

Preface

A Note to the Reader

It would be beneficial to state the assumptions the authors have made in this book so that the reader will know what to expect, what will be covered and what will be left out. These assumptions relate to the position of the reader in the search effort and the reader's knowledge of search procedures.

The reader is assumed to be a person within an agency that is responsible for, among other things, urban search, typically the jurisdictional law enforcement officer in a city or town. He or she may be in a command position where the search function has been delegated or may be responsible for developing the agency's search protocols.

Although the reader is not expected to have a firm knowledge of standard wilderness search procedures, because of space limitations, this book will only mention wilderness search procedures when needed to clarify a point. It is recommended that the reader take one of the many search management courses taught by various entities, both governmental and private, as a way to understand the fundamental principles of searching. A glossary of technical terms is included in the back of the book (Appendix B Glossary of ICS Terms) and the reference list provides excellent references, in particular "The Textbook for Managing Land Search Operations" by Robert "Skip" Stoffel.

While urban searches can be managed in a number of ways, in the United States and many other places in the world, the Incident Command System (ICS) has been adopted as the standard by most agencies. Therefore, it is assumed that the reader has a basic knowledge of ICS, since this system will be the foundation of the management techniques described in this book. See Appendix A (Incident Command System) to become more familiar with or brush up on the fundamentals of ICS.

This book compares factors common to the urban/suburban/rural incident with those faced in a wilderness search, including preplanning, managing the lost person search, special investigation considerations, use of resources, and documentation. Several states have enacted legislation that requires law enforcement agencies to respond to and act on the report of missing children. Because of these requirements the book also includes information on special considerations that are found in child abduction incidents.

It will be obvious to the reader that the procedures discussed in this book lean heavily on the authors' experience in urban search, which has been gained mostly in major urbanized areas of California (San Francisco Bay area and San Diego County), in Virginia, and in parts of Canada. Urban search is still a new subject and other areas of the country may do things a little differently. Thus, we have written this book so that any agency throughout the United States and Canada can utilize these techniques. However, we acknowledge that some readers may find other methods more compatible with their local way of doing things. What we offer are procedures we have found to work in two densely populated urban and suburban areas, based on a combined 100+ years of experience. If you find a better method, by all means use it, and let us know!

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