



Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance

GENERAL INFORMATION PACKAGE

(Updated February 2009)

**Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance
General Information Package**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction.....	3
II.	Our Mission	3
III.	Code of Ethics.....	4
IV.	Membership in the Alliance.....	5
V.	Letter of Commitment	6
VI.	Resource Survey	7
VII.	Ground Rules for Participation.....	8
VIII.	Texas Center for the Missing.....	10
IX.	Participating Teams, Organizations, and Independents	11

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance General Information Package

I. INTRODUCTION

For initial information contact:

Beth Alberts
CEO

Texas Center for the Missing
P.O. Box 420148
Houston, TX 77242-0148

Phone: (713) 314-3644
Fax: (713) 522-7386
E-mail: balberts@tcftm.org

Or check the Alliance web site at:

www.saralliance.org

II. OUR MISSION

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance (SETSARA) provides its membership search training; and public safety agencies with awareness, education, and search services.

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance
General Information Package

III. CODE OF ETHICS

1. *Members shall uphold the Mission and Code of Ethics of the Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance (the "Alliance").*
2. *Members shall be responsible for performing background checks on all their members prior to participation in Alliance activities.*
3. *Under no circumstances shall members use the Alliance for personal gain.*
4. *Members shall conduct themselves in a professional manner, promote the team concept, and exhibit proper respect for others.*
5. *Members shall be held accountable for the actions of their individual members.*
6. *Members shall abide by all federal, state, and local laws.*
7. *Members shall accurately represent their experience, qualifications, expertise, limitations, legal standing, and other relevant information.*
8. *At Alliance events, members shall refer the media to the designated Alliance public information officer.*
9. *Alliance Members will not contact the media regarding a search incident without express permission of the activating agency.*
10. *Members shall engage in the ethical and humane treatment of animal partners. At no time will abuse or neglect of animals or humans be tolerated.*
11. *Violations of this Code of Ethics by members shall be brought before the Alliance and referred appropriately for follow-up action.*

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance

General Information Package

IV. MEMBERSHIP IN THE ALLIANCE

Membership in the Alliance is open to teams, organizations, and independents actively involved in search-and-rescue (SAR) in Southeast Texas.

For membership purposes, a team or organization is defined as a legal business entity with documentation of its entity's legal standing. In addition, the organization must be a viable search and/or rescue organization. A viable search organization is one with three or more members - those members must actively participate in search and/or rescue activities.

An independent is an individual actively involved in SAR who is not affiliated with a legal business entity.

Teams, organizations, and independents wishing to join the Alliance:

- Must sign and comply with the Letter of Commitment as provided in Section 5, including the performance of background checks as required by the Code of Ethics and the completion and submission of the Resource Survey described in Section 6;
- Complete a three (3) month probationary period; and
- Be voted on for membership in accordance with the adopted rules of the Alliance.

Alliance members must maintain their membership in accordance with the adopted rules of the Alliance.

**Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance
General Information Package**

V. LETTER OF COMMITMENT

To the Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance

This letter is a statement of commitment by our organization (or me) to the Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance (the “Alliance”).

As a condition of membership we as an organizational (or independent) member of the Alliance agree:

1. To uphold the Mission of the Alliance.
2. To abide by the Code of Ethics of the Alliance.
3. To abide by the Ground Rules for Participation as adopted by the voting members of the Alliance and as amended from time to time.

Dated to be effective _____.

Signed on behalf of: [Name of Organization or Individual]

Signature: _____

Name, Title: _____

Date: _____

**Acknowledged on behalf of the
Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance**

Signature: _____

Name, Title: Beth Alberts, CEO, Texas Center for the Missing

Date: _____

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance General Information Package

VI. RESOURCE SURVEY

Contact Melissa Turnquist at 713.599.0235 or mturnquist@tcftm.org for a resource form. The form should be completed in its entirety and returned to Ms. Turnquist. Full membership into the Alliance cannot be completed until the Resource Form is returned to the Alliance either electronically or in hard copy format.

Members must update Resource Surveys on an annual basis – quarterly if there are significant changes in the reported information. These updates should be submitted to the designated Alliance representative for compilation.

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance General Information Package

VII. GROUND RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

A. Membership: Membership requirements are discussed in Section 4.

B. Meetings: Meetings are typically held at 7 PM on the first Tuesday of each calendar quarter or other date designated by the Alliance at a central meeting location.

Meetings are open to members, probationary members, members of law enforcement, and invited non-member guests. Each member and probationary team or organization is allowed two representatives at the monthly meeting.

However, each team or organizational member shall have only one vote in matters brought before the Alliance.

Issues requiring an official vote will occur at the regularly scheduled meetings. Proxy votes are not permitted. A quorum of 50% of voting members must be present for an official vote. Votes will be decided by the majority of the quorum present to vote.

Members must attend seventy-five (75) percent of monthly meetings to maintain their membership in the Alliance.

Non-member guests must be placed on the agenda if they are to participate in the meeting.

The meeting chair shall be rotated among the members by team or organization or individuals (independents) if applicable. The meeting chair shall be responsible for compiling the agenda and for presenting or providing an educational component at each meeting.

The chair of the previous meeting shall take the minutes for the next meeting. Minutes are to be distributed to the membership within one (1) calendar week after the meeting is held.

C. Committees: The Alliance has two standing committees: the *Training & Education* and *Mock Search* committees. In addition, when needed the Alliance or its designee shall appoint an *Inquiry Committee*. Ground rules for these committees are as follows:

- Committee Chairs and members shall serve a one-year term to coincide with the calendar year.
- Committee size shall be a minimum of three members.
- Any changes to committee membership shall be brought before the Alliance membership for approval.

D. Records: Minutes and records of the Alliance shall be maintained by Beth Alberts of Texas Center for the Missing.

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance General Information Package

E. Resource Surveys: Members must update Resource Surveys on an annual basis – quarterly if there are significant changes in the reported information. These updates should be submitted to the designated Alliance representative for compilation.

F. Miscellaneous: Beth Alberts of Texas Center for the Missing is the designated contact for the Alliance.

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance General Information Package

VIII. TEXAS CENTER FOR THE MISSING

The Texas Center for the Missing is the sponsor and primary contact for the Alliance.

What is The Texas Center for the Missing?

Texas Center for the Missing is a charitable 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to offering help, and hope, to the missing and their families.

When and why was it founded?

Formerly known as Gabriel's Gifts Missing Children's Organization, Texas Center for the Missing was founded in March, 2000. On Saturday, October 30, 1999, in the wee hours of the morning, 17-year-old Gabriel Lester's family awakened to the shrill ringing of the telephone—a night-time sound that strikes fear in every parent's heart. The caller informed the Houston family that Gabe, a student in Austin, Texas, had missed curfew and his car found near a bridge over Lake Austin.

After the initial visit with police, frustration and fear overwhelmed Gabe's mother, Doreen Wise. She longed for the comfort of someone to tell her how she could quickly find her youngest child; however, virtually no guidelines or instructions on what she as a parent should do were available, nor were there informational packages about other helping organizations to call. As every parent who has lost a child wishes to do, Gabe's mother launched an aggressive search, using trial and error and making many mistakes; the information she needed to find her child simply was not available. Tragically, four agonizing months later, the body of Gabriel Lester was found. Gabe's family learned first-hand how few resources there are to help parents search for lost children. From one family's loss and sadness, Texas Center for the Missing was born.

For Additional Information on Texas Center for the Missing, contact:

Beth Alberts
CEO
Texas Center for the Missing

P.O. Box 420148
Houston, TX 77242-0148

Phone: (713) 314.3644
Fax: (713) 522.7386
E-mail: balberts@tcftm.org

**Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance
General Information Package**

**IX. PARTICIPATING TEAMS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND
INDEPENDENTS**

CEN-TEX Search and Rescue

Houston Citizen's Police Search Team

K9 Search and Rescue of Texas

Pasadena Volunteer Search Team

Texas Center for the Missing

Texas Gulf Coast Search and Rescue

Independent SAR Personnel:

Joe Hakkinen

Joe Huston