

INTRODUCTION – Virgin Islands -TF1

The Virgin Islands Urban Search and Rescue Task Force One (VI-TF1) is an organized Technical Rescue Team dedicated to saving lives through the enhancement of rescue capabilities in the territory of the US Virgin Islands. Since its inception, VI-TF1 has had two goals: 1) To improve the rescue capabilities of local jurisdictions and 2) To provide an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) response for the US Virgin Islands.

VI-TF1 is the primary response unit for handling Urban Search and Rescue incidents in the USVI. The St. Croix Rescue Department serves as the Sponsoring Agency. The Task Force is structured to maintain a minimum of 72 hours of self-sustaining functionality and the capability of handling extended periods of operations. VI-TF1 is also capable of deployment to provide the rapid, efficient USAR response and incident management where needed.

Chief Gregory N. Richards serves as the VI-TF1 Task Force Leader. The Chief supervises and directs the overall operations of the Task Force. The Assistant Task Force Leader is **Deputy Chief Carl Fleming** of the St. Thomas Rescue Department.

Virgin Islands Urban Search and Rescue Task Force (VI-TF1) is comprised of various Emergency Response Personnel from St. Croix Rescue Squad, VIEMS, VIFS, as well as other emergency response professionals and volunteer members from the St. Thomas Rescue Squad, St. John Rescue Squad and the Water Island Search and Rescue Team.

Background Information

What is Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)?

Urban Search and Rescue involves locating (searching), rescue (extrication), and initial medical stabilization of victims trapped in confined spaces such as a building collapse incident.

Urban Search and Rescue is considered a multi-hazard discipline, as it may be needed for a variety of emergencies or disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, storms and tornadoes, floods, dam failures, technological accidents, terrorist activities, and hazardous materials releases.

The USAR Response System is a framework for structuring existing emergency services personnel from the local level into integrated disaster response task forces. These community-based Search and Rescue teams take advantage of the preexisting organizations that support them, and emergency services personnel already doing this work on a day-to-day basis. In addition to being a national resource when activated, most Task Forces can easily be utilized as a regional emergency response mechanism by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Components of the Virgin Islands USAR Task Force

The Virgin Islands US&R Task Force is comprised of 62 specialists and is divided into four major functional elements:

- * **Search**
- * **Rescue**
- * **Technical**
- * **Medical**

Team members include structural engineers, hazardous materials specialists, heavy rigging specialists, search specialists (including highly trained search dogs), logistics specialists, rescue specialists, four medical specialists and two physicians. By design, there are two personnel assigned to each position for the rotation and relief of personnel. This allows for round-the-clock task force operations. A comprehensive equipment cache totaling approximately 20,000 pounds supports the Task Force.

Capabilities of the Virgin Islands US&R Task Force

Physical search and rescue operations in damaged/collapsed structures.
Emergency medical care to disaster response personnel. Emergency Medical Care to the injured.
Reconnaissance to assess damage and needs and provide feedback to local, territorial, and federal officials.
Assessment / shut-off of utilities to houses and buildings.
Hazardous materials surveys / evaluations.
Structural/hazard evaluations of government/municipal buildings needed for immediate occupancy to support disaster relief operations.
Stabilization of damaged structures, including shoring and cribbing operations, on damaged buildings.

To maintain minimum staffing requirements, there is ongoing recruitment of members to fill the following specialty areas vital for the task force function and response.

Team Managers: Oversee and direct the operations of each of the 4 teams that make up the VI Task Force, i.e., Search, Rescue, Medical and Technical.

Planning Officers: Assist the Task Force Leaders with short and long range planning for the Task Force operations.

Technical Search Specialists: Utilize state of the art equipment, such as search cams and sensitive sounding equipment to locate victims.

Canine Search Specialists: Use highly trained search dogs to locate possible victims.

Rescue Specialists: Individuals trained and equipped to extricate victims from confined spaces, collapsed buildings, or heavy vehicles.

Medical Specialists: Provide advanced medical care for the Task Force members, canines and victims. They are composed of doctors, paramedics and nurses with specialized training.

Structural Specialists: To serve as technical advisors and consultants to evaluate damaged buildings to determine optimal measures to stabilize the building to allow for rescue personnel to remove victims. The Structural Specialists are Certified Engineers.

Hazardous Materials Specialists: Ensure a safe working environment for rescue workers, including containing hazardous materials that may have been released in a building collapse. Each Hazardous Materials Specialist is State Certified.

Heavy Rigging Specialists: Coordinate operations of heavy equipment, such as cranes, backhoes and other equipment needed to move heavy portions of structures during rescue operations.

Communications Specialists: Maintain, configure, distribute and train personnel on all communications equipment in the Task Force cache. Equipment includes local hand held and repeater systems, high frequency short wave and satellite systems, for voice and data transmission.

Information Specialists: Regulate and provide technical information and documentation to the Task Force.

Logistics Specialists: Provide inventory control of specialized equipment and supplies maintained in the Task Force equipment cache.

Safety Specialists: Oversee rescue operations to assure the safety of the rescue workers and other personnel in the area.

FUNCTIONAL RESPONSE ELEMENTS OF VI-TF1 TASK FORCE

The Rescue Team

The Rescue Team is one of four functional task force elements. The team is further subdivided into four Rescue Squads. The primary responsibilities of the team are the evaluation of compromised areas, structural stabilization, breaching and site exploration and live victim extrication.

The Rescue Team, on a mission, is made up of the following positions:

2 - Rescue Team Managers: The Rescue Team Manager is responsible for managing and supervising the rescue function of the task force during incident operations. The Rescue Team Manager reports directly to the Task Force Leader.

4 - Rescue Squads: Each squad has 1 Rescue Squad Officer and 5 Rescue Specialists. The Rescue Squad Officer is responsible for managing and supervising one of the rescue squads of the task force during incident operations. The Rescue Squad Officer reports directly to the Rescue Team Manager. In turn, the Rescue Specialist is responsible for performing the rescue function of the task force incident operation.

The Search Team

The Search Team is one of four task force elements. The primary focus of the team is to locate live victims trapped in collapsed buildings. The team must provide canine, electronic and physical search strategies, tactics and techniques, either separately or in an integrated fashion, as required.

The Search Team, on a mission, is made up of the following positions:

2 - Search Team Managers: The Search Team Manager is responsible for managing and supervising the search function of the task force during incident operations. The Search Team Manager reports directly to the Task Force Leader.

2 - Canine Search Specialists: The Canine Search Specialist is responsible for performing the search function of the task force incident operations. The Canine Search Specialist reports directly to the Search Team Manager.

2 - Technical Search Specialist:

The Technical Search Specialist is responsible for performing the search function of the task force incident operation. The Technical Search Specialist reports directly to the Search Team Manager.

The Medical Team

The Medical Team is one of four functional task force elements. The team is designed to provide sophisticated and possibly prolonged pre-hospital emergency medical care during a mission and at rescue sites. It is recognized that both serious injuries and illnesses may be encountered and will require treatment. The medical personnel are also responsible for minimizing health risks, intervention of critical incident stress syndrome, and limited treatment of hazardous materials exposure, for task force personnel. In addition, the medical personnel are also capable of providing treatment to the search team canine.

The Medical Team, on a mission, is made up of the following positions:

2 – Medical Team Managers

The Medical Team Manager is responsible for managing and supervising the medical function of the task force during incident operations. The Medical Team Manager reports directly to the Task Force Leader.

4 – Medical Specialists

The Medical Specialist is responsible for performing the medical function of the task force incident operation. The Medical Specialist reports directly to the Medical Team Manager.

The Medical Component of VI-TF1

The medical team is comprised of four Medical Specialists and two Physicians. Many of the medical specialists on the teams are both EMT-Paramedics and fire fighters, and thus have both rescue experience and extensive experience in pre-hospital emergency medical care. The physicians involved in USAR are Emergency Medicine specialists, and have also taken special courses in confined space medicine and rescue systems.

The medical team is designed to bring the Emergency Department out to the field. We carry most of the advanced life support equipment available in a state-of-the-art Emergency Department. In addition to providing advanced emergency medical care in the field, the team continues to train in hazardous materials management, public health issues relevant to disaster management, confined space medicine, and other issues important to the function of a USAR Team.

The Technical Team

The Technical Team is one of four functional task force elements. The team is comprised of specialists that support the overall search and rescue mission of the task force. The primary responsibilities of the team are the evaluation of hazardous or compromised areas, structural assessment, stabilization advice, hazardous materials monitoring, liaison with local capabilities, communications and logistics responsibilities, and the information management and documentation requirements of the task force.

The Technical Team, on a mission, is made up of the following positions:

2 - Technical Team Managers: The Technical Team Manager is responsible for managing and supervising the technical functions of the task force during incident operations. The Technical Team Manager reports directly to the Task Force Leader.

2 - Structures Specialists: The Structures Specialist is responsible for performing the various structural assessments for the task force during incident operations. The Structures Specialist reports directly to the Technical Team Manager.

2 – Hazardous Materials Specialists: The Hazardous Materials Specialist is responsible for performing the various hazardous materials assessments for the task force during

incident operations. The Hazardous Materials Specialist reports directly to the Technical Teams Manager.

- 2 – Heavy Equipment and Rigging Specialists
- 2 – Technical Information Specialists
- 2 – Communication Specialists
- 2 – Logistics Specialists

Taskforce Members Minimum Training Requirements for continued Certification

The training needs of the Virgin Islands Urban Search and Rescue Task Force (VI-TF1) reflect the range of tasks that the team could be called on to undertake. The possibilities are very wide ranging and thus the team requires a wide diversity of skills and knowledge. In addition to the minimum training requirements, all task force positions must meet knowledge and skills/abilities criteria as identified by the Team Leader. Minimum requirements must be equivalent to FEMA US&R Task Force requirements. The following is a list of certification courses that are required for Task Force member certification.

Task Force Leader:

- * Incident Command System
- * BLS/CPR
- * Hazardous Materials First Responder Awareness
- * USAR Incident Management System
- * Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Safety Officer:

- * Incident Command System
- * Rescue Systems 1 (or equivalent)
- * BLS/CPR
- * Incident Safety Officer
- * Health and Safety Officer
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- * Confined Space Rescue

Planning Officer:

- * Incident Command System
- * Rescue Systems 1 (or equivalent)
- * EMT / First Responder Certification
- * USAR Systems Operations

- * BLS/CPR
- * Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Search Team Manager:

- * Technical Search Specialist
- * Canine Search Specialist
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * BLS/CPR
- * Critical Incident Debriefing

Canine Search Specialist:

- * Canine Search Specialist
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * BLS/CPR

Technical Search Specialist:

- * Technical Search Specialist
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * BLS/CPR
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - L/M

Rescue Team Manager:

- * Rope Rescue 1
- * Rope Rescue 2
- * Confined Space Rescue
- * Trench Rescue - Basic
- * Trench Rescue - Intermediate
- * Structural Collapse Rescue- L/M
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - Heavy
- * EMT/ First Responder Certification
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * BLS/CPR
- * Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Rescue Squad Officer:

- * Rope Rescue 1

- * Rope Rescue 2
- * Confined Space Rescue
- * Trench Rescue - Basic
- * Trench Rescue - Intermediate
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - L/M
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - Heavy
- * EMT/ First Responder Certification
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * BLS/CPR
- * Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Rescue Specialist:

- * Five Years Rescue Experience
- * Rope Rescue 1
- * Rope Rescue 2
- * Confined Space Rescue
- * Trench Rescue - Basic
- * Trench Rescue - Intermediate
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - L/M
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - Heavy
- * EMT / First Responder Certification
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Surface Water Rescue
- * BLS/CPR

Medical Team Manager:

- *USAR Task Force Medical Operations
- * Licensed Physician - ACL, ATLS, PALS
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Critical Stress Debriefing
- * Confined Space Rescue

Medical Specialist:

- * Certified EMT/ Paramedic/ Nurse with BTLS, ACLS, PALS
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Critical Stress Debriefing
- * Confined Space Rescue

Technical Team Manager:

- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Critical Stress Debriefing
- * BLS/CPR

Structures Specialist:

- * Licensed Civil Engineer
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - L/M
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Confined Space Rescue
- * BLS/CPR

HAZMAT Specialist:

- * HAZMAT Technician Certification
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - L/M
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Confined Space Rescue
- * BLS/CPR

Heavy Rigging & Equipment Specialist:

- * Class A Commercial Drivers License
- * Structural Collapse Rescue - L/M
- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Confined Space Rescue
- * BLS/CPR

Technical Information Specialist:

- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * Confined Space Rescue
- * BLS/CPR

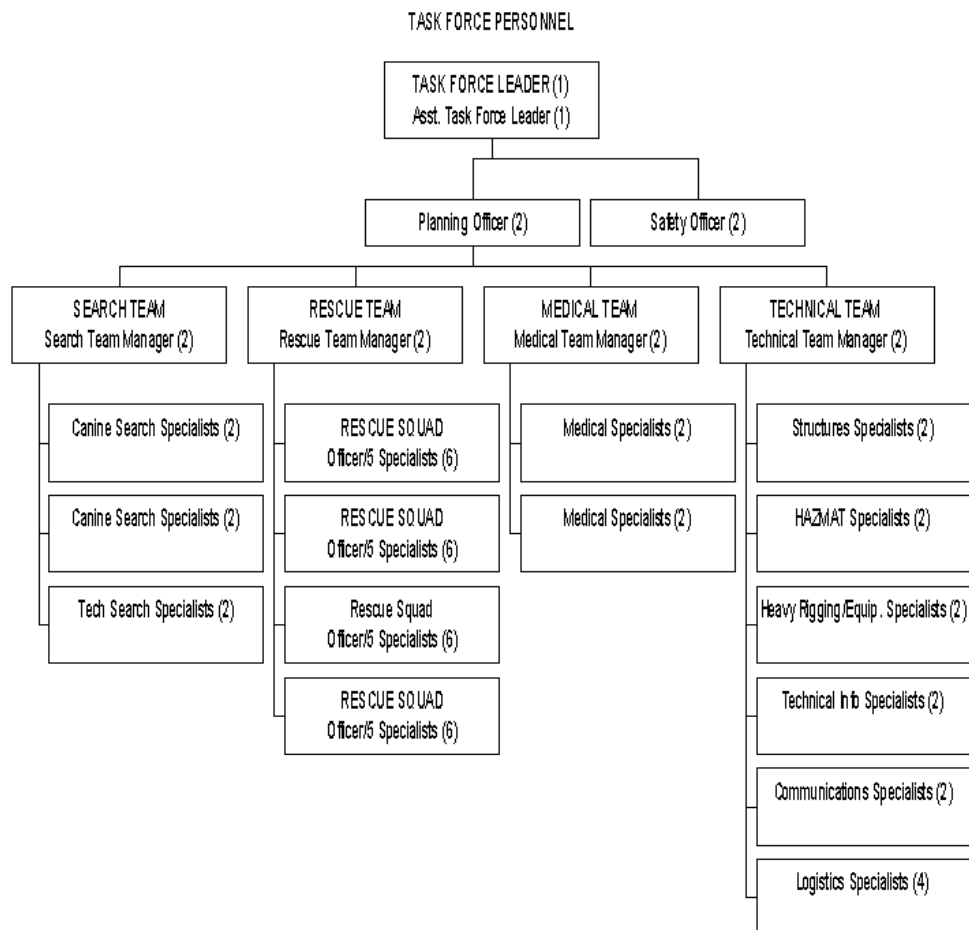
Communications Specialist:

- * Incident Command System
- * USAR Systems Operations
- * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
- * BLS/CPR

Logistics Specialist:

- * Certified Shipper of Dangerous Goods
 - * Incident Command System
 - * USAR Systems Operations
 - * HAZMAT First Responder Operations
 - BLS/CPR
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Virgin Islands Task Force-1 Organizational Chart:



TASK FORCE POSITIONS	NUMBERS
Task Force Leader	1
Assistant Task Force Leader	1
Safety Officer	2
Planning Officer	2
Search Team Manager	2
Canine Search Specialist	4
Technical Search Specialist	2
Rescue Team Manager	2
Rescue Squad Officer	4
Rescue Specialists	20
Medical Team Manager	2
Medical Specialists	4
Technical Team Manager	2
Structural Specialist	2
HAZMAT Specialist	2
Heavy rigging /Equipment Spec.	2
Technical Information Specialist	2
Communication Specialist	2
Logistics Specialist	4

Custom on-site Training Programs are available through the St. Croix Rescue Academy: The following training programs have been developed by FEMA and other International Agencies, and are mandatory certifications requirements for Task Force Members across the US.

Hand –on customized courses can be scheduled for your agency or company. Each class is tailored to your specific needs and taught at your location. This allows your team to develop skills based on the rescues they are most likely to have.

Canine Search Specialist

FEMA equivalent training course.

Technical Search Specialist

FEMA equivalent training course.

Incident Command System

Sixteen hour NFA training course.

Incident Safety Officer

Eighteen hour NFA training course.

Health and Safety Officer

Eighteen hour NFA training course.

FEMA UR&R Systems Operations

Eight hour orientation and cross training course for all task force personnel.
(Prerequisite for all Task Force Personnel)

Rope Rescue 1

Thirty-hour introductory rope rescue training program.
(Prerequisite for Rope Rescue 2)

Rope Rescue 2

Thirty-hour Rigging Systems training course. (Prerequisite for Confined Space Rescue)

Confined Space Rescue

Thirty-hour task force confined space rescue training course.
(Prerequisite for Trench Rescue -Basic)

Trench Rescue Awareness

Four hour training program.

Trench Rescue Operations

Twenty-hour training program. Course is given over three days. Each day being eight hours of training. (Prerequisite for Trench Rescue - Intermediate)

Trench Rescue Technician

Twenty - four hour training program.
(Prerequisite for Structural Collapse L/M)

Structural Collapse Rescue - Light/Medium

Forty hour training Program. (Prerequisite for Structural Collapse Heavy)

Structural Collapse Rescue - Heavy

Forty-hour training program.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Eight hour Critical Incident Stress Debriefing training program.

Hazardous Materials First Responder Awareness

Four hour HAZMAT training program. (Prerequisite for FRO)

Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations

Twenty-four hour HAZMAT training program.
(Prerequisite for HM Tech)

Hazardous Materials Technician

Eighty hour HAZMAT training program.

Medical First Responder

Forty to Sixty-hour DOT National Standard Curriculum training program.

Emergency Medical Technician

One hundred and forty-hour DOT training program.
(Prerequisite for Paramedic)

EMT-Paramedic

Six hundred-hour DOT training program.

Virgin Islands Task Force Emergency Medical Operations

Eight-hour task force operations orientation training program.

Advanced Cardiac Life Support

American Heart Association training program.

Basic Life Support/CPR

American Heart Association Health Care Provider CPR training program.