



Thank you for your interest and welcome to the Fresno County Sheriff's Search & Rescue Mountaineering Team.

We are an all volunteer, non-profit 501 (c) (3), organization formed in 1982. Our group of volunteers, augments the Fresno County Sheriff's Office during search and rescue operations in Fresno County and any where in the state of California we are requested to assist. Our Mission Statement:

***"To provide highly skilled and dedicated volunteers to assist the Fresno County Sheriff's Office and other agencies requesting mutual aid in search and rescue operations."***

As a new or perspective member, you may have many questions concerning what our team does and what may be expected of you.

To break things down in the simplest of terms: When there is a reported missing subject or party, under the direction of the Fresno County Sheriff's Office, we respond into the area and look for them. We use specific training and current search techniques, as well as the information we obtain and know about our missing subject(s), to increase the probability of finding them. **The majority of our searches are off trail, non-technical hiking that involves a moderate level of physical activity and exertion.**

This is often a hasty team, to quickly cover ground in areas where the victim could most likely be found, or it may be a slow, meticulous, search in a specific area. More than likely, it will be a combination of the two.

Members are expected to maintain a minimum physical fitness level to ensure they would be able to hike several miles and still be able to conduct search activities without being a hindrance to the operation. **Annual physical fitness testing is required and includes a fitness hike and skills test.** This involves a minimum 8 mile hike over three hours, with at least 2000 feet of elevation change, while carrying a 25lbs. backpack.

We will provide all of the training required to be prepared to respond to a search mission. Our team training and meetings are normally conducted the third Saturday of the month. The Fresno County Sheriff's Office, sponsors two major trainings a year, one in the summer and one in the winter.

Our team is composed primarily of Ground Searchers. The performance levels are based on individual abilities and the potential types of terrain in the search area. In your first year, you will be required to obtain the Level 4 Ground Searcher typing. This involves demonstrating basic wilderness survival skills, First-aid / CPR certification and knowledge of basic search techniques and principles.

You can learn more about these classifications by visiting the CAL EMA website and visting "Search and Rescue Mutual Aid Program"

[CAL EMA GROUND SEARCHER REQUIREMENTS,  
http://www.oes.ca.gov/WebPage/oeswebsite.nsf/HomePage?OpenForm](http://www.oes.ca.gov/WebPage/oeswebsite.nsf/HomePage?OpenForm)

With team provided training during the first year, full members are expected to maintain qualifications in Basic First Aid, CPR, Land Navigation, Radio and Field Interview Procedures, and Man-tracking. Both High Angle and Swift Water Rescue training is also available at no cost to the member.

Members are required to meet a minimum 50% attendance at trainings for their performance levels. After qualifying at the performance level(s) necessary to be eligible for search callouts, you will be required to respond to a minimum of three (3) callouts per year.

Because missions may come at any time or location, there is little notice when a search event occurs. Members are encouraged to make arrangements with employers and family, that will allow for their services on short notice. Members are expected to depart for a search within one hour of committing to the search and be capable of sustaining themselves for three (3) days in the field.

Many of our missions require only the use of a “day pack” with the minimum essentials to be self sufficient for one day and have the ability to spend the night in the field if needed. Some missions require members to be self sufficient for 72 hours (including food, shelter and sleeping gear).

We accept applications continuously and interview perspective members twice a year. Applicants are interviewed, undergo a background check and participate in an intensive training course over three weekends. This process takes about two months from time of interview to being trained for mission ready status. Upon satisfactory completion, you will be issued a Disaster Service Worker number, which will identify you as a member of our Search & Rescue Team.

You are responsible for your own gear. The team often provides equipment support and uniform items. Plus, many members have donated equipment to the team as they themselves have upgraded their equipment. These are made available to members to use.

As a team member, you are also able to obtain many of your equipment items at considerable discounts, when ordered direct with pro-deals through many of the major outdoor apparel and equipment manufacturers.

You are also responsible for your own method of transportation to and from trainings and searches. Members do car-pool and the team will often “convoy” to training or missions. Transportation expenses to and from actual missions may be reimbursed by Fresno County.

Because the team has an operating budget and must be self sustaining, the team participates in several fund raising events throughout the year and your attendance at these events, as well as other “public relations” events is appreciated.

I hope this cover letter has answered some basic questions. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions. [russ@fresnosar.org](mailto:russ@fresnosar.org). I have included some photos from both searches and training, to give you a visual perspective. THANKS!

**Russ Richardson**

**Team Leader - Fresno County Sheriff's Mountaineering Search and Rescue Team**

Our Website: <http://fresnosar.org/> NASAR: <http://www.nasar.org/nasar/education.php>



**Search Technique During Training on Bear Mountain Summer 2009**



**Crossing the North side of Bear Mountain**



**Searching Exchequer Creek**



**Night Map and Compass Exercise Dinky Creek**



**Courtright Reservoir**



**Dinkey Creek**



**Iron Lakes, Madera**



**Florence Lake Mission**



**San Joaquin River Gorge**