Skamania County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue

Applicant Information Packet

Fall/Winter 2026 Application Cycle
Field, Support, and Community Support Volunteers

At a glance	
Application submission window	**Opens:** October 1, 2026 **Closes:** October 31, 2026, 11:59 PM Pacific Time
Before you submit	Attend **one All-Hands Meeting** within the last 3 months **and one Info Session** within the last 8 months
Experience needed	None. We teach you. We look for people who are reliable, coachable, and able to commit.
Ways to serve	Field Volunteer · Support Volunteer · Community Support Volunteer
How to submit	One email with all completed forms to **recruiting@scsosar.org**
Questions	recruiting@scsosar.org · scsosar.org (Join Us page and team calendar on the Schedule page)

Dear Prospective Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in the Skamania County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue (SCSOSAR) team. SCSOSAR volunteers support the Skamania County Sheriff's Office in search, rescue, and emergency response throughout Skamania County and the surrounding region. Some of our volunteers work in the field. Others keep missions, the team, and our community connections running. Every role matters to a mission's success.

Safety, responsibility, and professionalism guide everything we do. Because of that, every prospective volunteer completes a structured process: attending meetings, applying, interviewing, completing Orientation and role-based Academy training, passing a background check, and registering with the Washington State Department of Emergency Management (DEM).

We have laid out every step and every date for this cycle in this packet. You should know what is coming, when you will hear from us, and what we will ask of you. Please read it all the way through before you apply. It answers most of the questions people ask us.

Thank you for being willing to give your time to Skamania County. We look forward to meeting you!

With gratitude,

Skamania County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue

What's in this package

Document	What it is	What you do with it
1 · Information Packet	This document. Steps, dates, roles, and what to expect.	Read it. Keep it.
2 · Application & Questionnaire	Fillable PDF. Includes your meeting attendance log, role interest, and interview consent.	Complete, sign, and submit.
3 · Background Check & DEM Form	Fillable PDF. Sent to the Sheriff's Office *only* if you accept an Academy invitation.	Complete, sign, and submit.
4 · Tier I Minimum Field-Ready Gear List	The minimum gear a Field Volunteer must own before a pack check.	Read it. Not needed to apply.

Three Ways to Serve

You do not need to pick perfectly. Tell us what interests you on the application, and we will talk it through at your interview. Volunteers may request a change of role later through our volunteer process.

	Field Volunteer	Support Volunteer	Community Support Volunteer
What you would do	Ground searches, rescues, and patient packaging and transport in rugged terrain and all weather, day or night. Specialty teams (ropes, drones, K9, e-motos, swiftwater, and others) later on.	Enable missions and the team: base operations, logistics, communications, equipment, transportation, records and administration, technology, public information, fundraising, training support.	Serve the team and the public: community outreach and education, recruiting, fundraising, event staffing, administrative projects, and search-base or volunteer rehab support when assigned.
Goes into the field?	Yes, once qualified; never self-deploys	No. Except for limited-duty base-ops roles. Field work requires separate qualification; never self-deploys	No. Except for limited-duty base-ops roles; never self-deploys.
Academy	Full Academy: Orientation, two hands-on days, and Qualification Day.	Orientation required. Hands-on days and Qualification Day depend on the role.	Orientation required. Hands-on days and Qualification Day depend on the role.
Gear list & pack check	Required before being activated as field-ready.	Depends on the role.	Depends on the role.
Policy reference	Policy 404	Policy 406	Policy 408

Required of every volunteer, in *every* role

- Attend an Info Session and an All-Hands Meeting before applying (see **Before You Apply**).
- Submit a complete application and complete a panel interview.
- Pass a Skamania County Sheriff's Office background check and register with DEM.
- Attend **Orientation** (Academy Day 1), and subsequent Academy Days dependent upon role.
- Complete the required online core competency trainings prior to the start of Academy.
- Complete **FEMA IS-100 and IS-700** and hold current **First Aid / CPR / AED** certification by the onboarding milestone we give you. For Field Volunteers, that milestone is Qualification Day.
- Complete a probationary period (~ 12 months) with regular participation, and uphold SCSOSAR's values.

Academy capacity this cycle

Up to **15** interviewees will be invited to Academy, across all roles. Some Support and Community Support roles may not require the Academy hands-on days. The number of those placements is at SCSOSAR's discretion after interviews. Academy capacity subject to change at the discretion of SCSOSAR.

Before You Apply

You do **not** need certifications or SAR experience to apply. What matters most is availability, team fit, and a first-responder mindset. Applicants who already hold First Aid/CPR/AED or FEMA IS-100 and IS-700 (or a comparable combination of training) *may* be weighted more favorably in scoring. Holding them never guarantees advancement.

Required before you submit

STOP — DO NOT SIGN OR SUBMIT YET UNLESS…

You have attended **at least one SCSOSAR All-Hands Meeting within the last 3 months AND at least one Info Session within the last 8 months** before the date you submit.

Applications submitted without both may be administratively returned and not reviewed. Log every meeting and Info Session you have attended in Section C.

- **All-Hands Team Meetings** are held the **2nd Thursday of every month, 7:00–9:00 PM**, at North Bonneville Fire Department, North Bonneville, WA 98639. They are open to the public. For this cycle, the **August 13, September 10, and October 8** meetings qualify for any submission date in October.
- **Info Sessions** are about one hour and cover who we are, the roles, time commitment, training, typical costs, mission types, the probationary period, and this application process. Any Info Session within the last 8 months counts, including one from the Spring 2026 cycle.
- Attending more than one All-Hands Meeting is recommended, but not required. We take attendance, and how often you have joined us is one of the factors SCSOSAR *may* consider when reviewing applications.
- You will also need a valid driver's license, reliable transportation, vehicle insurance that meets Washington state minimums, and the ability to pass a background check.

Fall 2026 Info Sessions

Date	Time	Format	Details
Thursday, October 8	6:00–7:00 PM	In person	North Bonneville Fire Department. Stay after for the All-Hands Meeting at 7:00 PM and you will meet both requirements in one evening.
Saturday, October 10	2:00–3:00 PM	In person	Location: North Bonneville Fire Department.
Wednesday, October 14	7:00–8:00 PM	Virtual	Google Meet. The link is sent after you RSVP.

Please RSVP so we know you are coming: **click here** or copy/paste this link in your browser: https://forms.gle/4S9gBUs6gk86cf5N7

Any added sessions will be posted on the team calendar at scsosar.org. Info Sessions may be cancelled with no notice if no RSVP's are received for specific scheduled dates/times.

Your step-by-step path

1. **Attend an Info Session and an All-Hands Meeting.** The sooner, the better. Write down each date.
2. **Recommended: start FEMA IS-100, IS-700, and First Aid/CPR/AED.** They are free (FEMA) or low-cost, and required later. Instructions are at the end of this packet.
3. **Complete Document 2** (Application & Questionnaire), including the attendance log, role interest, interview availability, and, if you have served with SCSOSAR before, Section H.
4. **Complete Document 3** (Background Check & DEM Form).
5. **Check the STOP box one more time**, then sign both forms.
6. **Email everything in ONE email** to **recruiting@scsosar.org** between October 1 and October 31, 11:59 PM PT. Subject line: *Fall 2026 Application – Last Name, First Name*. Attach Documents 2 and 3 as PDFs, plus any certificates you already hold (optional).
7. **Watch your email and phone** for November 10–11 (interview invitations).

Your Interview

Format: in person, with a panel of 3–5 selected SCSOSAR volunteers, about 20–30 minutes (scheduled in 30-minute slots). Location is North Bonneville Fire Department

What we ask about: teamwork, receiving feedback, and following through on commitments, plus a short scenario for the role you are interested in: field, support, or community support. We may also cover your availability and the expectations of your intended role. We will make every effort to leave time for your questions.

No SAR experience is needed to answer. Examples from work, school, volunteering, caregiving, or everyday life are welcome.

Answer with CAR

For questions about past experiences, CAR keeps your answer focused. Aim for about two minutes per answer.

C · Context	A · Action	R · Result
Briefly explain what was happening.	Describe what *you* personally did.	Share how it turned out and what you learned.

- You do not need to memorize answers, and it is fine to take a moment to think.
- We are interested in your judgment, your actions, and your willingness to learn.
- Panelists take notes and may ask follow-up questions or gently redirect to stay on schedule.
- If you have served with SCSOSAR before, we may ask about your prior service, your departure, and your interest in returning.
- If you need an accommodation to take part in the interview, tell us on the application (Section I) or by email.
- A more detailed interview guide is to be included with your interview invitation.

Fall/Winter 2026 Cycle: Every Date

Put these on your calendar now, **including backup dates**. We only use backups for weather, missions, or other unforeseen circumstances, and will tell you if we do. The team calendar on the schedule page at scsosar.org should always be current, though there is a delay in it receiving updates at times. All times are Pacific Time.

In addition to monthly meetings – After Academy day 1 (Orientation), part of Academy and ongoing team participation, is to attend monthly Team Field Trainings (offered the Saturday [9 AM - 1 PM] following the monthly meeting, and an alternative date of 10 days later on Tuesday 6-10 PM) While you're welcome to attend both identical field trainings each month, only one is requested or required, depending on role.

Date	What happens	What you do / when you hear from us
Aug 13, Sep 10, Oct 8	All-Hands Team meetings that qualify for this cycle (7:00–9:00 PM, NBFD)	Attend at least one. Log the date(s).
Oct 8, 10, 14	Info Sessions (see previous page)	Attend one (if you have not in the last 8 months). Log the date.
Thu, Oct 1	**Application window opens**	Submit once you meet the STOP-box requirements.
Sat, Oct 31, 11:59 PM	**Application deadline**	Late or incomplete applications may not be reviewed.
Mon, Nov 9	SCSOSAR reviews and rates every application received and selects up to 20 applicants to interview.	Nothing needed from you.
Tue–Wed, Nov 10–11	**Interview invitations** by email	Reply quickly. Time slots are first come, first served. Applicants not selected to interview are also notified by email.
Thu, Nov 12	November All-Hands Team Meeting, 7 PM - 9 PM	
Thu–Mon, Nov 12–16	**Panel interviews** (30-minute slots)	Arrive a few minutes early to your chosen slot.
Sat–Sun, Nov 21–22	**Backup interview dates**	Used for weather, cancellations, or added slots. First come, first served.
Nov 23 – Dec 6	Panel ratings; the Board of Directors reviews and approves Academy invitations.	Nothing needed from you.
Mon, Dec 7	**Academy invitations** sent by email	Interviewees not invited this cycle are also notified.
Thu, Dec 10	**December All-Hands Team Meeting, 7 PM - 9 PM**	
Sun, Dec 13, 11:59 PM	**Deadline to accept** your Academy invitation	Reply by email to accept or decline.
Dec 14–17+	Background checks and DEM registrations are submitted to the Sheriff's Office.	Processing time varies, especially over the holidays.
Sat, Jan 9, 2027	**Academy Day 1: Orientation** (in person, around 4+ hours). **Required for every role.**	Backup: Sat, Jan 16
Thu, Jan 14, 2027	**January All-Hands Team Meeting, 7 PM - 9 PM**	
Sat, Jan 16, 2027	**January Team Field Training, 9 AM - 1 PM**	Option 1 of 2 for Jan team field training
Sat–Sun, Jan 23–24, 2027	**Academy Days 2 & 3:** hands-on instruction (two 8-hour days). Field Volunteers; other roles as assigned.	Backup: Jan 30–31
Tues, Jan 26, 2027	**January Team Field Training, 6 PM - 10 PM**	Option 2 of 2 for Jan team field training
Sat, Feb 6, 2027	**Academy Day 4: Qualification Day** (4–8 hours depending on cohort size). Field Volunteers; other roles as assigned.	Backup: Sat, Feb 13
Thu, Feb 11, 2027	**February All-Hands Team Meeting, 7 PM - 9 PM**	
Sat, Feb 13, 2027	**February Team Field Training, 9 AM - 1 PM**	Option 1 of 2 for Feb team field training
Feb 7–20, 2027	Leadership reviews Academy graduates for field-operational status.	New volunteers are recognized at an upcoming All-Hands Team Meeting
Tues, Feb 23, 2027	**February Team Field Training, 6 PM - 10 PM**	Option 2 of 2 for Feb team field training
Through Sep 30, 2027	**Probationary period**	Participation, team fit, and character are observed with extra care.

Up to 20 applicants are interviewed and up to 15 are invited to Academy. Capacity limits subject to change at the discretion of SCSOSAR. Anyone not selected at any stage is welcome to reapply in a future cycle (next window: Spring 2027, information for the Spring application cycle should be posted online by February 1st, 2027).

Returning Volunteers

If you have served with SCSOSAR before, welcome back. We value the experience former volunteers bring. Under Policy 411, returning volunteers:

- Complete the same application process as everyone else, plus **Section H** of the application.
- Should expect SCSOSAR to review past volunteership / prior service as part of the evaluation.
- Do not automatically return to a previous role, qualification, seniority, credential, or equipment.
- Can expect to be asked to complete current Orientation, Academy, training, qualification, or other readiness requirements, as appropriate to the circumstances. Final approval rests with the Board of Directors.

Returning from an approved Leave of Absence? That is a different process (Policy 405). Email us instead of applying.

The Commitment

SAR is deeply rewarding, and it asks a lot. This is a volunteer first responder role. Volunteers are expected to:

- Attend regular team meetings and training events.
- Maintain required certifications and training standards.
- Field Volunteers: take part in a share of missions, which can happen day or night, in severe weather, and on holidays.
- Maintain personal readiness and, for field roles, required personal gear (purchased over time).
- Uphold the professionalism and values of the team.

Talk with your family and employer before you apply. A realistic plan for your time is one of the most important things we discuss at the interview.

Equal Opportunity, Essential Functions, and Volunteer Status

SCSOSAR provides equal opportunity in volunteer recruitment, selection, training, and participation and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, age, veteran or military status, genetic information, disability, or any other status protected by applicable federal or Washington State law. Selection is based on qualifications, ability to meet required standards, and the needs of the team.

Field operations occur in rugged, physically demanding environments. Field Volunteers must safely perform the essential functions of the role, which may include extended hiking over uneven terrain, carrying required gear, lifting and packaging patients, and assisting with patient transport. All volunteers must complete the training and meet the standards required for their role. Reasonable accommodations will be considered consistent with applicable law and operational safety requirements.

SCSOSAR volunteers serve in a voluntary capacity and are not employees of the Skamania County Sheriff's Office or Skamania County. Volunteers receive no wages, salary, benefits, or other financial compensation.

FEMA IS-100 & IS-700

Washington State requires all SAR personnel to complete two free, online FEMA courses introducing the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). They give everyone a common structure and language when working alongside the Sheriff's Office, fire districts, and regional SAR partners.

Not required to apply. Required for every volunteer by the onboarding milestone we give you (Field Volunteers: Qualification Day). Completing them early may strengthen your application.

IS-100.c · Introduction to the Incident Command System

- Overview and registration: training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c
- Course materials: https://training.fema.gov/programs/independent-study/coursematerials.aspx?code=IS-100.c
- Direct course link: https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0100.c/content.html

IS-700.b · An Introduction to the National Incident Management System

- Overview and registration: training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b
- Course materials: training.fema.gov/is/coursematerials.aspx?code=IS-700.b
- Direct course link: https://emilms.fema.gov/_is0700b/curriculum/1.html

How to complete them

Step	
1	**Get a FEMA Student ID (SID)** at cdp.dhs.gov/femasid. You need it to take FEMA Independent Study courses.
2	**Log in** at https://training.fema.gov/signin/ with your SID.
3	**Enroll in and complete** IS-100.c and IS-700.b at your own pace. Plan on around two - four hours each.
4	**Pass each final exam** with 75% or higher. You may retake an exam.
5	**Download and save your certificates.** Attach them to your application package if you have them.

If a government funding lapse makes FEMA courses or exams unavailable, the deadline is extended until they are accessible again.

First Aid / CPR / AED Certification

Required for every volunteer by your onboarding milestone, typically by Qualification Day. Recommended providers:

- American Red Cross: CPR, First Aid, and AED certification
- American Heart Association (AHA): Heartsaver® First Aid CPR AED
- Skamania County EMS public education offerings
- Cascade Training
- Other local fire departments and hospitals (search "CPR First Aid AED certification near me")
- SCSOSAR may host an opportunity for this certification prior to Qualification Day, but this is not a guarantee.

Questions? Email **recruiting@scsosar.org**. We are a team of busy volunteers, so please check this packet, the Join Us page at scsosar.org, and an Info Session first. If you are still stuck, we are happy to help.

Information, dates, documents, and links are subject to change. The team calendar at scsosar.org is always the most current.