personal or government agencies, from any damages of, or resulting from furnishing such information. <p>Signature of Applicant: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>

Sample Volunteer Referral Form

Volunteer Referral Form
<p>For official use only.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Name of Volunteer _____2. SAR-ID _____3. Date _____4. Title/description of volunteer assignment _____5. Referred to assignment supervisor _____6. Dates & hours volunteer will work _____7. Referred by _____8. Received Safety Briefing by _____9. Received Training by _____10. Assignment Supervisor (return form to VRC-SAR) _____

³Courtesy of the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office, AZ

Sample Volunteer Instructions

Volunteer Instructions

1. Station #1: Reception Area. Please read STOP notice. If you do not qualify, please leave via Station #8: Directions.
2. Pick up a registration form, clipboard, and pen, and proceed to seating area to complete registration form and sign waiver.
3. Station #2: Form and ID Checker. Show government issued photo ID and have form checked. Leave completed form, clipboard, and pen.
4. Station #3: SAR Presentation. Learn about SAR and what types of assignments are possible.
5. Station #4: Background Check. If you pass the background check, pick up your form.
6. Station #5: Interview, Assignment, SAR-ID, and Check In: This is where you are interviewed, receive your assignment and your SAR-ID, and Check In. They will keep your Registration Form but give you a Volunteer Referral Form.
7. Station #6: Safety Briefing. This is where you will get a safety message. The instructor will sign your Volunteer Referral Form.
8. Station #7: Job Training. Here you will receive specific training based on your assignment. The instructor will sign your Volunteer Referral Form.
9. Station #8: Directions. Here you will be given directions to your assignment. Discard these instructions, but keep your Volunteer Referral Form.

Thank you for volunteering!

Sample Safety Message

Safety Message

Thank you for volunteering today!

1. If you will be working outside, dress for the weather.
2. Bring work gloves, sunscreen, hat and any appropriate equipment you have. You will be responsible for your equipment.
3. Water may be available at your work site, but you are encouraged to bring a personal water container. It is important to drink lots of water while you work.
4. The work you will be doing may cause you stress, anxiety, fear or other strong emotions. You are providing a valuable service by volunteering today. Please understand that, by helping, we will not be able to undo the effects of this event. Do not feel guilty because you are not able to fix everything. Just work your shift, then go home to rest and eat well. Both will help to relieve the stress. Be sure to attend any debriefing that may be conducted at the end of your shift.
5. In case you are injured while volunteering and need medical care, you should plan on paying for that care. The agency with which you are volunteering might have a policy that will cover you while you volunteer for disaster relief. If you are volunteering under the direction of a government entity, you might be covered by their Workers Compensation policy. It's best to ask questions and not make any assumptions about health/accident coverage.
6. Follow carefully any instructions given to you at your job site.
7. Please attend any debriefing activity provided at your work site after your shift.
8. Do not feel pressure to do something beyond your capabilities. If you receive an assignment that you do not feel comfortable doing please speak up.

B Sample SV Assignment Job Sheets

Operations—Containment/Attraction

<p>SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER-CONTAINMENT ASSIGNMENT JOB DESCRIPTION</p> <p>INCIDENT NAME: _____/INCIDENT LOCATION: _____</p> <p><u>TASK (Check one):</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain stationary containment point at location: _____ and contact individuals coming off the feature and those going into the area to provide information about the incident and inquire about any clues that the individual may have seen. Document name and phone number of individuals contacted, especially if they reported any clues and report that information to the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator at this phone number: _____.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct roving patrol of _____ road/trail/other feature (Circle one). Patrol slowly and carefully looking for any clues such as foot tracks, clothing, food wrappers, beverage containers, cigarette butts, notes, etc. that might be associated with the missing person as well as contacting any individuals in the area to provide them with information about the incident and determine if they had located any clues. Document the location of any clues found and any individuals contacted who indicated that they had located any clues and report that information to the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator at this phone number: _____.</p> <p><u>PURPOSE:</u></p> <p>Limit or detect movement of the lost/missing person in order to keep the search area as small as possible or locate the lost/missing person. Lost persons will often follow linear features such as trails, roads, utility corridors, etc. and those make good Containment locations. Other hikers, motorists, or workers will also use those features and should be contacted to advise them of the situation and provide them with a description of the missing person and missing person flyer if available. The public in the area should be asked to call 911 or this number _____ with any information that they may have about the incident.</p> <p>Public contacts should be documented for follow-up interviews if needed. Please collect the name and contact phone number for the individuals contacted if they are willing to provide that information.</p> <p><u>END STATE:</u></p> <p>The area around where the lost/missing person was last seen or known to be is contained with stationary and roving patrols that can detect or limit the missing person's movement. Any clues or sightings of the missing person have been reported to the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator.</p> <hr/> <p>To be completed by Incident Management Personnel:</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT BRIEFING PROVIDED BY: _____</p> <p>DATE/TIME: _____</p>

Figure 12: Containment Assignment Job Description—Page 1

CONTAINMENT ASSIGNMENT CONTACT LOG:			DATE: _____
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	TELEPHONE NUMBER	INFORMATION PROVIDED (CLUES, SIGHTINGS, ETC)

Figure 13: Containment Assignment Job Description—Page 2

Operations—Distributing Missing Person Flyers

SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER-MISSING PERSON FLYER DISTRIBUTION ASSIGNMENT JOB DESCRIPTION

INCIDENT NAME: _____/INCIDENT LOCATION: _____

TASK (Check one):

☐ Distribute Missing Person Flyers for posting at designated trailheads, businesses, and neighborhoods as directed by the Incident Management Team. Questions or concerns about the assignment, or if tips are received, should be directed to the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator at this phone number: _____.

☐ Distribute Missing Person Flyers at roadblocks/trail blocks/information stations as assigned by the Incident Management Team. Questions or concerns about the assignment, or if tips are received, should be passed to the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator at this phone number: _____.

PURPOSE:

The distribution of Missing Person Flyers increases the awareness of the public about the incident and creates more passive searchers in communities or areas. Missing Person Flyers may also cause members of the public to remember an interaction or clue that they did not realize was important at the time. If someone has information that is important they should be encouraged to report that to the SV assigned to Missing Person Flyer distribution or to call 911 or this number _____ with the information.

Locations where the Missing Person Flyers were posted or delivered should be recorded on the attached log so that they can be removed at the conclusion of the incident.

END STATE:

Missing Person Flyers will have been distributed in communities or areas surrounding the incident to increase public awareness and potentially generate tips for investigators to follow-up on.

Figure 14: Missing Person Flyer Distribution Assignment—Page 1

To be completed by Incident Management Personnel:

ASSIGNMENT BRIEFING PROVIDED BY: _____

DATE/TIME: _____

MISSING PERSON FLYER DISTRIBUTION ASSIGNMENT LOG: DATE: _____

ADDRESS WHERE MISSING PERSON FLYERS WERE POSTED OR DELIVERED	BUSINESS OR TRAIL HEAD NAME IF APPLICABLE	INFORMATION PROVIDED (CLUES, SIGHTINGS, ETC)

Figure 15: Missing Person Flyer Distribution Assignment—Page 2