# Aviation Search and Rescue Study

(ASAR)

JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 14, 2012

Study principles

- JTC directed to address:
  - Where aviation search and rescue operations should be located to benefit searches
  - Duplication of services and training
  - Best use of state and federal funding
  - Source of funding if ASAR relocated
- Meetings to be held in Olympia
- Conduct Study within existing funds

Aviation Search and Rescue

- The general Search and Rescue mission is to locate, access and stabilize persons to save life and limb.

- This effort can be for:
  - Missing vessels
  - Lost persons
  - Natural or man made disasters

- ASAR is the mission of resolving aircraft emergencies.
  - Follow up on false alarms
  - Search for missing aircraft

- Once located, local law enforcement performs rescues.
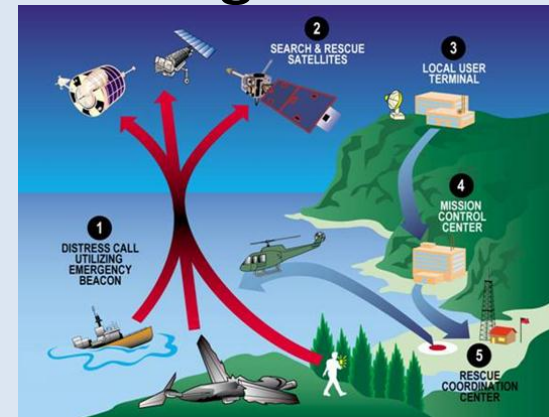
Study Work Group

- Work Group of stakeholders
  - WSDOT; State Patrol; Military Department
  - Civil Air Patrol (CAP); FAA; Air Force Rescue Coordination Center
  - Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association; Washington Pilots Association; Washington Air Search and Rescue (WASAR)
- Numerous individual interviews / interactions
  - Understand agency roles, relationships & concerns
  - Review study documents
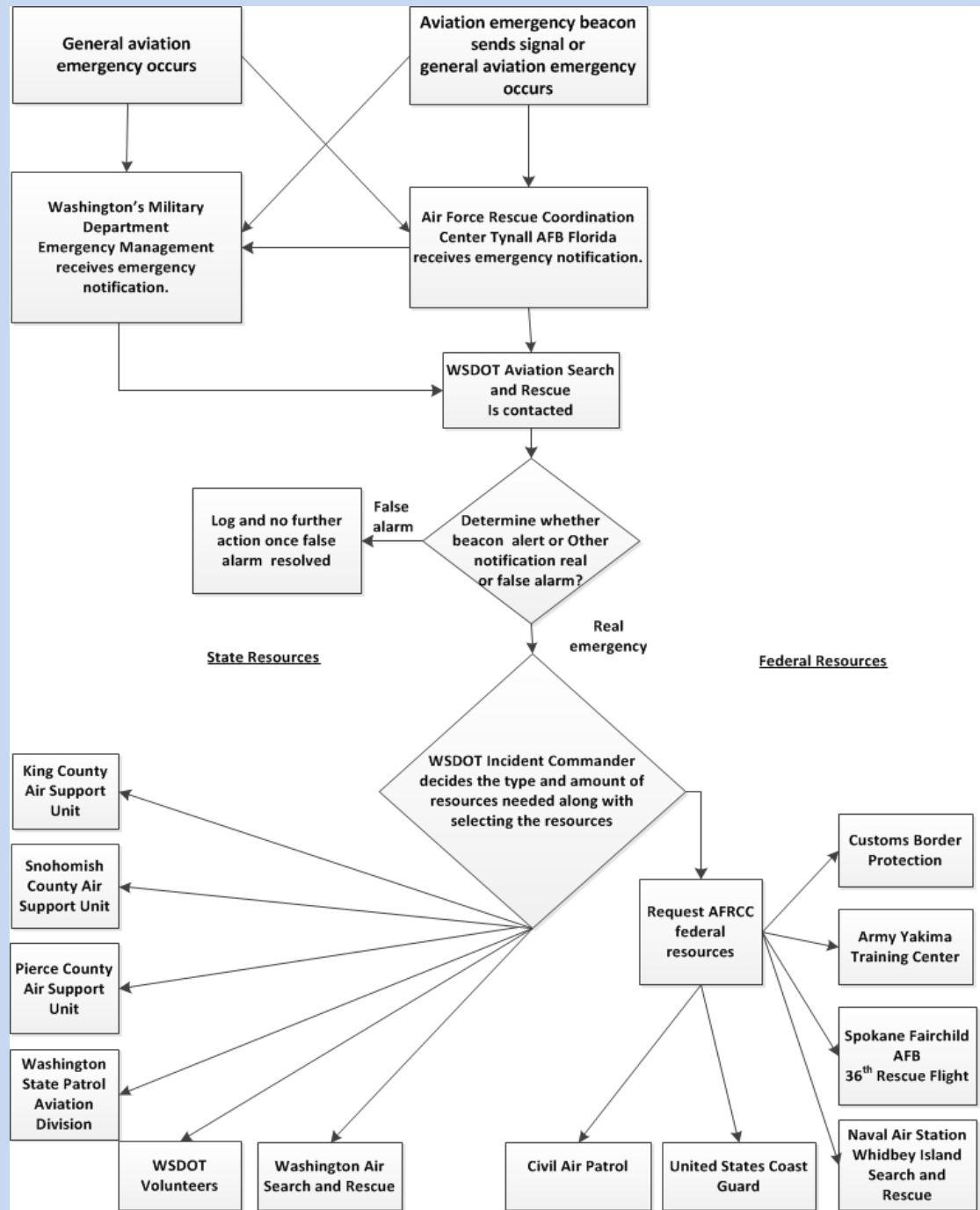- Work Group met on July 31, 2012

ASAR Procedure

- State law assigns ASAR to the WSDOT (RCW 47.68.380)
  - One staff person, plane, emergency vehicle, & volunteers
- Missions are for general aviation aircraft
  - Emergency signal is activated
  - Other types of reports of missing or overdue aircraft
- WSDOT oversees search and rescue effort.
- WSDOT responsible for training and certifying volunteers.
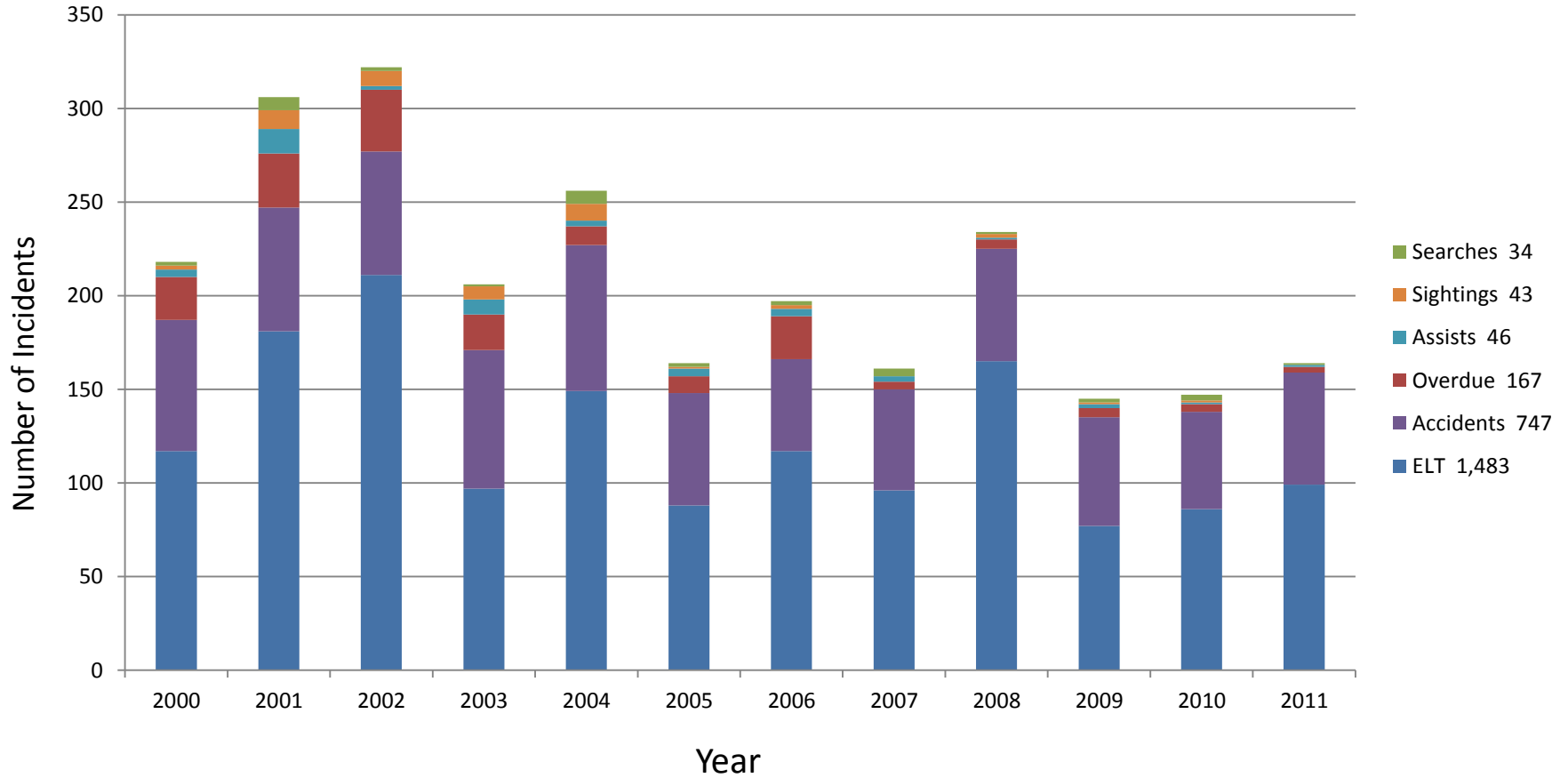
WSDOT's ASAR Process

WSDOT'S ASAR Process

- Determine alarm status
- Alert / Activation
  - Coordination with other partners
    - Military Department, Air Force Rescue Coordination Center
    - Notification of Resources: CAP, WASAR, local law enforcement
- Execution / Operations
  - Resources to the field
  - Mission safety

Air Search and Rescue Process

General aviation emergency occurs

Aviation emergency beacon sends signal or general aviation emergency occurs

Washington's Military Department Emergency Management receives emergency notification.

Air Force Rescue Coordination Center Tynall AFB Florida receives emergency notification.

WSDOT Aviation Search and Rescue Is contacted

False alarm

Log and no further action once false alarm resolved

Determine whether beacon alert or Other notification real or false alarm?

Real emergency

State Resources

Federal Resources

WSDOT Incident Commander decides the type and amount of resources needed along with selecting the resources

King County Air Support Unit

Snohomish County Air Support Unit

Pierce County Air Support Unit

Washington State Patrol Aviation Division

Request AFRCC federal resources

Customs Border Protection

Army Yakima Training Center

Spokane Fairchild AFB 36th Rescue Flight

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Search and Rescue

WSDOT Volunteers

Washington Air Search and Rescue

Civil Air Patrol

United States Coast Guard

Air Search and Rescue Incidents

Study Observations and Recommendations

Study Observations
General Observations

1. An effective ASAR program is important in WA

2. States house their ASAR programs in a variety of agencies:

    - Emergency Services (24 states)

    - State Police (11 states), and

    - Department of Transportation (8 states)

3. Washington's ASAR program is well regarded.

4. Public organizations and private organizations contribute to Washington's program.

Study Observations (cont'd)
WSDOT ASAR Program

5. Little support among stakeholders to transfer ASAR to another agency

6. WSDOT ASAR program is broader than searches
    - Training volunteers, tracking beacon alerts

7. One staff person at WSDOT with many ASAR duties

8. Program dependent on one person, little back-up

9. Communication between WSDOT and volunteer organizations is vital.

10. More transparency needed between WSDOT and volunteer organizations.

11. WSDOT biennial budget is $400,000.

Study Observations (cont'd)
Search-Related Issues

12. Technology improves search success but drives more work (resolving beacon alerts).

13. Nationally, 83% of pilots do not file flight plans.

14. WSDOT and Civil Air Patrol training programs could be better coordinated.

15. WSDOT ASAR training is largely in Western Washington

16. The number of qualified ASAR mission pilots and other volunteers is declining, as are the number of searches.

DRAFT Recommendations

WSDOT Administration

1. The ASAR program should remain at WSDOT.

2. Assess whether ASAR should remain in Office of Emergency Management or go to Aviation Division

3. Cross-train WSDOT personnel for ASAR.

4. Make ASAR policies and processes more transparent

5. Work more closely with aviation stakeholders

6. Progress report by WSDOT on implementing study recommendations to JTC in 2013.

DRAFT Recommendations
ASAR Training

7. Better coordination for training
   - WSDOT and CAP course uniformity
   - Coordinate course materials and scheduling

8. WSDOT should expand ASAR training course offerings in Central and Eastern Washington.

9. WSDOT should more clearly designate training required for ASAR missions.

DRAFT Recommendations
General Aviation Safety Enhancements

10. and 11. Organizations involved in general aviation should:

> --encourage pilots to file flight plans

> --help educate pilots on the importance of emergency beacons and flight safety policies

12. The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, along with WSDOT, should encourage installation of Model 406 emergency beacons

13. Aircraft registration renewals, newsletters, and other measures should be used to enhance general aviation safety

Next Steps

- Address comments from JTC members
- Circulate Draft Report to Study Group
- Present DRAFT Report to JTC in December

Questions