

# VRA PROCEDURES MANUAL

February 2009 Version

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# VRA PROCEDURES MANUAL

## EVENT CANCELLATION & RECALL DURING AN EVENT

February 2009 Version

**While an event is in progress, it may be necessary to cancel the event and recall competitors.**

To recall competitors, although a remote possibility, is more likely on a 24 hour event, because weather conditions can change. Possible reasons are:

- severe adverse weather,
- bushfire on or beyond the course,
- floods.

The Administration Manager has the responsibility to cancel the event and begin the recall process. The prime consideration is the safety of all competitors on the course and those in event support roles at the Hash House. The safest refuge, for the numbers involved and for the situation/conditions prevailing, at or near the Hash House needs to be decided.

Emergency services may need to be advised and consulted

Vehicles may need to be used to alert and collect competitors depending on the advice of the emergency services. The allocation of vehicles to road patrols, both on the identified safety circuit and other roads, under adverse weather recall conditions needs to be done with great care. Accurate records of vehicles, occupants and proposed routes need to be kept.

Following a recall, the exit route for vehicles departing the HH must be confirmed as safe. Accurate records of vehicles and occupants who have departed must be kept.

### RECALL IMPLEMENTATION

1. The standard recall to be used is four short successive car horn blasts, repeated at regular intervals.
2. Vehicles should travel the identified safety and other roads, providing conditions are safe to do so, sounding the recall.
3. Consideration should be given to leaving notes at water drops.
4. Competitors must make their way to the nearest track and then towards the HH via the track/road network.
5. Competitors should be able to guess the likely nature of the hazard considering the prevailing weather conditions.

*Authors: Duncan Brookes, Merv Trease*

*FOR VRA COMMITTEE ACTION/INCLUSION IN COURSE PLANNING MANUALS/ADMIN MGR'S MANUALS*

*\*\*\* A note must be in event instructions on recall signals and implementation.*

*\*\*\* in deciding the location of hh, consideration needs to be given to the likelihood of a recall during an event, eg. during warmer months the hh should be located such that it provides a high degree of safety for people in the event of a bushfire ..... large open space as opposed to surrounded by dense bush*

# VRA PROCEDURES MANUAL

## SEARCH FOR OVERDUE OR LOST PEOPLE

February 2009 Version

*This document should be emailed to and be read by each VRA Event Administration Manager and designated Search Coordinator, prior to the event.*

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# SEARCH

## 1. Introduction

This section describes the procedure when a team or individual roganier is reported to be lost during an event, or is overdue at the end of an event. The latter occurrence is far more likely, so these procedures relate to that particular circumstance. They can be readily adapted to suit the situation where an individual is reported missing during an event.

It is normal for a few teams to be late back, and up to 30 minutes after the finish time is usually allowed for their return. There may be simple reasons for lateness such as overestimating travel time or a team member may become excessively fatigued and has decided to wait for assistance.

Teams could be late for more serious reasons such as injury to one or more team members, and/or the team is lost on the course, or they have strayed off the map.

It is important to start searching for missing teams in a methodical manner, following the sequence set out below.

Remember that at any time the missing person/s may be found. This may mean that all searching is ceased or that evacuation procedures need to be enacted. Continue all coordination procedures until all search teams have returned and checked in.

## 2. 10 minutes after Event Finish SAFETY ROAD SWEEP

If teams are overdue a sweep of the safety road circuit should begin from the Hash House (HH) 10 minutes after the event finish time. Sweeps continues until all teams are accounted for.

While teams are still overdue, controls and water drops should NOT be collected.

## 3. 15 to 30 minutes overdue ADMIN COMMENCES DETAILED CHECKING

Administration Manager, assisted by the Event Search Coordinator, is responsible for these actions:

1. Notify the Event Search Coordinator the situation.
2. Ensure the Check Point Manager has a hold on collecting controls.
3. List and print out details of all overdue teams; names, ages, genders, mobile phone numbers, car registrations, levels of experience.
4. Collect information regarding the missing team from other competitors via loudspeaker announcements.
5. Check the Hash House environs.
6. Check parked cars.
7. Locate the Intentions Map/s for the team/s. Have copies made.
8. The event First Aider or other qualified first aider must remain on site until the situation is resolved. He/she will locate the VRA first aid kit and St John First Aid Manual.
9. Locate the Search Coordinators kit.

All information obtained should be recorded.

#### 4. At 30 to 45 minutes overdue **COMMENCE SEARCH PROCEDURES**

The Administration Manager has the responsibility to determine the necessity for a search for people who have not returned after 30 minutes of the nominated event finish.

A Search Coordinator is now required. The Administration Manager should not take on this role. The Search Coordinator may be:

- The designated Search Coordinator for the Event
- A VRA Committee Member
- An experienced member of the event administration team
- An experienced Bush Search and Rescue Victoria member

The Search Coordinator should have excellent communication skills and organisational skills. He/she will appreciate the limitations of time and manpower the VRA event participants can provide, and will arrange for additional assistance when appropriate. It may be necessary for the Administration Manager to ask if any event participants have such appropriate experience and skills and would be prepared to undertake the role.

##### **i. Search Coordinator's immediate tasks:**

1. Appoint an Assistant Search Coordinator
2. Set up a dedicated table in or near the Administration tent,
3. Locate the Search Coordinator's kit. It should have the necessary pen, paper, proformas etc.
4. Ascertain all the information available on those missing and actions taken so far.
5. Obtain additional copies of the event map, and any maps of the areas beyond the event map
6. Obtain the event mobile phone, additional mobile phones, additional adequate light.
7. Consult the course setters or veters, if available, on road and track conditions, etc. Obtain any additional maps they may have.
8. Commence a log, noting all times, actions and information received.
9. Establish a 'master map' on which relevant details of the search will be noted
10. Record details of all search teams and vehicle road patrol routes and times.
11. Commence developing a picture of the route of the lost team, based on information from teams at the Hash House, and as information comes in from Intention Sheets and intention maps.

THE ADMINISTRATION MANAGER can make a general request for volunteers to remain and prepare for a search by vehicle and/or on foot. Four wheel drive vehicles are particularly useful.

Volunteers should report to the Search Coordinator. The Search Coordinator or Assistant will note the details of each volunteer. The Search Coordinator will need to make an assessment as to the suitability of volunteers for the task. Experienced or known members are best.

1. Name
2. Event team number
3. Experience or special skills
4. Mobile phone number
5. Contact person and phone number
6. Car rego and type of vehicle being offered for use. If there is any reservation in regard to the suitability of the vehicle or driver, do not use or allocate a minor task.

Notify the VRA committee member responsible for the organisation/ administration of the event, or failing that, any VRA Committee member if this has not already been done.

The **Safety Road Patrol:**

1. Continues to check roads and water drops
2. Checks controls located on the safety road
3. Reports information such as visits to controls by missing group/s, the time of visit and their next check point, to Search HQ as soon as possible

**5. At 45 to 60 minutes overdue VEHICLE BASED SEARCHING COMMENCES**

Form search groups composed of a minimum of two people and one vehicle, preferably a 4WD. Where practical, searchers will be left in their event team. Exercise judgement in the formation of search groups, and the tasks they are given.

Plan a series of vehicle based search tasks that will incorporate first the checking of easily accessible controls close to the road that covers all sectors of the course. Consider the possibility of a team having walked off the map and so extend the vehicle searches to better roads in a reasonable vicinity. The objective is to find the missing people if they are out on a road, or ultimately to locate the checkpoint last visited.

Stagger the dispatch of search teams. **Hasten slowly!**

**Navlight options:**

Collect Navlights from some controls (leave the controls out), and bring them back to the Hash House for downloading the data.

or

Take a spare notebook computer with appropriate software, to the control to read Navlight data.

The search log continues to be maintained.

**ii. Safety of Searchers:**

1. The safety of searchers is paramount.
2. Searchers are probably very tired already if they have just completed the rogaine, or if they have been helping admin for many hours without sleep
3. Each searcher must be well equipped with adequate clothing and equipment such as torch, whistle, first aid, survival blanket and extra food & water, plus map, compass and mobile phone.
4. If weather conditions are bad, eg: heavy rain, snow, fog, then vehicle or foot searching may need to be limited for the safety of searchers.
5. Searchers leaving their vehicle must be in pairs and remain together at all times.

**iii. Briefing of all searchers:**

1. The Event mobile telephone number becomes the search base phone number.
2. While searching on foot, searchers should call out the names of the missing team members. (Other calls, such as cooee, can be mistaken by others as being from the lost persons.)
3. Searchers will report information such as visits to controls by missing group/s, the time of visit and their next control, to Search HQ by telephone if possible.
4. The finding of the missing team will be reported with precise details of their condition, location and any assistance required.

5. The standard recall signal (4 short successive horn or whistle blasts repeated at regular intervals) will be implemented to recall search teams when the missing group/s is found or it is decided to call off the search due to unsafe weather conditions or any other reason.
6. No car horns should be sounded during the search phase.
7. Each searcher must report to the Search Coordinator when returning from a search task.
8. Each searcher must sign off when their search involvement is concluded.
9. Searchers are to be encouraged to rest/sleep before travelling home.

#### **iv. Dispatching Search Groups:**

1. Identify each search group by number, and their vehicle, and record.
2. Provide the missing group/s event number, names and full descriptions
3. Specify the search task for each group, by providing a marked map, and also recording the task on the search master map. Note the controls to be checked.
4. Define the route including direction of travel, for each vehicle.
5. Only use tracks that can be driven on safely under the prevailing conditions.
6. Ensure each search group has noted the tasks of the search groups that adjoin their area, at least.
7. Ensure a mobile phone per search group, and record the number.
8. Each vehicle should have a VRA standard first aid kit, water and spare clothing/sleeping bag/blanket.
9. Specify the latest time by which each search group must return. This is essential as mobile phone coverage will be limited and cannot be relied on to manage the search.

#### **6. 1 Hour Plus FOLLOW UP SEARCHING**

Progressively as Intentions Sheet information comes in from search groups and Navlight data is received:

1. Some search groups are dispatched or redirected to visit the expected next controls for the missing people.
2. Each new or revised task needs to be clearly stated and recorded, with a deadline for return to base.
3. Vehicle based road patrols continue through the search area.

Once the last known visited control has been determined, some search groups can be directed to search the obvious routes away from that control; along ridges, gullies and other possible 'incorrect' routes. In practice, finding the last recorded visited control may take considerable time, or be beyond the resources available. It also assumes that the missing team has been completing each intentions sheet, which in practice may not be the case.

The search log continues to be maintained.

Throughout the search, including after the finding of the missing people or the arrival of the Police, the Search Coordinator continues to monitor the location and safe return to base of all VRA search groups.

## **7. At 4 hours or earlier CONTACT POLICE**

Regardless of the timeframe of the preceding stages, at no later than 4 hours after the event finish, the Police must be contacted and assistance sought. **Dial 000 or the local Police Station.**

Or earlier if dictated by

- The people - inexperienced, elderly, young
- The weather
- The terrain

The designated VRA Committee Member at the event should contact the family and/or friends of the missing people to notify them of the situation and what has been, and what is being done

Meanwhile:

1. VRA search groups will most likely need resting by this stage.
2. VRA search groups who have found vital information should be asked to remain at search base pending the arrival of the police.
3. VRA searchers should be directed to rest before driving home.
4. VRA searches must sign off when departing for home.
5. Prepare information, including maps for the Police

Be aware that Police may wish to retain the HH tents for their search organisation and administration, particularly if the weather is inclement.

## **8. When the missing team is found**

The search group will immediately report to the search coordinator that the missing team is found and render any first aid or other assistance. If necessary use 3 whistle blasts to call nearby search teams for assistance.

**Refer to the VRA RESCUE PROCEDURES document for further information.**

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# VRA PROCEDURES MANUAL

## DEATH OF A PERSON DURING A ROGAINING EVENT

February 2009 Version

Upon being informed of a death, or a reported death, of a competitor or other person during a Rogaining Event, the Event Administrator will appoint an experienced Committee Member or similarly experienced person to coordinate the response. Alternatively, the Event Administrator could appoint a replacement Event Administrator and coordinate the response.

The Coordinator will:

1. Immediately establish a base/working area.
2. Attend to the safety, wellbeing and privacy of those who have reported the death.
3. Record their details.
4. Commence a log of .....who, what, where and times.
5. Notify the local police. A death is a police matter and it must be reported as soon as possible. Most likely it will be appropriate for Police and ambulance to come to the Hash House first.
6. Arrange for experienced people in the vicinity of the Hash House to assist.
7. Arrange for a small group of experienced members (volunteers) to go to the location of the reported dead person (first aiders (at least 2), committee members, other senior rogainers, members of Bush Search and Rescue or SES). Instruct them to:
  - a. Attend to the safety and well being of any rogainers, most likely team members, who are with the body. Emotional first aid will be required.
  - b. Confirm there are no signs of life.
  - c. Protect the body from further deterioration. Do not move the body unless it is necessary to secure it against tides, currents, gravity or animals.
  - d. Secure the area and prevent other teams from approaching.
  - e. Seek assistance from any teams of experienced rogainers in the area, if required.
  - f. Identify the exact location of the body, and inform the Hash House.
8. Arrange for experienced members to monitor and attend to the well being of all competitors returning to, and at, the Hash House as well as all volunteers
9. Once Police and ambulance arrive, escort them to the location of the body.

# VRA PROCEDURES MANUAL

## DEALING WITH THE MEDIA FOLLOWING A SERIOUS INCIDENT DURING A ROGAINING EVENT

February 2009 Version

### THE MEDIA

If reporters come to the Hash House following a serious incident, (eg a search or a death) during a Rogaine:

1. Refer all comments and questions to the police, if they are present.
2. In the unlikely event that you find yourself facing media questions that cannot be referred to the police or rescue services, keep your response short, and factual.
3. It is best to inform the media that you will be available at a specific time to make a statement. This will tend to satisfy their need for information and reduce ad hoc questioning.
4. Do not allow any members of the group to speak to the media.
5. Do not speculate about what happened, or about what will happen next.
6. Do not give out names or other private information. You can choose whether to give your own name, but you should consider telling the media your name, since they will probably find out soon enough.
7. Do not tell the media where a body is or assist them to go into the area.

### Stick to these notes:

1. I am the coordinator of a Victoria Rogaining Association rogaining event, held in this area today/yesterday. Rogaining is a cross country navigation activity similar to orienteering, completed in small teams.
2. About xx competitors have been on the event in this area.
3. There has been a serious incident, and the police have been informed.
4. A spokesperson from the VRA will speak to the media as soon as possible, and will continue to keep the media informed.
5. The incident is very distressing, and I am unable to answer any questions at this stage.

# VRA PROCEDURES MANUAL

## RESCUE OF INJURED PEOPLE

February 2009 Version

*This document should be emailed to and be read by each VRA Event Administration Manager, prior to the event. It is to be read in conjunction with the VRA 'SEARCH FOR OVERDUE OR LOST PEOPLE' document.*

**A rognair may be injured at any time during an event. Thus it is more likely that the need to rescue, or consider a rescue, will arise during the event rather than at the end.**

**However when a team does not return on time, the reason the team is missing may be due to an injured team member. The search team finding the lost party must provide appropriate support and first aid and seek further assistance as quickly as possible.**

The Administration Manager will involve the Event First Aider. The services of other qualified first aiders or other medical personnel present at the event should be sought, if the injury is serious, or potentially serious.

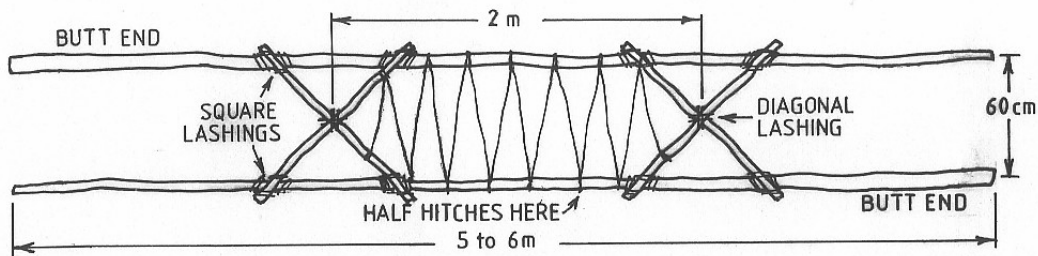
### **EVACUATION/RESCUE OF INJURED PERSON/S**

The Event First Aider or qualified medical personnel should assess the situation with care, and advise on the appropriate evacuation strategy.

1. Any significant rescue will require the assistance of specialists, under the direction of the Police. So, ring 000 immediately that it is apparent that such an evacuation may be required.
2. Walk out with assistance: This is the most likely scenario. The easiest and shortest access route to a driveable track should be chosen. Some physical support may be needed. Packs may/should be carried for the injured. If it is dark, a well lit path should be provided. Some clearing may be necessary to provide easier walking. Allow rests as necessary. Steep terrain should be avoided.
3. Carry out over a short distance, e.g. 250 metres. This will depend on the nature of the injury, the nature of the terrain and the prevailing weather. The VRA stretcher should be used. It will require a number of bearers who can swap the load carrying at regular intervals. A well cleared path that avoids steep terrain needs to be provided. If it is dark, the route needs to be well lit. The wellbeing of the patient must be checked at regular intervals.
4. Longer carry, serious injury, e.g. 250+ metres: Any stretcher carry must be supervised by a person with relevant experience. This is unlikely to be possible with VRA only resources. However, if it is to be attempted, possibilities are to attach poles to the sides of the VRA stretcher or if personnel and conditions permit build a 'bush stretcher'. For both, long poles will be required – see diagram below. Note that in both cases a minimum team of 24 bearers is necessary. The patient will need to be continuously monitored. The path will need to be cleared and well marked. Such a carry should be left until daylight unless the injury or condition of the patient requires critical medical attention that cannot be provided on site. If a night carry is to proceed, a well lit path will be required.

5. If a team member is found presumably dead, carry out extensive checks for signs of life. Severely hypothermic people may appear dead. It is not the job of VRA searchers to pronounce or presume a person to be dead. Protect the body from the elements and animals but do not move it at all. Look after other team member/s. Seek police and medical assistance.

REFER TO THE DOCUMENT "Death of a person during a Rogaining Event."



## POST INCIDENT

A VRA searcher may be distressed after a search and/or rescue, particularly after finding persons with severe injuries or deceased. Police and medical personnel can advise on counseling as necessary. The VRA Committee will follow up in all cases where counseling may be necessary.

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