

from [ONSW Manual 4.3 Organisers Rules - ALL Orienteering Events 2024 03 01.docx](#)

H. SEARCH PROCEDURES

These procedures have been developed with input from an orienteer with expertise in bush search and rescue. They are written to be picked up, read and used in an emergency situation. It is desirable, but not essential, for a Preliminary Search Coordinator to be familiar with the procedures beforehand.

Each club shall make copies of these procedures and take them to all events organised by the club. Each search team member should be able to make notes on a copy of the procedures during the briefing. The club's first aid kit might be a logical place to store the copies.

1. Preliminary Search

a. Introduction

A preliminary search must, at the latest, be commenced ONE HOUR after course closure time. It can be commenced earlier, e.g. if someone is reported as being out for an extraordinary length of time.

It is essential that ONE person coordinate a search. This Preliminary Search Coordinator is the central point of contact for everyone. The Preliminary Search Coordinator shall:

- stay at 'base' for the duration of the preliminary search;
- have all known information about the overdue/injured participant told to them;
- allocate all roles and tasks;
- ensure that all searchers report back to the Preliminary Search Coordinator when they complete their task - this is so the Preliminary Search Coordinator knows a task is complete (even if it did not find anything) and to ensure all searchers are accounted for; and
- be prepared to brief the Police if the search is handed over to the Emergency Services.

When a Preliminary Search Coordinator is coordinating a search, they should have no other role in the organisation of the event (ie. someone else takes over any other role they have). The Coordinator should have the skills and experience to be accepted as being in charge during a potentially stressful period. The Controller is a logical person to perform this role. If there is no pre-determined "Preliminary Search Coordinator" the Event Organiser, Controller and/or Course Planner should designate one as soon as the possible requirement is recognised.

The organisers shall begin to gather the information below as soon as possible, thereby getting any search moving at the earliest possible time. Many of our events occur when daylight is limited.

b. Preliminary Search Coordinator memory jogger

The Preliminary Search Coordinator must use the following as a check list. It lists tasks which might be relevant in a preliminary search; any irrelevant ones can be ignored.

- Ensure that sufficient experienced and fit people remain at the event should a search be required. Ideally, they will be in addition to control collectors.
- Decide whether people designated to collect controls should form part of the search party. The Competitors Rules suggest that waiting at a control is a good option if you are lost. If normal control collection continues, they must be briefed regarding any people known to be still out after course closure.
- Ascertain and check that the participant has not returned, and a search is warranted by:
 - Double checking start lists with finish lists
 - Checking with family, friends and colleagues
 - Calling the participant's mobile phone if available
 - Checking whether the participant's car has gone.
- Gather as much information as possible about the participant: - Course - Age - Fitness level - Experience and competence - Any known/perceived medical conditions. - Clothing the participant is wearing, watch?, whistle?
- Obtain a copy of the course and compare actual completion times and estimated completion time for the participant.
- Narrow the possible search area by asking if anyone has seen the participant while competing.
- Consider likely points of error/hazards and estimate likely distance travelled.
- Consider likely perimeters that the participant might have made their way to if lost; bordering roads, tracks etc.
- Consider where the participant might be if they followed the safety bearing.
- If SportIdent, with normal (not touchless) punching, is being used, it is possible to establish from the SI units on their course which controls were last visited. Retain the services of a SI expert to carry out this task once SI stations have been collected. The SI units must be retained at the search base until all searching is complete.

- If touchless (SIAC Air+) punching is used, any radio controls should show whether a competitor has passed that control.
- Consider daylight remaining.

c. Essential preparations for search

- Establish a search base (e.g. event tent, vehicle) to which all searchers will report.
- Plan search.
- Identify and assemble search personnel.
- Appoint search team leaders.
- Brief leaders and other search personnel. (see Briefing section)
- Record names of all searchers.
- If mobile phone reception is available, set up a mobile network (swap numbers) between the search base and as many of the search teams as possible.
- Ensure base remains staffed.

d. Preliminary search pattern

There is a wide variety of orienteering maps and events. In the past, most preliminary searches have been at bush events - a suggested search pattern is:

Team 1: Perimeter or road search (by vehicle) - maintained until an agreed time unless advised.

Team 2: Sweep the missing person's course in the direction of the course following likely route choices and 'possible' areas. Report back to search base on completion.

Team 3: Sweep the missing person's course in reverse direction and 'probable' areas.

Report back to search base on completion.

All teams should consist of between 2 and 4 people.

As search teams will be calling out and carefully looking for a person, it is likely that Teams 2 and 3 will take 2 or 3 times longer than the winning time to make the search.

If normal punching is used, the SI units on the missing person's course should be collected during the preliminary search. If there are more orienteers available and capable of searching, they should form teams to collect controls (or possibly just the SI units for interrogation). The units should be kept until the preliminary or police search coordinators says they can be released. These collection teams and the search teams need to be briefed on who is collecting what.

e. Briefing – search teams & control collectors

- Details to be covered:
 - Information relevant to the missing person –name, age, sex, clothing, fitness, medical conditions, time out on course, experience.
 - Area to be searched – have maps prepared
 - Recommended search pattern.
 - Allocated time for initial search.
 - Command and communication system.
 - Any special instructions.
- Searchers should be instructed to pause frequently, looking ahead, back and side to side while using voice, calling out person's name. Searchers should not use whistles to avoid confusion except as directed in the two points below.
- Instruct teams that, in the event of finding participant and requiring further assistance, use normal whistle call for help: 3 one second whistle blasts at one second intervals; repeated at one minute intervals. (See Upon Locating a Lost Person below).
- Each team must carry water, extra clothing and an emergency first aid kit containing a compression bandage, triangular bandage and space blanket, and a torch.
- If participant is found and cannot be moved, at least one searcher must remain with participant, while another reports to the search base.
- All searchers must return to the search base by the predetermined time.
- If the person is found, the search base should, if possible, communicate with other search teams by phone or radio. If this is not possible, the recommended signal for searchers to return to base is 3 short blasts of a car horn every 1 to 2 minutes or whistles.
- The search procedure remains in place until the lost participant is accounted for and all searchers have reported back.

f. Contacting emergency services

000 is designed to be used in life threatening situations. If the search coordinator believes a person is genuinely missing or there are concerns for the person's welfare, ring 000. If in doubt, ring 000 anyway - IT WILL NEVER BE WRONG TO CALL 000.

g. Upon locating a lost person

Once the missing person is found:

- If you come across an injured person in the bush the following injuries MUST be treated only by trained first aiders or emergency services. Keep the injured person warm and dry and summon assistance, but do not move them and definitely do not encourage them to walk out - this can make their condition worse and, in some cases, kill them. This applies to these types of injuries: - Hypothermia (over exposure to cold). - Hyperthermia (over exposure to hot conditions). - All leg injuries more serious than a rolled ankle. That means dislocations, possible fractured bones, bad sprains or strains or major bleeding. - Eye, head, chest, abdominal or back injuries. - Any "high velocity injury", such as falling down a cliff or being hit by a car. - Snake or spider bite
- The missing competitor is likely to be worried, frightened, upset, disorientated, tired, hungry, cold or wet. Reassure them and tell them help is on the way. Get a message to the search coordinator that you have found an injured person, the location and any suspected injuries. If you must send somebody to go for help make sure you have at least one person to remain with the injured person.
- The Search Team approaching him/her must be sympathetic and reassuring, use his/her name – do not add to their fear and do not chastise.
- Missing person must receive any basic treatment necessary to prevent worsening of their condition and provide comfort until evacuation.
- Such treatment must include first aid, food, warmth and shelter – the missing person must not be left alone once found.
- If the person is uninjured or is safe to move proceed to the search base with the found person.

The search base should be informed by phone or radio or, if appropriate, by sending one person from the search team back to base.

h. Termination of preliminary search

The search will be terminated on the recovery of the missing person and the return of all search personnel to the search base. All people who have been informed of a search must be informed of its conclusion.

If the initial search fails to locate the missing person, the search coordinator must ring 000 and commence the police search process.

2. Police Search

a. Introduction

To commence a police search, the Preliminary Search Coordinator shall:

- Notify the police that a person is overdue at an orienteering event.
- Notify an available emergency contact for the missing participant (e.g. home telephone number)
- Ensure that all information is on hand and up to date for the briefing of the police.
- Support the search as required by the police.
- Ensure at least one member of the ONSW Board is informed (the Board's phone numbers are on the ONSW website).

b. Conduct of police search

- On arrival of the police, the Preliminary Search Coordinator provides all recorded information and gives a verbal report to the police.
- Police assume full control of search from that point.
- The Preliminary Search Coordinator co-operates with police.

The Police will want to use appropriately accredited emergency workers for the search. It is unlikely they will use orienteers.

3. Emergency Contact Numbers

In the case of serious injury or the need to organise a police search ring 000.

You will be asked which emergency service you require. If the person is injured, ask for ambulance. For a search, ask for police.

You will be asked for a street and cross street. If this is not relevant, say it is a remote area and give GPS references, grid reference from a topographic map or clear directions on how to get to the area.

Consider arranging for an experienced orienteer to meet emergency services at an easy place to find, if there is any possible confusion where emergency services should go.