



Search and Rescue

When an individual has gone missing, it is the Search and Rescue team that will be out trying to bring them to safety. If this search team is looking for and finds an individual on the autism spectrum, they will need to approach the individual using different skills and tactics than the ones they may use in ordinary situations. If these teams are armed with information and skills, both from consultation with the missing persons family and from professional trainings, they will be able to better ensure the safety of the individual. Additionally, knowing how this individual may respond, or where they may have gone will ensure the timely and safe return of this person to their family.

Quick Facts for Search and Rescue

- Make sure you understand the degree of Autism you are dealing with. It will make a difference in dealing with the person when located.
- Find out if there has been anything that has attracted the attention of the person within the past 24 hrs. Have they been obsessed with a location or object, at a location, within that time.
- Do not expect the person to reply if you are calling their name. You'll most likely have to make visual contact to locate them.
- On many of the searches we have had, the person has hidden from us.
- Check any location that has water, such as, pools, ponds, lakes, rivers, et al. immediately. These are points of attraction for those with Autism.
- Remember that someone with Autism will, most likely, not experience fear, as we do. Don't discount searching any location because you feel a reasonable person would not go there.

Saunders, G. (2009). From Project Lifesaver Website: www.projectlifesaver.org

Resources for Search and Rescue Professionals

The Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition - www.sncarc.org/alec.htm

Autism 101 for Fire and Rescue - www.autismlink.com/pages/emergency_firerescue

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children – www.missingkids.com

Caretrak Systems – www.caretrak.com

Autism Society of America - [Information for Law Enforcement and Other First Responders](#) (PDF)

[Disaster Prep](#) - (PDF)

