



2023

**Squamish
Search
And
Rescue
Society**

Annual
Report

A Message from the President

I've been fortunate to have the privilege of peering into the many moving pieces of our society. We're a busy group; as you read this report, at least one person will receive an email about work that needs completion. What makes it manageable is that everyone contributes in many different ways. Some are, at times, shouldering the lion's share of the work. Without them, this report would be much shorter. It's worth highlighting, however, that it takes every team member's contributions to dream bigger and do more. These combined efforts make this team something we should all be proud of.

Over the past year, we've reached higher, leapt forward, and looked further into the future than ever before. We can do this because we stand on the shoulders of giants. Squamish has a long history of incredible people rising to incredible feats. This year, we recognized some of these people as honorary members who are bastions of our society, not just because of the laundry list of accomplishments they have collected but because they so brilliantly represent the spirit of volunteerism in the province. They have shown up in times of need again and again and again.

As I near the end of my term, I want to highlight the strength of our board of directors' efforts and my immense gratitude for having the chance to collaborate with them over the past few years. Behind the scenes, the board is responsible for the organization's well-being. We come together to engage, dissent, disagree, and collaborate. What makes this group special is the sentiment and character of those involved. I've seen us approach conflict with kindness, and I've seen us disagree with our peers. However, instead of pushing others down, we've sought ways to move forward by bringing everyone along. We could sail in many different directions now and in the future, but we must agree on a path. If you want to feel more inspired, look no further than the current leadership of this team. It has been an absolute privilege to serve within a group that continues to find ways forward for everyone involved.

My final, sincere thanks go to our unsung heroes: our corporate sponsors, funders, those who went above and beyond the call of duty, those who donated time and energy to special projects, our incredible team of coordinators, and lastly, our friends and family, without whom none of this would be possible. I hope you enjoy reading through these reports this year. As you do, consider offering a word of encouragement to a fellow team member. I've said this often: it takes a village. Thank you for being part of it.

Raz Peel

Special thanks to Matt & Lianne. Without their support, this report wouldn't be possible.

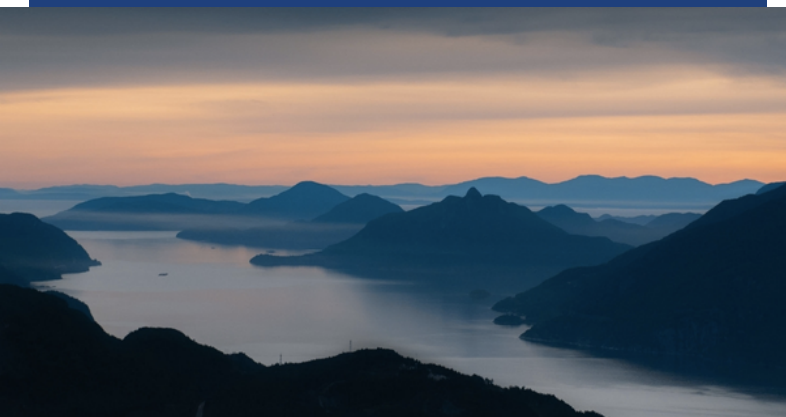
The Squamish Search and Rescue Society was founded in 1975 by eight friends as an extension of the community's Emergency Response Program. Since then, Squamish Search and Rescue has grown to include more than 80 members who respond to over 100 calls yearly and donate thousands of hours to training. In 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 organization.

Our response zone stretches from Porteau Cove in the South to Daisy Lake in the North. It encompasses some of the most heavily trafficked outdoor recreation areas in 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 significant 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, Squamish SAR must have a well-rounded response structure capable of responding to various emergencies.



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 organization 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.

We foster 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

UAV (Drone) Operations



Vehicles

Our response area covers a multitude of different terrain and climates, necessitating a wide array of transportation options. Many people are to thank for keeping our vehicles in response-ready condition. Still, a special thank you goes out to Craig Oliver and the District of Squamish for handling regular maintenance and upkeep on our primary response trucks.

Land

Ford Transit Passenger Van

Ford F-350 Water Response Truck

Ford F-350 Support Truck

Hino Rescue Truck

2 x ATVs

5 x e-Bikes

2 x Snowmobiles

3 x Trailers (ATV/Snowmobiles/Boat)

NEW!

Land Rover Defender 130

(arriving March 2024)



Air

Helicopter services provided by **Blackcomb Helicopters**.

Water

Inflatable Kayak
Soft Bottom Inflatable Boat
Rescue Boat

2023 Leadership

SSAR Board of Directors

Raz Peel

President

Cam Stuart

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

Jeff Fielding

Director - Membership

Renee Lemmon

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 just under 100 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 contribute 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.



2023 At A Glance

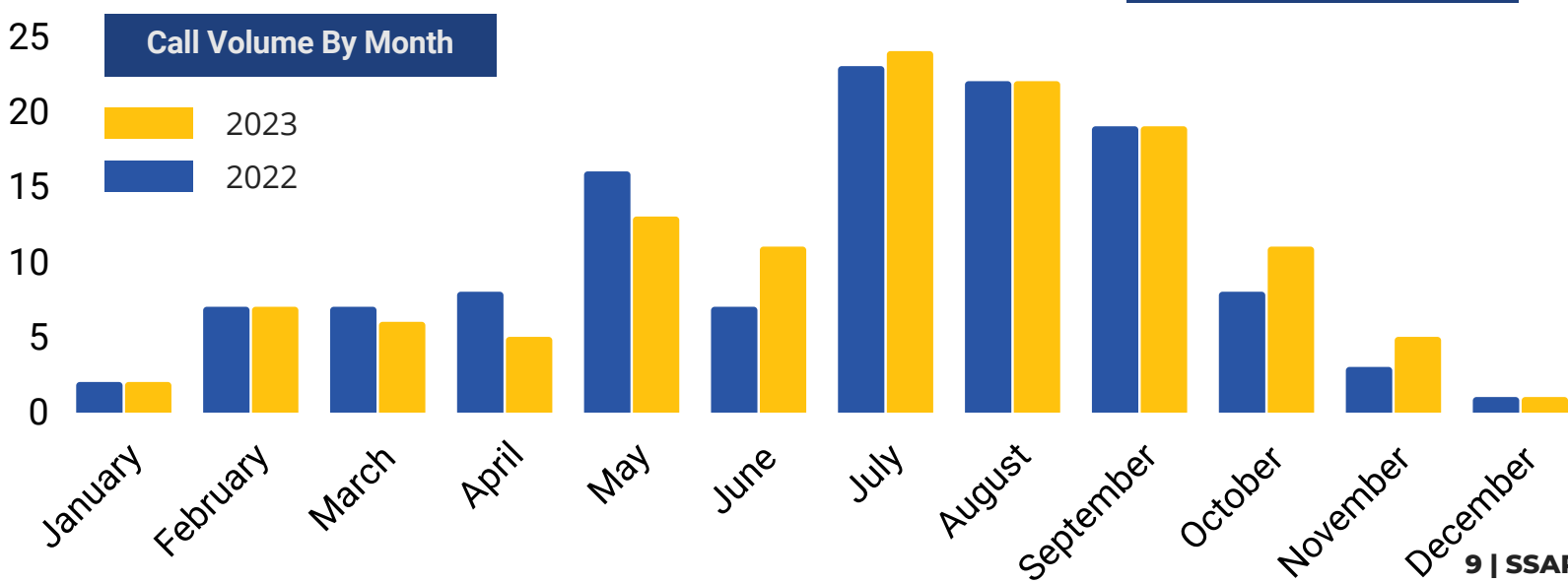
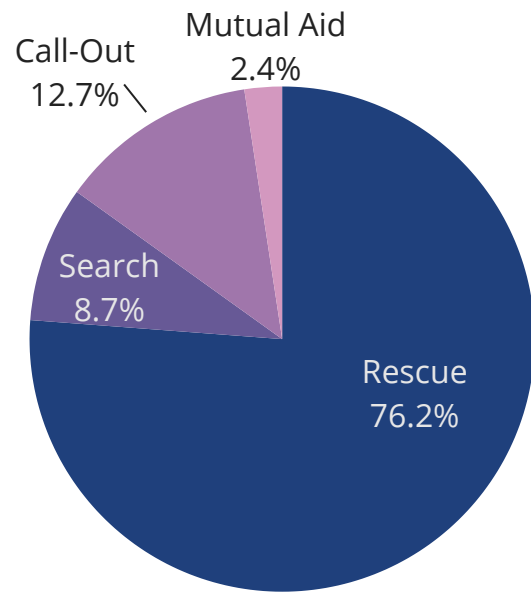


126 Calls

76% Rescue Calls

Busiest Month:
July (24 calls)

Most Common Call:
Hiker Rescue



Takeaways

Squamish Search and Rescue responded to **126 total calls in 2023**, three more than the 2022 response year.



126 Calls

Although Spring “shoulder season” (March/April/May) responses were down (24) compared to the previous year (31 in 2022) abnormally warm and sunny conditions persisted through October and November, likely contributing to the increase in call volume (16) through the late Fall months (October/November) compared to Fall of 2022 (11).

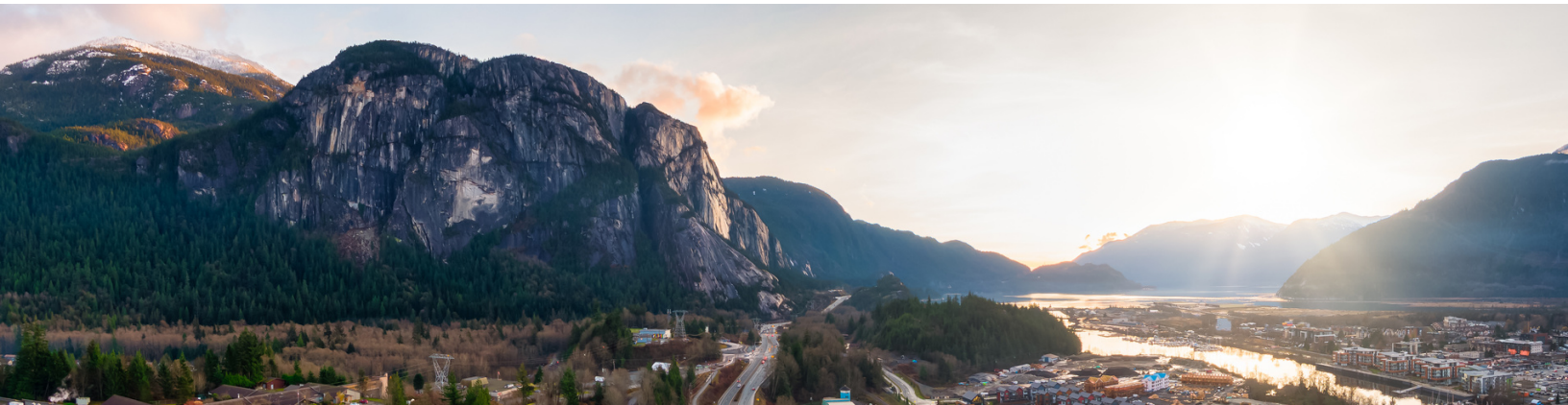


Tourism and the high density of popular and accessible trails are most likely responsible for tight groupings of calls near the Chief and the Gondola. Similarly, the severity of calls in the Diamond Head area can likely be attributed to the number of mountain bike trails in the area.

Geographically, our busiest response areas were The Chief and the Sea to Sky Gondola/Shannon Falls/Sky Pilot area with 19 and 17 calls, respectively.

Notably, 2023 saw a significant increase in calls in and around the Alice Lake area (11) and the Tantalus Mountain Range (6).

The most common call type was a rescue for injured hikers (48 calls), followed by mountain biking (27) and climbing (15).



With a noticeable trend of warmer weather and changing annual weather patterns it seems likely we will continue experiencing an increase in call volume during the Fall months, almost as an extension of our busy summer response season. In contrast, milder weather may result in less busy Winter seasons, as lack of snow or poor conditions stifle plans for winter activities like backcountry skiing and sledding.

Prevention

2023 was an important community outreach year for the Squamish SAR Prevention Team. We started off with a presentation to the Rotary Club of Squamish, teamed up with the Squamish Beer Festival fundraising team and ran a successful tent/table at the Brackendale Fall Fair.

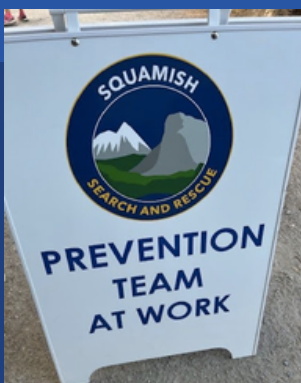
2023 also marked the inaugural "It Just Got Real" MTB outreach event, hosted at our very own SSAR compound. This 2 hour information session for local mountain bikers included discussions around helicopter awareness, the anatomy of a SSAR call for an injured biker and some great chats with members of our local mountain bike community. As an added bonus, we were able to raise \$700 from the by-donation registration fee!

Other events the prevention team took part in included the UBC Rock Party, Brennan Park Summer Camps, the Squamish Library summer reading club, out of school camps and home school groups and several different scout groups, to name a few. Our efforts resulted in 22 individual events, with 207 volunteer hours and a total of 2123 participants.


Finally, as BCs leading Search and Rescue outreach team we were the ideal candidate to support the BCSARA trailhead data collection program, where we were asked to help BCSARA determine outdoor users' level of preparedness.

2023 was a big year, but we have already started our 2024 season with an outreach event at the Britannia Mine Museum and have received more requests for presentations in January and February than ever before for this time of the year.

Thank you to everyone inside and outside the organization for your support in our prevention efforts!



2023 Land Rover Defender Service Awards

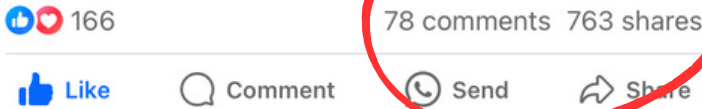
 Squamish Search and Rescue
Sep 15, 2023 · 🌐





VOTING IS NOW OPEN!!

Exciting News! Our team is the ONLY Canadi... See more


**DEFENDER
SERVICE
AWARDS**
PRESENTED BY CHASE 

VOTE FOR SQUAMISH SAR!

 166 78 comments 763 shares

 Like  Comment  Send  Share



2023 was a Texas-sized year for our team, being crowned winners of the "Search & Rescue and Emergency Support Services" category of the Defender Service Awards. This entire competition was a massive team effort, and we could not have done it without the incredible support of our local and national supporters. We can't wait to show off our brand new Land Rover in 2024!

Special shout-out to Kathy Wolfe, Christy Allan and Nat White for their tireless work in making this dream a reality!



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.

This year in particular, we would like to recognize a special subset of members who were awarded lifetime “Honorary Member” status in recognition of their tremendous contributions to the growth and continued success of Squamish Search and Rescue.

Doug Woods

John Howe

John Wilcox

Gerry Woods



Member Recognition

Our members go above and beyond to respond to every call that comes in, often sacrificing precious time with family and friends. We would like to recognize all of our members who reached some incredible milestones in their time with SSAR. Special shout-out to Sue, Craig, Nils and Raz who reached 300+ calls this year.

*** Note that the numbers below ONLY include calls from 2012 - 2023 (inclusive). Data was not collected prior to 2012. Some longstanding members' total calls (number) may be inaccurate as a result.*

500+ Calls

BJ Chute (958)

Mike Teske (602)

John Willcox (576)

300+ Calls

Landon James (396)

Tyler Duncan (389)

John Howe (360)

Sue Nicholson (343)

Craig Oliver (326)

Nils Robinson (317)

Raz Peel (301)

200+ Calls

Stephan Peters (290)

Ben Hawkins (284)

Fraser Young (267)

Jacki Willcox (266)

Bob Manson (247)

James Morris (244)

Michelle Clark (238)

Jacob Lagercrantz (235)

Doug Woods (220)

David Thanh (214)

100+ Calls

Malcolm Schulz (169)

Michael Adams (165)

Michael Rafferty (160)

Cheryle Bass (157)

Cindy Welsh (156)

Andrius Kirdeikis (150)

Brendan White (148)

Shawn Campbell (146)

Alex Deslauriers (131)

Kristian Wild (131)

Josh Danielson (127)

Jamie Flynn (126)

Nat White (126)

Mark McMahon (125)

James Dahmer (121)

Christine Strub (117)

Laure Lejeune (116)

Phil Bonham (102)

Jarrett Zavitz (101)



2023