



Basic Training Orientation Packet

For additional information, please visit our website at <http://www.kcesar.org> or email ESAR training at training.admin@kcesar.org

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Basic Training at a Glance

Overview

ESAR Basic Training is a comprehensive program designed to prepare new members for the challenges that they will face in the field. As a trainee, you will receive instruction and demonstrate proficiency in Wilderness Navigation & Survival skills, Search Method Theory, and First Aid & CPR. You will also receive instruction on Helicopter Safety, Legal Issues, and Crime Scene Awareness. After basic training, many of these certifications must be maintained through ongoing training. Some can be renewed by going on missions, whereas others will need to be maintained through continuing education every two to five years.

Advanced Courses

Basic Training prepares you to serve on missions that do not require technical skills or snow/avalanche hazards. Advanced training is available for selected individuals who wish to gain skills for missions involving technical rescue and snow. Courses such as Basic Snow, AIARE 1, Emergency Medical Technician, and Rope Rescue are offered periodically following Basic Training.

Schedule

Basic Training begins in July and runs through April; it is purposefully scheduled during the winter months to give trainees experience working in the worst conditions they could encounter on a mission. Training may involve snow, ice, wind, rain and other unpleasant situations. Trainees are expected to understand how to prevent hypothermia, to be aware of the conditions around them, and to take care of themselves and their team.

Inclement Weather

Training is rarely canceled due to weather. However, in extraordinary cases, training may be canceled at the discretion of the Course Director. To ensure that trainees are made aware of a training cancellation, we will communicate this information via e-mail provided at registration. While we will make every attempt to personally contact potential attendees in this rare circumstance; we encourage all attendees to double-check email prior to heading to training. A canceled training weekend may or may not be made up, depending on scheduling and staffing availability. While safety is always the top priority, there is inherent risk in Search and Rescue. There is a good chance that you will be cold, wet, and miserable.

Courses

Basic Training typically requires a minimum of four full weekends (overnight camping), and up to 40 hours of classroom and practical training. All courses are pass/fail and some trainees may need to repeat one or more additional weekends to successfully complete the series. Make sure to check the online schedule for dates and times.

The courses must be completed and passed in the following sequence to graduate: A, B, C, I, II, III

The Searcher First Aid series is completed in parallel; see the training schedule for more details.

Courses A, B, and Searcher First Aid Intro are in-town, classroom trainings. Searcher First Aid Advanced is a one-day outdoor course. Courses C, I, and II are camping weekends that take place at Camp Edwards, located north of Monroe. Course III is a search simulation exercise in a location that changes every session.

Basic First Aid/CPR/AED Certification

Trainees must obtain an external First Aid/CPR/AED certification (for example AHA, ARC, or ASHI) that include a classroom portion and submit that information by October 1st. Certificates must be valid through April 30, 2026.

Options include, but are not limited to:

- [American Heart Association \(AHA\)](#)
- [American Red Cross \(ARC\)](#)
- [American Safety & Health Institute \(ASHI\)](#)

FEMA National Incident Management System

As part of the application process, trainees are required to complete and submit certificates from the FEMA National Incident Management System (NIMS) 100 & 700 online classes.

IS-100.c <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c>

IS-700.b <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b>

If you are unable to complete the basic training courses in one season, you may continue the next year. Note that in such a case, some courses may need to be repeated. Email training.admin@kcesar.org for details.

NOTE: By submitting an application to join KCESAR, trainees are agreeing to conduct themselves according to the [King County Explorer Search and Rescue Code of Conduct](#).

Membership Requirements

King County ESAR is proud to admit both youth and adult members. The minimum age requirement for this program (upon starting Course B) is either age fourteen and an eighth grade graduate, or age fifteen. There is no maximum age limit. All new members are subject to a background check (repeated every three years) by the King County Sheriff.

The training fee covers the cost of a sighting compass, training manual, and navigation kit (including protractor, Rite-in-the-Rain notebook, calculator, and ruler). The fee also covers your registration dues for the current calendar year and the next year, which allows you to complete the basic training course. The training fee is due 48 hrs prior to the trainee's Course B session. Subsequent dues are \$15 per year (subject to change).

There will be times during training and on missions where photographs or videos will be taken of ESAR members performing search and rescue activities. These photos or videos may be taken by other SAR volunteers, the news media, or the general public. By joining ESAR, it is implied that permission is given for these images to be distributed and used by whoever took them. This may include use in promotional materials, news reports and web pages on the Internet.

Field Members

Field members have completed the Basic Training program and remain compliant with the WAC Field Search and Rescue Responder requirements. All field members are eligible to respond to missions.

Field qualified members must meet the following requirements:

- Current on all KCESAR and KCSARA required trainings
- Participated in at least 2 missions in the previous 12 month period (in the field or CP, non turn around)

- Participated in at least 32 hours of combined mission and training hours in the previous 12 month period

Training Policies

Co-ed and Adult/Youth Teams in ESAR

Explorer Search and Rescue believes that the adult and youth members are vital to the organization, and as such are treated as equals both during training and on subsequent missions and social outings. ESAR also recognizes the need to protect its members and to provide a safe, professional environment at all times.

A majority of the Basic Training program takes place at Camp Edward, a Scouting America camp, in Monroe, WA. We are able to use these facilities because ESAR maintains an Explorer Post with Learning for Life, a subsidiary of Scouting America. During training, both at Camp Edward and elsewhere, teams will consist of same gender, similarly aged members, or will be large enough to provide accountability. Sleeping arrangements will also be separated by gender and age group in accordance with Scouting America policy.

All trainees are expected to demonstrate effective application of skills. If team members are not able to perform these critical skills during a mission, it can pose a significant safety risk. During training, cases where one team member is over assisting, or “carrying”, the other(s) may result in failing the course. In order to avoid these situations and in addition to the age and gender separations, family members will not be allowed to be teamed together.

ESAR trainees and members are never required to participate in an environment that makes them uncomfortable. Please notify the Course Director if you have safety or team composition concerns.

Class Size Limits

Over the last few years, we have had a surge in basic trainee attendance. While this has greatly increased the size of our graduating classes, it has not significantly increased the number of active SAR members showing up to missions. At the same time, it has overwhelmed the staff at our basic trainings, the areas in which we train, and the patience of our trainees as they are forced to endure large class sizes.

In light of this, the ESAR Training Director has instituted class-size limits. The class size limit helps ensure that all trainees receive a high-quality training experience. This asks of you, our basic trainee, that you RSVP in advance for each training course, and that you plan ahead in choosing your training weekends.

The planning, organization, and execution of our training program requires a significant time investment by our volunteers, and a donation-funded financial investment that is only partially offset by our training fee. Its purpose is to prepare future Search & Rescue volunteers to be active participants in our organization. If you are merely looking for navigation or wilderness survival training there are more-appropriate places to take such courses. Please be respectful and reserve the space available on our course for those who are seeking to become active SAR volunteers.

Course Outline

Course A: Introduction to King County Explorer Search and Rescue

Time Commitment: 2 hours, classroom session, on a weeknight.

This informational meeting is used to present ESAR objectives, organization and procedures. Discussions center on basic training course content, requirements for team member field qualification, and personal equipment needs.

Course B: Navigation Basics (Map and Compass), Gear Review

Time Commitment: 8 hours, 1 weekend day (no overnight camping).

This in-town weekend day will cover necessary survival skills to prepare trainees for Course C, a full weekend of outdoor search training. The first half of the day will include instruction and practical application of wilderness navigation skills. Topics include the basic features of maps, the coordinate systems used in search and rescue, how to plot locations on a map, and how to navigate using a map and compass together. Class exercises are interactive; trainees will be given a Navigation Kit (compass, ruler, protractor, pencil) when they check in. The second half of the day wraps up with a required meeting to discuss and answer any questions about what to expect at Course C.

Registration link and info will be sent to all accepted applicants.

PRE-WORK:

There is a required homework exercise that trainees will need to have completed prior to the class. This will be sent out after trainees have applied for and been accepted into the current year's training class. It is due when trainees arrive for Course B. You will not be allowed to attend Course B without the completed homework in hand.

Badge Photo

On the first day of Course B we will be taking photographs when you sign in. This photo will help us put faces to names during training and it will be your badge photo once you have completed training.

Gear Questions

There is time to ask questions about your 48-hour pack at Course B. It's okay if you don't have all of your gear at this point, however your pack must be complete prior to Course C. Staff at Course B will be available to evaluate your personal gear and answer questions so that you are prepared to maximize your experience at Course C.

**REMINDER

By October 1st, trainees are required to submit proof of completion of Basic First Aid / CPR/ AED with a certification that is valid through the following April.

Course C: Search Method Theory and Field Practice

Time Commitment: weekend overnight camping - two days, one night. Trainees are organized into teams for the weekend. Under the direction of Team-Leaders-in-Training, trainees receive instruction and practical experience in litter packing, subject evacuation and basic navigation skills (e.g., maps, compass, pacing). In addition, basic search theory and search types are introduced, familiarizing trainees with the three basic types of search and rescue missions (detailed evidence searches, lost person searches and injured person evacuations). The course is also designed to develop (a) search skills and teamwork among potential team members, (b) leadership skills of potential Team and Field Leaders and (c) support skills for Communication members.

Team members will spend the entire weekend outdoors. Participants will need to bring their full training pack, as detailed later in this packet. They will not return to their cars once the course has started and must complete the entire weekend to pass.

Course I: Basics of Wilderness Navigation

Time Commitment: weekend overnight camping - two days, one night

Participants, in teams of two, are given a series of cross-country and descriptive navigation problems to solve. The training staff provides participants with close supervision and individualized instruction to maximize the opportunity to develop wilderness navigation skills. It may be necessary to repeat this course in order to be fully prepared for Course II.

Course II: Test of Wilderness Navigation Skills

Time Commitment: weekend overnight camping - two days, one night

Two person teams are given a series of cross-country and descriptive navigation problems that must be solved with a specified level of accuracy and within a given period of time. The course tests people's teamwork and navigation skills under physical and mental conditions comparable to the search environment. To be able to meet course requirements, participants may have to take this course multiple times.

Searcher First Aid (Intro and Advanced)

Time Commitment: Two 8-hour weekend days (no overnight)

Searcher First Aid (SFA) consists of two sessions designed to build on skills that trainees learned in basic First Aid/CPR/AED certification. These sessions will introduce trainees to more advanced medical topics like splinting, patient assessment, and other concerns related to delayed care. The second session culminates in scenario-based practice of the full range of first aid skills and rescue equipment use, including litter handling.

Course III: Simulated Search Operation

Time Commitment: weekend overnight camping - two days, one night

Small teams under the direction of Team, Field, and Operations Leaders, participate in simulated rescue missions, with realistic search problems to resolve. Staff members play the roles of subjects, Sheriff's personnel, and other rescue organizations. The course is designed to develop and evaluate (a) search skills and teamwork among potential team members, (b) leadership skills of potential Team, Field and Operations Leaders, (c) experimental field techniques, and (d) cooperation with other Search and Rescue organizations.

Operations Orientation

This meeting teaches trainees how to respond to missions for ESAR. It covers paging codes, guidelines for driving to missions, common locations for Command Post, what to do when you arrive at Command Post, search mentality, what to do about media, debriefing after missions, what to do if you get an injury, lost or broken gear policies, and heading home. Members will receive information about the orientation meeting during training.

Additional Training Requirements

All volunteer search and rescue personnel are required by Washington State and King County Search and Rescue to have training in several additional areas to be field qualified. This includes two additional in-personal classes presented by KCSO; and several online self-guided courses. Details on these requirements will be provided during Basic training.

Registration

General information about training can be found at <http://www.kcesar.org/recruiting.html>.

Trainees will be expected to register online to indicate which session they plan on attending for each course in the Basic Training progression. Specific information on registering for each of the above courses will be e-mailed to you prior to the courses by the Course Directors. **You may not register for more than one session of a course at a time or register for a course before you have completed the prerequisite(s).**

Registering for training weekends is very important. Do not show up at a training weekend without registering first. Registration allows ESAR's training staff to prepare adequately for the amount of trainees each weekend. And as with real missions, we want to make sure you make it to training safely. If you have registered and do not show up at training that weekend, we will make every effort to locate you, and we are incredible at finding people. If you register and decide

to cancel, make sure to cancel your registration in a timely manner. Make sure you list your cell phone and/or an emergency contact who knows that you will be attending the training in case we need to locate you.

Equipment

Obtaining Equipment

You will almost certainly need to acquire some equipment to complete Basic Training. If you have previous hiking and/or camping experience, you may already have some or all of the required gear. Throughout the various courses, training staff will try to assist you in judging what equipment you will need to purchase/borrow, and when you will need each item.

We recommend you do not rush out and buy a brand new set of gear for basic training. Not only does it take a lot of experimentation to determine which gear is right for you, but ESAR training is notorious for ruining new Gore-Tex rain gear and other expensive equipment. While you will receive more guidance at Course A, it is generally a good idea to start collecting necessary items before Course B.

It is possible to obtain gear on the cheap from sources such as garage sales, thrift stores (such as Goodwill, Value Village, St. Vincent de Paul), and Craigslist. Army/Navy Surplus and thrift stores are great sources of warm, heavy-duty clothing and accessories. Ascent Outdoors in Ballard and Wonderland Gear Exchange in Fremont have a wide selection of new and used hiking and mountaineering gear. You may also try the sporting-goods section of stores such as Target, and Fred Meyer. Specialty recreation stores, such as REI and Feathered Friends rent gear at reasonable rates. You may also borrow gear from friends or family.

The 48 Hour Pack

https://kcesar.org/assets/doc/48_Hour_Pack_2022.pdf

Backpack

- You may need up to 75 liters of space
- Make sure your pack is fitted to you before coming to the trail.
- Bag needs to be sturdy enough to strap a litter to, and go through thorns.
- Line with trash bags, and put everything in waterproof bags

Navigation Kit – You may want to purchase a chest pack or fanny pack to make sure you can easily access:

- Ruler (provided)
- Rite in the Rain (provided)
- Pencils (and extra pencils) (provided)
- Calculator (provided)
- Compass (provided)

Clothing – Cotton clothes are an automatic failure. All packed clothing needs to be in waterproof bags such as gallon sized Ziplocs or dry bags. Normal Gore-Tex will shred if not protected. Your outer layer needs to be strong: neoprene, hunting shell, Carhartt, Military Gore-Tex.

This list includes the clothes you arrive in:

- Base layer shirt (2)
- Mid layer shirt (warm)
- Base layer bottoms (2)
- Waterproof Pants (be wary of pants that absorb water, the Swamp of Surrender awaits you)

- Socks (2 or more, consider waterproof up to the knee)
- Hooded Waterproof Jacket
- Insulated Hat/Balaclava (2)
- Gloves (additional warm gloves than just the work gloves)
- Boots (waterproof)
- Gaiters (recommended)

Additional Required Gear:

- Eye Protection (Safety glasses, no snow goggles)
- Sleeping bag (triple wrap in plastic trash bags and tape shut or use dry bag)
- Foam Cell Sleeping Pad
- Polyethylene Tarp one 8X10 and one 10X12 (Plain blue yard tarp, no tents allowed)
- 50' to 100' Paracord
- Tent Stakes (lightweight and skinny) (Recommend 6)
- Headlamp, Extra Batteries, and a Backup Light
- Extra Ziploc Baggies, Multiple Sizes
- Flagging Tape (at least 20')
- Toilet Paper (double wrapped)
- Folding Pocket Knife (small and lightweight)
- Leather Work Gloves
- Whistle
- Watch (with alarm)
- Water Purification Tablets or Filter
- Water (two quarts minimum)
- Mess Kit (whatever you need to successfully eat)
- Stove with Fuel
- 36 Hours of Food (at least one hot dinner)
- Waterproof matches (10, waterproof container)
- Lighter
- Spare trash bag (2)
- Sunglasses (1 pair)

First Aid Kit (In waterproof container)

This is a suggested minimum number of supplies you should carry. Depending on the time of year, terrain to be covered, length of trip/search, group size, known or suspected patient injuries and level of your training, you may carry additional equipment and/or supplies.

Band Aids (12)	Elastic Bandage (1 large)
Sterile Gauze Pads, 4" x 4" (4)	Aspirin / Tylenol/Advil (12 in sealed container)
Roller / Kling Gauze 4" wide (2 rolls)	Antacid (Tums/Rolaids) (1 roll or blister pack)
Triangular Bandages (2)	Plastic bag (1 gallon)
Moleskin/Adhesive padding (1 pkg)	Nitrile Gloves (6 prs)
Athletic Tape, 1.5" wide (1 roll)	Hand sanitizer (1 oz. bottle)
Safety Pins (4 large)	Alcohol wipes (6 packets)

Recommended Gear:

- Waterproof Map Case

Zone Method of Packing

A well-organized pack can make the difference between drudgery and enjoyment during the time spent on the trail. A few simple principles that are often overlooked can make a difference. Technically speaking, the body has a center of gravity located directly over the ankles. When standing normally there is very little forward lean of the body. However, when a pack is placed on the back the body leans forward to bring the pack's center of gravity directly over the ankles. Consequently it is good to keep the pack's center of gravity as close to your back as to prevent unnecessary forward lean.

ZONE A

This area is closest to the back and should carry heavier items, like a stove, tent hardware, water bottles, etc. There is also benefit in placing the densest weight high in the pack, as it will be more directly over the center of gravity.

ZONE B

This middle area should be packed with medium density objects.

ZONE C

The area farthest away from the body's center of gravity should be filled with the lightest equipment.

Getting Into a Heavy Load

Most backpackers have developed a method of putting on a pack. However there are a few recommendations, which have proven to be easy and safe for both pack and packer. Before following the suggestions outlined, start with a realistic weight by loading the pack as if you were going on a hike.

1. Stand by the pack with the load side turned away. If you are right-handed, point your right foot toward the pack.
2. Stepping backward with your left foot and crouching slightly to slant your right thigh, drag or lift the pack to rest on your thigh.
3. Steadying the pack with the left shoulder strap, and holding the upper part of the right shoulder strap, put your right arm under the shoulder strap. Reach downward with your right hand to grasp the lower right corner of the pack. Twist your upper body to the right and pull the right shoulder strap into place.
4. Lifting the pack with your right hand, swing your right elbow back to slide the pack around on your back. While the pack is held high and far to the left, put your left arm through the shoulder strap and pull the strap into place.
5. Buckle the hip belt in place and adjust the shoulder straps to hold the pack high on your back. Tighten the hip belt to relieve the pressure on the shoulder straps.
6. To remove the pack, reverse the procedure shown. Just remember; never let the loaded pack drop on one leg as damage may occur. With practice a loaded pack can be put on or taken off with ease and without injury or damage to the person with the pack or to the pack itself.

Helpful Hints

Gear

- Break in new gear, especially boots, prior to training weekends.
- Try on your pack and walk around with it prior to Course C. You will wear it ALL weekend during Courses C, I, II, and III, so it should fit correctly and not be more than 1/3 of your body weight.

- Consider attaching paracord to anything that you will need to access frequently (e.g. compass, pencil, Rite-in-the-Rain). Tie it to your equipment instead of just putting it in your pocket.
- Water bladders (e.g. Camelbaks) are great for easy access to water (drink on the go!) but can freeze in the winter or leak. Nalgene bottles are great for filtering water, and make great containers for hot water, which can then be put into your sleeping bag at night.

Packing

- Items that should be easily accessible: Map, compass, Rite-in-the-Rain, pencil, headlamp, safety glasses, safety gloves, warm gloves, hat, rain gear, gaiters (wear these), food & water. You will need these starting at the beginning of each outdoor course. Some trainees find it helpful to have a waist pack or other pouch to keep items easily accessible.

General

- Metal items (hand warmers, metal watches including Apple Watch, Garmin/Suunto etc., pencils, clicker, buildings, carabiners, etc.) may influence your compass.

Training Notes

For outdoor courses (C, I, II, SFA Adv & III) you will be sent home and not allowed to complete training if you:

- Are wearing cotton or linen.
- Are wearing something other than hiking boots (e.g. flip flops, trail shoes, or tennis shoes).
- Do not have all the necessary gear to safely do training (e.g. safety glasses, safety gloves).
- Arrive late.

For all courses

- You must show up on time. Be prepared with all your gear and ready to go at start time. For outdoor weekends, plan to show up at least 30 minutes ahead of time to get ready (e.g. put on boots, gaiters, rain gear, etc.).
- It takes about an hour to get to Camp Edward from Bellevue. Plan for extra travel time if this will be your first time at Camp Edward.
- Plan for extra time for both packing and travel in case of inclement weather (or if you generally need it).
- You cannot camp out at Camp Edward the night before the trainings.

Youth

- The ESAR Teen Advisory Board welcomes all teens! We will be reaching out to you during the training season to connect you to teen members who will be a resource for you as you complete training and join the team. If you run into problems registering for a course, tracking down gear or have other questions about SAR that you are unable to find the answer to, please reach out to our Youth Coordinator: youth@kcesar.org.

Resources

- Questions about training? Contact training.admin@kcesar.org or visit <http://www.kcesar.org/>
- Questions about KCSO/DEM? Learn more at www.emd.wa.gov