



SSAR Annual Report

2022

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Leading is being able to help groups of people move towards a common goal, where the sum of a project is larger than what anyone could contribute alone. It's easy to see sometimes: somebody offering to take the baton, break the trail, or lead the next pitch. More often, however, it's subtle: someone suggesting we slow down, shift our goals, or take a break to enjoy the snacks they brought. It's a kind word, a group that values your input, and an affirmation that whatever you can give is enough.

When I reflect on the year at a personal level, it's not the successes that stand out, but rather the opportunity to work as part of this team. Every task, every board meeting, and every training day I see examples of this type of leadership. I'm reminded that while some of us are in more formal roles, each and every one of us is certainly a leader in this team.

In this document you will find reports from the members of our group that represent various parts of our society. Reading through, it's clear that we've had an absolutely massive year with many well-executed projects and initiatives. It's incredibly challenging to give thanks to any one person when so many people have contributed to and been instrumental in our shared success. Thank you all.

While this report is perhaps illustrative of how much is going on, it is also worth reflecting on how it takes a community effort to provide the service we do. Every single person that has contributed or donated towards the team makes a huge impact. Every corporate sponsor is instrumental in getting us to where we are. To our family and friends: without your support behind the scenes, I don't know if we could pull it off. I really couldn't be more proud of what we've been able to pull off together over the last year.

It takes a village..

Special thanks to Matt Payne for his editorial work on this report, which continued well into the 11th hour. Without Matt, this report wouldn't be possible.

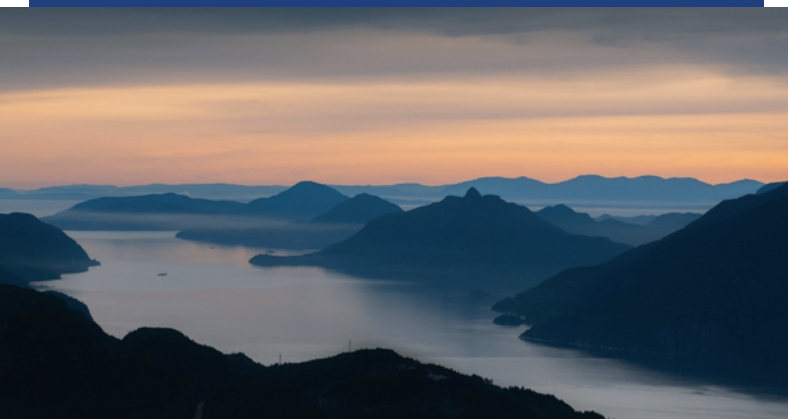
The Squamish Search and Rescue Society was founded in 1975 by 8 friends acting as an extension of the community's Emergency Response Program. Since then, Squamish Search and Rescue has grown to include more than 80 members who respond to over 100 calls each year and donate thousands of hours of their personal time to training. In cooperation with the BC Ambulance Service, Squamish RCMP, Squamish Fire Rescue Services and the BC Coroners Service, SSAR members are dedicated, highly skilled volunteers who respond to backcountry emergencies, providing critical lifesaving services at zero cost to lost or injured subjects. SSARS is a 100% volunteer-run, registered non-profit organisation. **For backcountry emergencies, dial 911 and ask for the police.**

Our response zone stretches from Porteau Cove in the South all the way to Daisy Lake in the North and encompasses some of the most heavily trafficked outdoor recreation areas in all of British Columbia, including the Sea-to-Sky Gondola and Sky Pilot mountain range, the Stawamus Chief, Garibaldi Provincial Park and the Tantalus mountain range. The greater Squamish area is also home to 6 major bodies of water (Howe Sound, and the Mamquam, Squamish, Cheakamus, Cheekye and Stawamus Rivers) and countless lakes offering a full complement of water-based activities, as well as myriad world-class mountain biking trails.

With such a vast geographical area to cover and the possibility for nearly limitless recreational activities it is imperative that Squamish Search and Rescue be a flexible and well-rounded group, capable of responding to a variety of emergency situations.



Although our namesake derives from the tradition of ground searches for lost and missing persons, our members are highly trained in multiple disciplines ranging from wilderness first aid to advanced rescue operations.



Purpose

Squamish SAR (SSAR) is a community-based volunteer organisation that provides free ground and inland water search and rescue services, wilderness public safety, and emergency services.

We promote the importance of trip planning and outdoor safety with our emphasis on public education and outreach, and strive to mitigate the severity of the accidents that do happen.

Our goal is to save lives by fostering excellence and proficiency in volunteer search and rescue through consistent annual training in multi-modal rescue techniques.

Values

Safety - everyone goes home.

Teamwork - we are better together.

Trust - we are honest, reliable and value-driven in all our interactions.

Learning - we will never know too much.

Community - we support each other in our shared passions, attitudes, interests and goals.

Specialized Teams

Ground Search and Rescue

Water Rescue

Winter Response

Avalanche Rescue

Rope Rescue

Class "D" (CDFL & Hoist)

Prevention / AdventureSmart



2022 Leadership

SSAR Board of Directors

Raz Peel

President

BJ Chute

Vice- President

Cheryle Bass

Secretary

Executive and Director positions carry a term of 1-2 years and are voted on by members of the society at an Annual General Meeting.

Chris Welsh

Treasurer

Alex Deslauriers

Director - Training

Bob Manson

Director - Operations

Cindy Welsh

Director - Special Projects

Sue Nicholson

Director - Building,
Equipment, Infrastructure

Jarrett Zavitz

Director - Membership

Cam Stuart

Director - Buildings,
Equipment, Infrastructure

The SSAR board of directors is responsible for clear direction and oversight of the organisation.

They focus on high-level strategy, planning and accountability of the organisation as a whole so that our individual SAR Managers and Team Leads can focus on the task at hand.

Non-Voting Directors

Past President - Gerald Wolfe
Legal Counsel - Devin Anderson
Fundraising - Kathy Wolfe
Communications - Christy Allan

Members

SSAR is comprised of a tight-knit group of 80+ members, the majority of whom serve in many capacities, both operationally and non-operationally (ie. administrative support).

Our tracking systems for volunteer hours are not currently robust enough to provide comprehensive hours of service outside of task hours, however most active members contributes hundreds of hours of training and non-task-related hours per calendar year.

This number increases dramatically for any additional role(s) on a specialized team or administrative support team.



Photo Credit: Michael Overbeck

2022 At A Glance



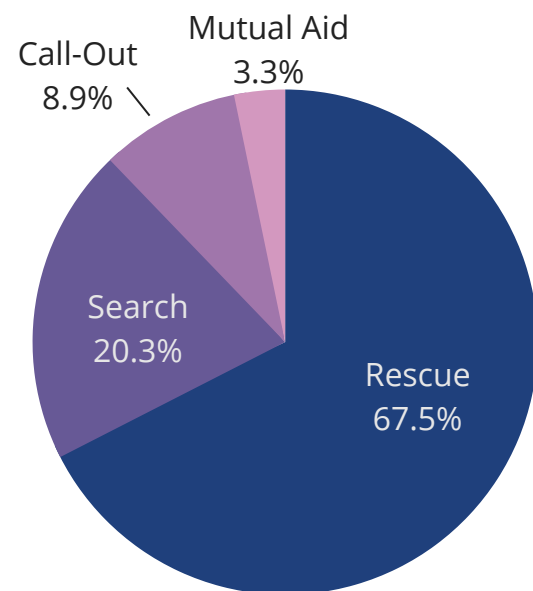
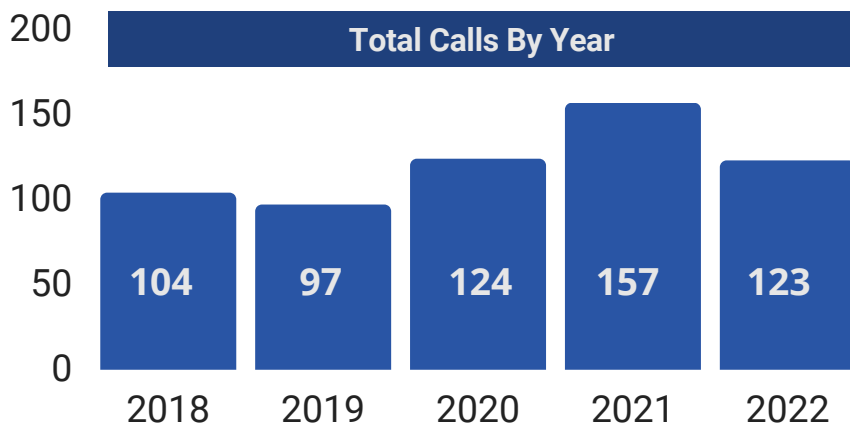
123 Calls

68% Rescue Calls

Busiest Month:
July (23 calls)

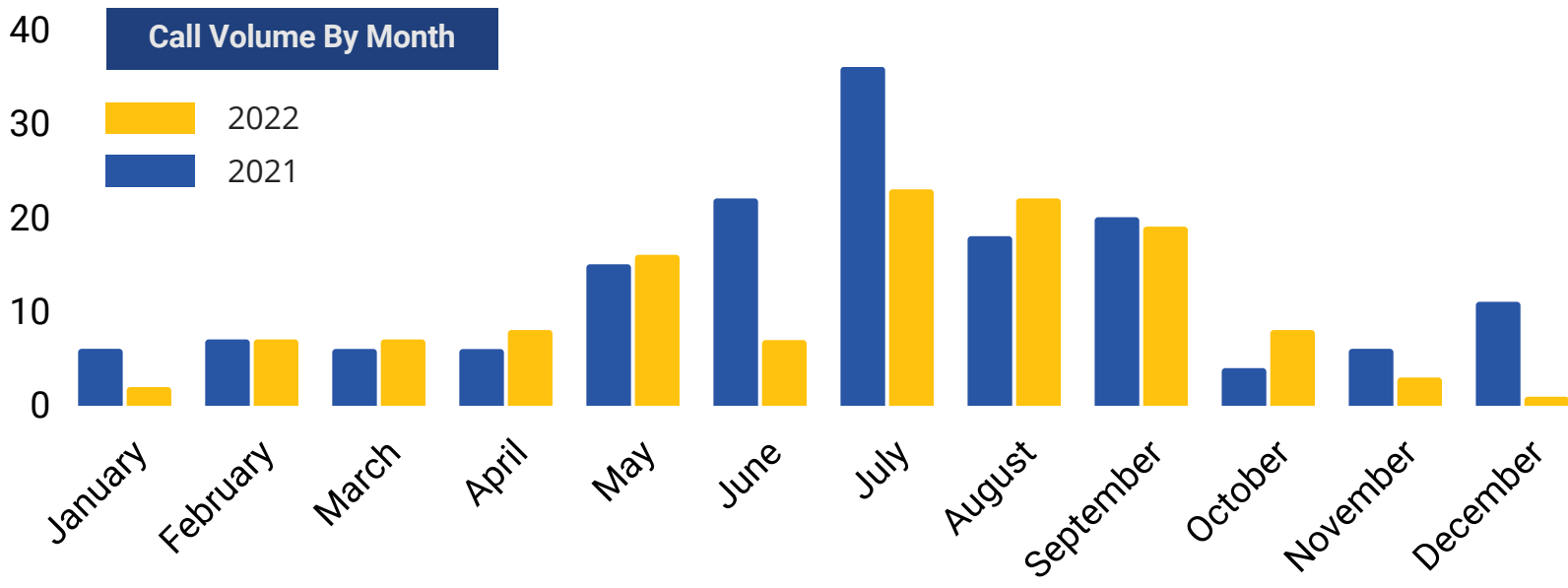
Most Common Call:
Hiker Rescue

Total Calls By Year



Types of Calls (2022)

Call Volume By Month



Takeaways



123 Calls

In 2022 Squamish Search and Rescue responded to **123 total calls**, 34 fewer than the previous year. The 2022 Fall season, specifically between August and October, was busier than 2021 however a significant decrease throughout June and July accounts for much of the difference year over year.

The Winter months (January, November and December 2022) were also noticeably quieter, presumably due to unseasonably warm weather conditions. Call volume remained similar or slightly increased in 2022 for most of the Spring “shoulder season” (March, April, May).



Tourism and the high density of popular and accessible trails are most likely to blame for the tight grouping of calls near the Chief and the Gondola. Similarly, the severity of calls in the Diamond Head area can likely be attributed to the number of mountain bike trails in the area.

Geographically, our busiest response areas were The Chief (including the Slhaney trail) with 20 calls.

The most common call type was a rescue for injured hikers (49 calls), followed by mountain biking (26) and climbing (22).

Our highest severity response area is the Diamond Head Trail Network. We see less total calls here than other areas but calls in this area are typically of a much more serious nature.



As pandemic restrictions were lifted and people settled back into their normal routines we saw our 2022 call volume drop to similar levels as 2020. Although this number is still an increase from 2018 and 2019 it seems likely that 2021’s 157 calls were an outlier due to pandemic-related restrictions and/or weather (2021 heat dome).

Prevention

The Prevention Team spent over 671 hours working on 58 different events, including school presentations in Lions Bay, Squamish, Whistler and Pemberton as well as community events at high traffic trailheads within our response zone reaching a total audience of 4019 people.

The team supported the organisation's goal of "fostering volunteer search and rescue excellence" by further educating the public about safety and preparedness. In conjunction with the External Communications Team they helped create new signal mirror cards that can be handed out at events or on tasks and were also involved in several engagement pieces with local newspapers and the SSAR Newsletter.

Prevention Team Coordinator, Christine Strub, represented Squamish Search and Rescue and the BC AdventureSmart Steering Committee at the District of Squamish Visitor Management Roundtable.

The Prevention Team was awarded the two available stipends issued by SARVAC in recognition of their contributions to AdventureSmart programs throughout the Sea to Sky corridor.

AdventureSmart



Get informed & go outdoors!

Member Recognition

As a 100% volunteer-run organisation we would be nothing without our people.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to each and every one of our members who selflessly give their time and expertise to serve their community.

In particular, we would like to recognize those members who have helped grow Squamish Search and Rescue.

The following members celebrated their 5, 10, 15 and even 35 years of service of milestones in 2022.

5 Years of Service

Shawn Campbell
James Dahmer
John Furneaux
Ben Kwiatkowski
Carrie Lula
Sue Nicholson
Jens Ourom
Raz Peel
Stephen Peters
Kristi Teske
David Thanh

10 Years of Service

Ben Hawkins

15 Years of Service

Mike Rafferty

35 Years of Service

Gerry Woods