



INSARAG Guidelines 2026

Appendix 5.22: ASR Levels

Endorsed and approved by the INSARAG Steering Group on 10 March 2026

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Abbreviations

ASR	Assessment, Search and Rescue Level
BoO	Base of Operations
ERS	Emergency Response Section
EMT	Emergency Medical Team
GDACS	Global Disaster Awareness and Coordination System
GPS	Global Position System
GRG	Guidelines Review Group
HNPW	Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week
HNS	Host Nation Support
ICMS	INSARAG Coordination and Management System
IEC	INSARAG External Classification
IER	INSARAG External Reclassification
IMTST	Information Management Technical Support Team
IRNAP	INSARAG-Recognised National Accreditation Process
INSARAG	The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
ISG	INSARAG Steering Group
LEMA	Local Emergency Management Authority
NAP	National Accreditation Process
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSOCC	On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
RDC	Reception and Departure Centre
RSB	Response Support Branch
UCC	USAR Coordination Cell
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
UN	United Nations
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
VOSOCC	Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre

1 ASR Level 1

ASR Level 1: Wide Area Assessment	
Definitions and purpose	• The preliminary survey of the affected or assigned area. • For the purpose of: ○ Determining the scope and magnitude of the incident. ○ Identifying scope, location and types of damage. ○ Estimating the urgent resource needs. ○ Developing a sectorisation plan. ○ Establishing priorities. ○ Identifying general hazards. ○ Identifying infrastructure issues. ○ Identifying potential BoO locations. • Usually accomplished by; vehicle, helicopter, waterborne craft, on foot or from reports from others e.g. the LEMA. • Initial, fast visual check of the damaged or assigned area. Teams carrying out this level of assessment must remain mobile, not engage in rescue operations and report the results as quickly as possible.
Carried out when and by who	1. The LEMA often do this prior to the arrival of teams and provide all or some of this information. <i>If it is not complete it may be beneficial to redo this.</i> 2. Can be done by members of the OSOCC/UNDAC team on their arrival. 3. USAR teams.
INSARAG Tools	1. Information on the VOSOCC. 2. RDC/OSOCC briefing. 3. These could be supported by information such as: LEMA briefings, maps, GPS coordinates, photographs, and video. 4. ICMS.
Outputs	1. OSOCC/RDC/UCC briefing. 2. Sectorisation plan. 3. BoO location(s). 4. Initial priorities and plan 5. Resource requests e.g. more teams. 6. Posts on the VOSOCC. 7. Updates on the ICMS dashboard.

2 ASR Level 2

ASR Level 2: Worksite Triage Assessment	
Definitions and purpose	- The main purpose is to identify specific and viable live rescue sites within the allocated sector to allow assignment prioritisation and make a plan of action. - It needs to be a fast paced but methodical assessment. - The aim is to assess the whole sector in a timely manner. - The Worksite Triage form must be used to gather the essential information at this stage. - Information from the local population and local responders is often valuable and should be sought during the assessment. - Rescues are not usually performed during this level unless an unexpected opportunity arises. - If live victims are found the decision on whether the assessment team stays to start the rescue or carries on the assessment will be dependent on the situation and the brief the team received, some options are: - Create a worksite form. - Additional resources are called in to carry out the rescue via the UCC/SCC. The Assessment team stays but must ensure the sector assessment continues simultaneously, keeping UCC/SCC advised of progress/delays. - Assessment is completed by others as soon as possible, request through UCC/SCC. - Adopt a strategy to send a combined team able to do both ASR Level 2 sector Assessment and ASR Level 3 Rapid Search and Rescue (split squad methodology). - An ASR Level 2 Assessment can be repeated later if it is thought necessary, e.g. a night time assessment or an assessment with additional dogs, which may produce different results. - In this phase it may be decided to switch to rapid response if the possible number of worksites strongly exceeds the available operational capacity (in the sector).
Carried out when and by who	- It is preferably done closely behind the Level 1 Wide Area Assessment and as soon as possible after sectors have been established. - The LEMA may have sectorised and started this process prior to assistance arriving. If this is not complete it may be beneficial for a USAR team to redo this. - If the LEMA has not done this, then it should be the first action of the initial USAR team(s) in a sector. - USAR teams. - Use of dogs or technical search equipment is optional and will depend on the situation. Using these will improve the detailed results but will slow down the process; a balance is needed.

INSARAG Tools	1. Worksite Triage form. 2. Briefing from UCC. 3. A map of the sector area being assessed is highly recommended and should be used to clarify the areas assessed and cleared. <i>There could also be information such as: LEMA briefings, information from local teams, GPS coordinates, photographs etc.</i> 4. ICMS
Outputs	1. Completed Worksite Triage Forms identifying viable worksites. 2. A completed worksite ID. 3. A correctly marked worksite for triage. 4. A map of the sector showing the area covered by the assessment. 5. Development of the sector plan of action and priorities by UCC. 6. Assignment of USAR teams to worksites. 7. Further resource requests. 8. Approved data in the ICMS dashboard. 9. An up to date ICMS dashboard.

3 ASR Level 3

ASR Level 3: Rapid Search and Rescue	
Definitions and purpose	- Usually applies in the early stages of a large-scale event when a relatively small number of teams are available compared to the number of sites that require search and rescue. - Fairly rapid progress needed to ensure the allocated structures are all searched relatively quickly to maximise the lifesaving opportunities. - There is relatively modest commitment to each site with: - Use of physical, dog or technical search techniques. - Rescue operations using debris removal and limited shoring, breaking and breaching etc. - Limited penetration into the structure/rubble. - The search and/or rescues are normally possible to complete within one operational period, e.g. a few hours. - A team will not normally undertake long term operations (more than one operational period) to penetrate deeply into the structure unless there are strong indications of live victims. - Deeply entombed victims may not be found during this level - At this level teams should identify those structures or worksites where a Level 4 search might be worthwhile. - If a confirmed deeply trapped live victim is identified, team may extend to Level 4 operations if the assignment constraints and restraints allow or they get permission from sector coordination. However, they must ensure Level 3 work is completed for the remaining worksites assigned to them. In case they are not able or do not complete the rescue, they should ask for additional resources. - If additional rescue sites are identified at any time, then a new Worksite ID should be created. - The SCC/UCC must keep track of all ASR3 assignments and reassign to the site for ASR4, except for those sites being reported not to need ASR4.
Carried out when and by who	- This is usually done when USAR teams are initially allocated into sectors. - Should always be done at identified worksites. - Done by light, medium and heavy USAR teams. - This work might also be done by the LEMA's national teams. - One USAR team may be able to operate simultaneously at more than one worksite due to the limited commitment.
INSARAG Tools	- Worksite Triage form. - Worksite Report form. - Victim Extrication form. - Worksite marking system. - ICMS.
Outputs	- Completed Worksite Reports. - Marking of worksites.

	3. Completed Victim Extrication forms.
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4 ASR Level 4

ASR Level 4: Full Search and Rescue	
Definitions and purpose	This is the SAR work that should identify, locate and rescue the small number of heavily trapped or entombed survivors that local rescuers, first responders, LEMA resources or ASR Level 3 operations did not achieve. Teams will penetrate most or all of the survivable voids. These are likely to be longer term (more than one operational period) operations requiring a wide range of USAR skills, e.g.: All possible search techniques and equipment and often repeated as access is achieved. Possibly extensive shoring to make the structure or access routes safe. Heavy and repeated breaking and breaching of the full range of structural elements. Lifting and/or moving of large elements. Some delaying may take place at this level if access is needed to an identified potential live rescue. Working in confined spaces, sometimes deep inside structures. This may involve several teams on the same worksite. Complete command and control of the worksite is needed.
Carried out when and by who	This level is normally carried out after or in conjunction with Level 3 Rapid Search and Rescue. If the LEMA has identified specific sites already, a team may go straight into Level 4 operations as their first tasking. Carried out by medium and heavy USAR teams.
INSARAG Tools	Worksite Triage form. Worksite Report. Worksite Marking system. Victim Extrication form. ICMS.
Outputs	Completed Worksite Reports. Marking of worksites. Completed Victim Extrication forms.

5 ASR Level 5

ASR Level 5: Total Coverage Search and Recovery	
Definitions and purpose	• This usually means operations carried out at a worksite to recover the deceased victims. • It is conceivably still part of the rescue phase if this is deemed necessary by the coordinating authority. • There may be a “miracle” find of a live victim that is achieved as the structure is de-layered or deconstructed. • If the work relates to collapsed structures or rubble pile worksites this work can include: ○ Searching or making access into every possible void. ○ All the USAR skills listed in Level 4. ○ Delaying of large elements to allow access to all parts of the structure or rubble pile. ○ Working with heavy machinery, e.g. cranes and demolition equipment, to achieve this access. ○ Complete command and control of the worksite is essential.
Carried out when and by who	1. This is usually done after the rescue phase. 2. This level is not normally carried out by international USAR teams. 3. Usually done by the LEMA resources for their own body recovery purposes. 5. International USAR teams can be asked to undertake this task where area clearance and body recovery is a high priority. 6. Some international teams may do this and some may not, each team will make their own decision.
INSARAG Tools	1. Worksite Triage form. 2. Worksite Report form. 3. Worksite Marking system. 4. Victim Extrication form. 5. ICMS.
Outputs	1. Completed Worksite Reports. 2. Worksite Marking. 3. Completed Victim Extrication forms.
Area Clearance to ASR Level 5	• This level can also apply to areas where building collapse is less or absent, but USAR skills are needed for access or safety to enable complete clearance of all possible victims. In this case the operations will include: ○ Systematic search of every room of every structure in the assigned area of operation. ○ This operation should quickly clear relatively large areas. ○ If necessary forced entry is used to gain access to all areas.

	○ Heavy machinery may occasionally be needed to clear smaller rubble piles. • This may specifically be for deceased victim location/recovery. • The rules of assignment (brief) must detail what teams do if they locate a live or deceased victim, e.g. call in other teams or stay and deal with it themselves. • Full control and coordination is needed with detailed recording by the teams of the exact areas they have cleared.
Carried out when and by who	1. LEMA resources usually do this but international USAR teams may be asked to do this in some circumstances. 2. USAR teams may or may not decide to move to this phase of work based on various factors e.g. other rescue possibilities, capacity of teams at the event, policy of the team, mandate from sponsors etc.
INSARAG Tools	1. Victim Extrication Form if necessary.
Outputs	1. Report on the work carried out as agreed with the UCC/OSOCC/LEMA. 2. Maps of areas cleared as part of reporting results.