

**BELIZE**

**DEPARTMENT OF**

**CIVIL AVIATION**



**BELIZE CIVIL AVIATION REGULATIONS**

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**BCAR 12**

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Revision: 0  
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**BELIZE CIVIL AVIATION REGULATIONS  
SEARCH AND RESCUE**

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**Issue and Revision System**

**AMMENDMENTS TO THIS RULE WILL BE INDICATED BY A VERTICAL BAR IN THE LEFT MARGIN NEXT TO THE LINE, SECTION OR FIGURE THAT IS BEING AFFECTED. AN ISSUE WILL BE THE REPLACEMENT OF THE ENTIRE DOCUMENT BY ANOTHER.**

**THESE AMENDMENTS SHALL BE WRITTEN IN THE REVISION RECORD, INDICATING THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER, DATE ENTERED AND ENTERED BY.**



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**Preamble**

The BCAR 12 was emitted on August 2013 and it was developed based on ICAO's Annex 12, eighth edition of July 2004, this edition incorporates all amendments adopted by the Council prior to July 2004 and supersedes, on 22 November 2007, all previous editions of Annex 12.

This second issue of BCAR 12 was developed based on ICAO's Annex 12, eighth edition of July 2004 with amendment 18 dated 22 November 2007 and amendment 19 dated 2 November 2024.



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**SECTION 1 - REQUIREMENTS**

**PRESENTATION AND GENERALITIES**

**1 PRESENTATION**

- 1.1 Section one of BCAR 12 is presented in double columns. Each page is identified by its edition or amendment date that was incorporated.
- 1.2 This section Font is arial 10.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This document contains the requirements for the development and applicability of Search and Rescue.
- 2.2 This document is based on ICAO's Annex 12 text, eighth edition of July 2004 with amendment 18 dated 22 November 2007 and amendment 19 dated 28 November 2024 issued and published by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).



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**SUBPART A**

**DEFINITIONS**

**BCAR 12 1.0 Definitions**

Refer to BCAR 05 Definitions and Units of Measurements

[\(See IEM 12 1.0\)](#)





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**SUBPART B**

**GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**BCAR 12 2.0 Applicability and Effectiveness**

**BCAR 12 2.0.1 Applicability**

This BCAR 12 applies to Search and Rescue Service providers whether they are service providers from the Government of Belize or any other search and rescue service provider.

**BCAR 12 2.0.2 Effectiveness**

This BCAR 12 will be mandatory from its official publication.

**BCAR 12 2.1 Search and Rescue Services**

**BCAR 12 2.1.1** The Belize Department of Civil Aviation (BDCA) through the Search and Rescue Service providers, which are the Joint Intelligence Operations Centre (JIOC) which performs the Rescue Subcentre (RSC) functions and Central American Air Navigation Services Corporation (COCESNA) Rescue Coordination Center (RCC), shall arrange for the establishment and prompt provision of search and rescue services within the territory of Belize to ensure that assistance is rendered to persons in distress. Such services shall be provided on a 24-hour basis.

**BCAR 12 2.1.1.1** Those portions of the high seas or areas of undetermined sovereignty for which search and rescue services will be established, shall be determined on the basis of regional air navigation agreements. COCESNA having accepted the responsibility to provide search and rescue services in such areas shall thereafter, individually or in cooperation with other States, arrange for the services to be established and provided in accordance with the provisions of this BCAR 12 and the COBUSA "SAR Operations Manual".

[\(See IEM 12 2.1.1.1\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.1.1.2** Basic elements of search and rescue services shall include a legal framework, a responsible authority, organized available resources, communication facilities and a workforce skilled in coordination and operational functions.

**BCAR 12 2.1.1.3** The Search and rescue service provider shall establish processes to improve service provision, including the aspects of planning, domestic and international cooperative arrangements and training.

**BCAR 12 2.1.2** In providing assistance to aircraft in distress and to survivors of aircraft accidents, the SAR service provider shall do so regardless of the nationality or status of such persons or the circumstances in which such persons are found.

**BCAR 12 2.1.3** The search and rescue service provider shall use search and rescue units and other available facilities to assist any aircraft or its occupants that are or appear to be in a state of emergency.

**BCAR 12 2.1.4** The SAR service provider shall ensure the closest practicable coordination between the aeronautical and maritime rescue coordination centres.

**BCAR 12 2.1.5** The SAR service provider shall facilitate consistency and cooperation between their aeronautical and maritime search and rescue services.



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**BCAR 12 2.1.6** The SAR service provider shall arrange through the Belize Department of Civil Aviation to establish a joint rescue coordination centre to coordinate aeronautical and maritime search and rescue operations, where practical.

#### **BCAR 12 2.2 Search and rescue regions**

**BCAR 12 2.2.1** The SAR service provider shall delineate the search and rescue region within which they will provide search and rescue services. Such region shall not overlap and neighbouring regions shall be contiguous. [\(See IEM 12 2.2.1\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.2.1.1** The search and rescue region shall, be coincident with corresponding flight information regions and, with respect to those areas over the high seas, maritime search and rescue regions.

#### **BCAR 12 2.3 Rescue coordination centres and rescue subcentres**

**BCAR 12 2.3.1** The SAR service provider shall establish a rescue coordination centre within the Central American search and rescue region. [\(See IEM 12 2.3.1\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.3.2** The Belizean airspace is included within the search and rescue region; which shall be associated with the rescue coordination centre in Honduras (CENAMER), the SAR service provider shall arrange for the appropriate authorities of Belize to establish a rescue subcentre to coordinate with the rescue coordination centre, so to improve the efficiency of search and rescue services within its territory.

**BCAR 12 2.3.3** The rescue coordination centre and subcentre shall be staffed 24 hours a day by trained personnel proficient in the use of the language used for radiotelephony communications.

#### **BCAR 12 2.3.4 English language proficiency**

The RCC and RSC personnel involved in the conduct of radiotelephony communications shall be proficient as a minimum, according to the ICAO language proficiency scale LEVEL 4.

**BCAR 12 2.3.5** In areas where public telecommunications facilities would not permit persons observing an aircraft in emergency to notify the rescue coordination centre or rescue sub-centre concerned directly and promptly, the SAR service provider shall designate suitable units of public or private services as alerting posts.

**BCAR 12 2.3.6** The rescue coordination centre and, as appropriate, rescue subcentre shall maintain up-to-date contact details in the OPS Control Directory.

**BCAR 12 2.3.7** The rescue coordination centre and, as appropriate, rescue subcentre shall subscribe and maintain access to the location of an aircraft in distress repository (LADR). [\(See IEM 12 2.3.7\)](#)

#### **BCAR 12 2.4 Search and rescue communications**

**BCAR 12 2.4.1** The rescue coordination centre shall have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with:

- a) air traffic services units;
- b) rescue subcentres;
- c) appropriate direction-finding and position-fixing stations;





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- d) where appropriate, coastal radio stations capable of alerting and communicating with surface vessels in the region;
- e) the headquarters of search and rescue units in the region;
- f) all maritime rescue coordination centres in the region and aeronautical, maritime or joint rescue coordination centres in adjacent regions;
- g) designated meteorological offices or meteorological watch offices;
- h) search and rescue units;
- i) alerting posts; and
- j) the Cospas-Sarsat Mission Control Centre servicing the search and rescue region.

[\(See IEM 12 2.4.1\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.4.2** The rescue subcentre shall have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with:

- a) adjacent rescue subcentres;
- b) a meteorological office or meteorological watch office;
- c) search and rescue units; and
- d) alerting posts.

#### **BCAR 12 2.5 Search and rescue units**

**BCAR 12 2.5.1** The SAR service provider shall designate as search and rescue units, elements of public or private services suitably located and equipped for search and rescue operations.

[\(See IEM 12 2.5.1\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.5.2** The SAR service provider shall designate as parts of the search and rescue plan of operation, elements of public or private services that do not qualify as search and rescue units but are nevertheless able to participate in search and rescue operations.

#### **BCAR 12 2.6 Search and rescue equipment**

**BCAR 12 2.6.1** The Search and rescue units shall be provided with equipment for locating promptly, and for providing adequate assistance at, the scene of an accident.

**BCAR 12 2.6.2** Each search and rescue unit shall have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with other search and rescue facilities engaged in the same operation.

**BCAR 12 2.6.3** Each search and rescue aircraft shall be equipped to be able to communicate on the aeronautical distress and onscene frequencies and on such other frequencies as may be prescribed.

**BCAR 12 2.6.4** Each search and rescue aircraft shall be equipped with a device for homing on distress frequencies, 121.5 MHz/406MHz.

[\(See IEM 12 2.6.4\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.6.5** Each search and rescue aircraft, when used for search and rescue over maritime areas, shall be equipped to be able to communicate with vessels.



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[\(See IEM 12 2.6.5\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.6.6** Each search and rescue aircraft, when used for search and rescue over maritime areas shall carry a copy of the International Code of Signals to enable it to overcome language difficulties that may be experienced in communicating with ships.

[\(See IEM 2.6.6\)](#)

**BCAR 12 2.6.7** Unless it is known that there is no need to provide supplies to survivors by air, at least one of the aircraft participating in a search and rescue operation shall carry droppable survival equipment.

**BCAR 12 2.6.8** The RSC shall locate, at appropriate aerodromes, survival equipment suitably packed for dropping by aircraft.

**BCAR 12 2.6.9** As of 26 November 2026, each search and rescue aircraft, when used for search and rescue over maritime areas, shall carry a droppable device for measuring actual surface drift.

### **BCAR 12 2.7 Job description, functions and responsibilities, and training**

**BCAR 12 2.7.1** The Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) and Rescue Sub Center (RSC) shall develop written job descriptions for each of their technical staff.

**BCAR 12 2.7.2** The Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) and Rescue Sub Center (RSC) shall define the functions and responsibilities for their technical staff.

**BCAR 12 2.7.3** The Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) and Rescue Sub Center (RSC) shall establish a training programme for their technical staff, that as a minimum includes initial, specialized, OJT and recurrent training when applicable.

**BCAR 12 2.7.4** The Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) and Rescue Sub Center (RSC) shall maintain training records for their technical staff.



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**SUBPART C**

**COOPERATION**

**BCAR 12 3.1 Cooperation between SAR service providers**

**BCAR 12 3.1.1** The SAR service provider shall coordinate their search and rescue activities with those of neighbouring States.

**BCAR 12 3.1.2 Cooperation between adjacent SAR service providers**

The SAR service provider shall, whenever necessary, coordinate their search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States especially when these operations are in proximity to adjacent search and rescue regions.

**BCAR 12 3.1.2.1 Common search and rescue plans**

The SAR service provider, shall, in so far as practicable, develop common search and rescue plans and procedures to facilitate coordination of search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States.

**BCAR 12 3.1.3 Immediate entry into its territory of search and rescue units of other States**

Subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by its own authorities; the SAR service provider shall manage so that Belize shall permit immediate entry into its territory of search and rescue units of other States for the purpose of searching for the site of aircraft accidents and rescuing survivors of such accidents.

**BCAR 12 3.1.4 Search and rescue units to enter the territory of another State**

The SAR service providers of a Contracting State who wish their search and rescue units to enter the territory of Belize for search and rescue purposes, shall transmit a request, giving full details of the projected mission and the need for it, to the rescue coordination centre or to the rescue subcentre of Belize.

**BCAR 12 3.1.4.1 The SAR service providers of Belize shall:**

- a) immediately acknowledge the receipt of such a request, and
- b) as soon as possible, indicate the conditions, if any, under which the projected mission may be undertaken.

**BCAR 12 3.1.5 Agreements with neighbouring States to strengthen search and rescue cooperation and coordination**

The SAR service provider shall enter into agreements with neighbouring States to strengthen search and rescue cooperation and coordination, setting forth the conditions for entry of each other's search and rescue units into their respective territories. These agreements shall also provide for expediting entry of such units with the least possible formalities.

**BCAR 12 3.1.6 State authorization to SAR service provider to request assistance**

The SAR service provider shall arrange for the appropriate authorities of Belize to authorize its rescue subcentre and/or coordination center to:



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- a) request from other rescue coordination centres such assistance, including aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment, as may be needed;
- b) grant any necessary permission for the entry of such aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment into its territory; and
- c) make the necessary arrangements with the appropriate customs, immigration or other authorities with a view to expediting such entry.

#### **BCAR 12 3.1.7 Assistance to other rescue coordination centres and /or sub centres**

The SAR service provider shall arrange for the appropriate authorities of Belize to authorize its rescue coordination centre and rescue sub centre to provide, when requested, assistance to other rescue coordination centres, including assistance in the form of aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment.

#### **BCAR 12 3.1.8 Joint training exercises between SAR service providers**

Until 25 November 2026, the SAR service providers shall make arrangements for joint training exercises involving the search and rescue units, those of other States and operators, in order to promote search and rescue efficiency.

##### **BCAR 12 3.1.8.1 Joint training exercises between RCC and RSCs**

As of 26 November 2026, the SAR service providers shall make arrangements for joint training exercises involving their RCCs, RSCs and search and rescue units, those of other States and operators, in order to promote search and rescue efficiency.

#### **BCAR 12 3.1.9 Staff visits to neighboring search and rescue centres and sub-centres**

The SAR service provider shall make arrangements for periodic liaison visits by personnel of their rescue coordination centre and subcentres to the centres of neighbouring States.

### **BCAR 12 3.2 Cooperation with other services**

#### **BCAR 12 3.2.1 Aircraft, vessels and facilities which do not form part of the search and rescue organization**

The SAR service provider shall arrange for all aircraft, vessels and local services and facilities which do not form part of the search and rescue organization to cooperate fully with the latter in search and rescue and to extend any possible assistance to the survivors of aircraft accidents.

#### **BCAR 12 3.2.2 Coordination between aeronautical and maritime authorities**

The SAR service provider shall ensure the closest practicable coordination between the relevant aeronautical and maritime authorities to provide for the most effective and efficient search and rescue services.

#### **BCAR 12 3.2.3 Cooperation for accident investigation**

The SAR service provider shall cooperate with those responsible for investigating accidents and with those responsible for the care of those who suffered from the accident.

#### **BCAR 12 3.2.4 Qualified personnel to conduct accident investigations**



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To facilitate accident investigation, rescue units shall, when practicable, be accompanied by persons qualified in the conduct of aircraft accident investigations.

#### **BCAR 12 3.2.5 Point of contact for the receipt of distress data.**

Until 25 November 2026, the SAR service provider shall designate a search and rescue point of contact for the receipt of Cospas-Sarsat distress data.

**BCAR 12 3.2.5.1** As of 26 November 2026, the SAR service provider shall designate a 24-hour search and rescue point of contact available for the receipt and acknowledgement of Cospas-Sarsat distress alert data that ensures timely notification to the responsible RCC for the initiation of appropriate search and rescue response action.

#### **BCAR 12 3.3 Dissemination of information**

**BCAR 12 3.3.1** The SAR service provider shall publish and disseminate all information necessary for the entry of search and rescue units of other States into its territory or, alternatively, include this information in search and rescue service arrangements.

**BCAR 12 3.3.2** When such information could benefit the provision of search and rescue services, the SAR service provider shall make available, through the rescue coordination centre or other agencies, information regarding their search and rescue plans of operation.

**BCAR 12 3.3.3** The SAR service provider shall, to the extent desirable and practicable, disseminate information to the general public and emergency response authorities regarding actions to be taken when there is reason to believe that an aircraft's emergency situation may become cause for public concern or require a general emergency response.





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**SUBPART D**

**PREPARATORY MEASURES**

**BCAR 12 4.1 Preparatory information**

**BCAR 12 4.1.1** The rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre shall have readily available at all times up-to-date information concerning the following in respect of its search and rescue region:

- a) search and rescue units, rescue subcentres and alerting posts;
- b) air traffic services units;
- c) means of communication that may be used in search and rescue operations;
- d) addresses and telephone numbers of all operators, or their designated representatives, engaged in operations in the region; and
- e) any other public and private resources including medical and transportation facilities that are likely to be useful in search and rescue.

**BCAR 12 4.1.2** The rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre shall have readily available all other information of interest to search and rescue, including information regarding:

- a) the locations, call signs, hours of watch, and frequencies of all radio stations likely to be employed in support of search and rescue operations;
- b) the locations and hours of watch of services keeping radio watch, and the frequencies guarded;
- c) locations where supplies of droppable emergency and survival equipment are stored; and
- d) objects which it is known might be mistaken for unlocated or unreported wreckage, particularly if viewed from the air;
- e) as of 26 November 2026, the position, course and speed of aircraft that may be able to provide assistance to aircraft in distress; and
- f) as of 26 November 2026, where the search and rescue region includes maritime areas, the position, course and speed of ships that may be able to provide assistance to aircraft in distress.

**BCAR 12 4.1.3** Until 25 November 2026, the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre whose search and rescue region includes maritime areas shall have ready access to information regarding the position, course and speed of ships within such areas that may be able to provide assistance to aircraft in distress and information on how to contact them.

[\(See IEM 12 4.1.3\)](#)

**BCAR 12 4.1.4 Ship reporting systems**

The SAR service provider shall, individually or in cooperation with other States, either establish ship reporting systems in cooperation with maritime authorities or arrange communication links with Amver or regional ship reporting systems to facilitate search and rescue operations at sea.

[\(See IEM 4.1.4\)](#)



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#### BCAR 12 4.2 Plans of operation

**BCAR 12 4.2.1** The rescue coordination centre in conjunction with the rescue subcentre shall prepare detailed plans of operation for the conduct of search and rescue operations within its search and rescue region.

**BCAR 12 4.2.2** Search and rescue plans of operations shall be developed jointly with representatives of the operators and other public or private services that may assist in providing search and rescue services or benefit from them, taking into account that the number of survivors could be large.

**BCAR 12 4.2.3** The plans of operation shall specify arrangements for the servicing and refuelling, to the extent possible, of aircraft, vessels and vehicles employed in search and rescue operations, including those made available by other States.

**BCAR 12 4.2.4** The search and rescue plans of operation shall contain details regarding actions to be taken by those persons engaged in search and rescue, including:

- a) the manner in which search and rescue operations are to be conducted in the search and rescue region;
- b) the use of available communication systems and facilities;
- c) the actions to be taken jointly with other rescue coordination centres;
- d) the methods of alerting en-route aircraft and ships at sea;
- e) the duties and prerogatives of persons assigned to search and rescue;
- f) the possible redeployment of equipment that may be necessitated by meteorological or other conditions;
- g) the methods for obtaining essential information relevant to search and rescue operations, such as weather reports and forecasts, appropriate NOTAM, etc.;
- h) the methods for obtaining, from other rescue coordination centres, such assistance, including aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment, as may be needed;
- i) as of 26 November 2026, the methods for obtaining approval to allow search and rescue units from an assisting State to enter the territory of Belize;
- j) the methods for assisting distressed aircraft being compelled to ditch to rendezvous with surface craft;
- k) the methods for assisting search and rescue or other aircraft to proceed to aircraft in distress; and
- l) cooperative actions to be taken in conjunction with air traffic services units and other authorities concerned to assist aircraft known or believed to be subject to unlawful interference.

**BCAR 12 4.2.5** Search and rescue plans of operation shall be integrated with airport emergency plans to provide for rescue services in the vicinity of aerodromes including, for coastal aerodromes, areas of water.

#### BCAR 12 4.3 Search and rescue units

**BCAR 12 4.3.1** Each search and rescue unit of Belize shall:





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- a) be cognizant of all parts of the plans of operation prescribed in BCAR 12 4.2 that are necessary for the effective conduct of its duties; and
- b) keep the rescue subcentre and rescue coordination centre informed of its preparedness.

**BCAR 12 4.3.2** The SAR service provider shall:

- a) maintain in readiness the required number of search and rescue facilities; and
- b) maintain adequate supplies of rations, medical stores, signalling devices and other survival and rescue equipment.

#### **BCAR 12 4.4 Training and exercises**

Until 25 November 2026, to achieve and maintain maximum efficiency in search and rescue, the SAR service provider shall provide for regular training of their search and rescue personnel and arrange appropriate search and rescue exercises.

As of 26 November 2026, to achieve and maintain maximum efficiency in search and rescue, the SAR service provider shall provide for regular training and exercises for their search and rescue personnel, which include both land and maritime environments as appropriate, containing both search and rescue elements, remote from an aerodrome.

[\(See IEM 12 4.4\)](#)

#### **BCAR 12 4.5 Wreckage**

(Applicable until 25 November 2026)

The SAR service providers shall ensure that wreckage resulting from aircraft accidents within Belizean territory or, in the case of accidents on the high seas or in areas of undetermined sovereignty, within the search and rescue regions for which it is responsible, is removed, obliterated or charted following completion of the accident investigation, if its presence might constitute a hazard or confuse subsequent search and rescue operations.

##### **BCAR 12.4.5.1 Accident sites and wreckage (Applicable as of 26 november 2026)**

The SAR service providers shall ensure that search and rescue personnel that may be required to respond to an aircraft accident site are trained in the management of related occupational health risks.

[\(See IEM 12 4.5.1\)](#)

##### **BCAR 12 4.5.2 Accident wreckage removal**

The SAR service provider shall ensure that wreckage resulting from aircraft accidents within its territory or, in the case of accidents on the high seas or in areas of undetermined sovereignty, within the search and rescue regions for which it is responsible, is removed, obliterated or charted following completion of the accident investigation, if its presence might constitute a hazard or confuse subsequent search and rescue operations.





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**SUBPART E**

**OPERATING PROCEDURES**

**BCAR 12 5.1 Information concerning emergencies**

**BCAR 12 5.1.1** The SAR service provider or any element of the search and rescue organization having reason to believe that an aircraft is in an emergency shall give immediately all available information to the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre concerned.

**BCAR 12 5.1.2** The rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre shall, immediately upon receipt of information concerning aircraft in emergency, evaluate such information and assess the extent of the operation required.

**BCAR 12 5.1.3** When information concerning aircraft in emergency is received from other sources than air traffic services units, the rescue coordination centre and rescue sub-centre shall determine to which emergency phase the situation corresponds and shall apply the procedures applicable to that phase.

**BCAR 12 5.2 Procedures the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre during emergency phases**

**BCAR 12 5.2.1 Uncertainty phase**

Upon the occurrence of an uncertainty phase, the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre shall cooperate to the utmost with air traffic services units and other appropriate agencies and services in order that incoming reports may be speedily evaluated.

**BCAR 12 5.2.2 Alert phase**

Upon the occurrence of an alert phase the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre shall immediately alert search and rescue units and initiate any necessary action.

**BCAR 12 5.2.3 Distress phase**

Upon the occurrence of a distress phase, the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre shall:

immediately initiate action by search and rescue units in accordance with the appropriate plan of operation;

ascertain the position of the aircraft, estimate the degree of uncertainty of this position, and, on the basis of this information and the circumstances, determine the extent of the area to be searched;

notify the operator, where possible, and keep the operator informed of developments;

notify other rescue coordination centres, the help of which seems likely to be required, or which may be concerned in the operation;

notify the associated air traffic services unit, when the information on the emergency has been received from another source;

request at an early stage such aircraft, vessels, coastal stations and other services not specifically included in the appropriate plan of operation and able to assist to:

maintain a listening watch for transmissions from the aircraft in distress, survival radio equipment or an ELT;



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[\(See IEM 12 5.2.3\)](#)

assist the aircraft in distress as far as practicable; and

inform the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre of any developments;

from the information available, draw up a detailed plan of action for the conduct of the search and/or rescue operation required and communicate such plan for the guidance of the authorities immediately directing the conduct of such an operation;

amend as necessary, in the light of evolving circumstances, the detailed plan of action;

notify the appropriate accident investigation authorities; and

notify the State of Registry of the aircraft.

The order in which these actions are described shall be followed unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

**BCAR 12 5.2.4 Initiation of search and rescue action in respect of an aircraft whose position is unknown**

In the event that an emergency phase is declared in respect of an aircraft whose position is unknown and may be in one of two or more search and rescue regions, the following shall apply:

- a) When a rescue coordination centre and rescue sub-centre is notified of the existence of an emergency phase and is unaware of other centres taking appropriate action, it shall assume responsibility for initiating suitable action in accordance with BCAR 12 5.2 and confer with neighbouring rescue coordination centres or rescue subcentres with the objective of designating one rescue coordination centre to assume responsibility forthwith.
- b) Unless otherwise decided by common agreement of the rescue coordination centres and rescue subcentres concerned, the rescue coordination centre to coordinate search and rescue action shall be the centre responsible for:
  1. the region in which the aircraft last reported its position; or
  2. the region to which the aircraft was proceeding when its last reported position was on the line separating two search and rescue regions; or
  3. the region to which the aircraft was destined when it was not equipped with suitable two-way radio communication or not under obligation to maintain radio communication; or
  4. the region in which the distress site is located as identified by the Cospas-Sarsat system.
- c) After declaration of the distress phase, the rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre with overall coordination responsibility shall inform all rescue coordination centres or rescue subcentres that may become involved in the operation of all the circumstances of the emergency and subsequent developments. Likewise, all rescue coordination centres or rescue subcentres becoming aware of any information pertaining to the emergency shall inform the rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre that has overall responsibility.



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#### **BCAR 12 5.2.5 Passing of information to aircraft in respect of which an emergency phase has been declared**

Whenever applicable, the rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre responsible for search and rescue action shall forward to the air traffic services unit serving the flight information region in which the aircraft is operating or air traffic services serving Belize, information of the search and rescue action initiated, in order that such information can be passed to the aircraft.

#### **BCAR 12 5.3 Procedures where responsibility for operations extends to two or more SAR service providers**

Since the conduct of operations over the entire search and rescue region is the responsibility of more than one SAR service provider, the Belize SAR service providers involved shall take action in accordance with the relevant plan of operations when so requested by the rescue coordination centre of the region.

#### **BCAR 12 5.4 Procedures for SAR service providers in the field**

The SAR service providers immediately directing the conduct of operations or any part thereof shall:

1. give instructions to the units under their direction and inform the rescue subcentre and rescue coordination centre of such instructions; and
2. keep the rescue subcentre and rescue coordination centre informed of developments.

#### **BCAR 12 5.5 Procedures for rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre — termination and suspension of operations**

**BCAR 12 5.5.1** Search and rescue operations shall continue, when practicable, until all survivors are delivered to a place of safety or until all reasonable hope of rescuing survivors has passed.

**BCAR 12 5.5.2** The responsible rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre shall normally be responsible for determining when to discontinue search and rescue operations.

[\(See IEM 12 5.5.2\)](#)

**BCAR 12 5.5.3** When a search and rescue operation has been successful or when the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre considers, or is informed, that an emergency no longer exists, the emergency phase shall be cancelled, the search and rescue operation shall be terminated and any authority, facility or service that has been activated or notified shall be promptly informed.

**BCAR 12 5.5.4** If a search and rescue operation becomes impracticable and the rescue coordination centre and rescue subcentre concludes that there might still be survivors, the centre and subcentre shall temporarily suspend on-scene activities pending further developments and shall promptly inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified. Relevant information subsequently received shall be evaluated and search and rescue operations resumed when justified and practicable.

#### **BCAR 12 5.6 Procedures at the scene of an accident**

(as of 26 November 2026, section 5.6 will be titled 5.6 Procedures at the distress scene)

**BCAR 12 5.6.1** When multiple facilities are engaged in search and rescue operations on-scene, the rescue coordination centre and rescue sub-centre shall designate one or more units on-scene to coordinate all actions to help ensure the safety and effectiveness of air and surface operations, taking into account facility capabilities and operational requirements.



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**BCAR 12 5.6.2** When a pilot-in-command observes that either another aircraft or a surface craft is in distress, the pilot shall, if possible and unless considered unreasonable or unnecessary:

- a) keep the craft in distress in sight until compelled to leave the scene or advised by the rescue coordination centre and rescue sub-center that it is no longer necessary;
- b) determine the position of the craft in distress;
- c) as appropriate, report to the rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre or air traffic services unit as much of the following information as possible:
  - type of craft in distress, its identification and condition;
  - its position expressed in geographical or grid coordinates or in distance and true bearing from a distinctive landmark or from a radio navigation aid;
  - time of observation expressed in hours and minutes Coordinated Universal Time (UTC);
  - number of persons observed;
  - whether persons have been seen to abandon the craft in distress;
  - as of 26 November 2026, whether any distress signals, including distress beacon transmissions, have been received or observed;
  - on-scene weather conditions;
  - apparent physical condition of survivors;
  - until 25 November 2026, apparent best ground access route to the distress site; and
  - as of 26 November 2026, apparent best ground access route to the distress scene;
  - as of 26 November 2026, position and description of any other craft in the area that may assist; and
- d) act as instructed by the rescue coordination centre or rescue sub-center or the air traffic services unit.

**BCAR 12 5.6.2.1** Until 25 November 2026, if the first aircraft to reach the scene of an accident is not a search and rescue aircraft, it shall take charge of on-scene activities of all other aircraft subsequently arriving until the first search and rescue aircraft reaches the scene of the accident. If, in the meantime, such aircraft is unable to establish communication with the appropriate rescue coordination centre or rescue sub-center or air traffic services unit, it shall, by mutual agreement, hand over to an aircraft capable of establishing and maintaining such communications until the arrival of the first search and rescue aircraft.

**BCAR 12 5.6.2.2** As of 26 November 2026, if the first aircraft to reach the distress scene is not a search and rescue aircraft, it shall take charge of on-scene activities of all other aircraft subsequently arriving until the first search and rescue aircraft reaches the distress scene. If in the meantime, such aircraft is unable to establish communication with the appropriate rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre or air traffic services unit, it shall, by mutual agreement, hand over to an aircraft capable of establishing and maintaining such communications until the arrival of the first search and rescue aircraft.



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**BCAR 12 5.6.3** When it is necessary for an aircraft to convey information to survivors or surface rescue units, and two-way communication is not available, it shall, if practicable, drop communication equipment that would enable direct contact to be established, or convey the information by dropping a hard copy message.

**BCAR 12 5.6.4** When a ground signal has been displayed, the aircraft shall indicate whether the signal has been understood or not by the means described in BCAR 12 5.6.3 or, if this is not practicable, by making the appropriate visual signal.

**BCAR 12 5.6.5** When it is necessary for an aircraft to direct a surface craft to the place where an aircraft or surface craft is in distress, the aircraft shall do so by transmitting precise instructions by any means at its disposal. If no radio communication can be established, the aircraft shall make the appropriate visual signal.

[\(See IEM 12 5.6.5\)](#)

**BCAR 12 5.6.6** As of 26 November 2026, when carrying a device for measuring actual surface drift in accordance with BCAR 12 2.6.9, a search and rescue aircraft should drop the device as soon as it reaches the scene of an accident.

[\(See IEM 12 5.6.6\)](#)

#### **BCAR 12 5.7 Procedures for a pilot-in-command intercepting a distress transmission (Applicable until 25 November 2026)**

Whenever a distress transmission is intercepted by a pilot-in command of an aircraft, the pilot shall, if feasible:

- a) acknowledge the distress transmission;
- b) record the position of the craft in distress if given;
- c) take a bearing on the transmission;
- d) inform the appropriate rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre or air traffic services unit of the distress transmission, giving all available information; and
- e) at the pilot's discretion, while awaiting instructions, proceed to the position given in the transmission.

#### **BCAR 12 5.7 Procedures for a pilot-in-command intercepting a distress transmission (Applicable as of 26 November 2026)**

**BCAR 12 5.7.1** Whenever a distress transmission is intercepted by a pilot-in-command of an aircraft, the pilot shall, if feasible:

- a) acknowledge the distress transmission;
- b) record the position of the craft in distress if given;
- c) take a bearing on the transmission;
- d) inform the appropriate rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre or air traffic services unit of the distress transmission, giving all available information;
- e) at the pilot's discretion, while awaiting instructions, proceed to the distress position; and
- f) attempt to establish communications with the person(s) in distress



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**BCAR 12 5.7.2** Whenever a pilot monitors 121.5 MHz, and intercepts a transmission from a distress beacon, the pilot shall also:

- a) record, and report as soon as possible, the position where the transmission was first received;
- b) not alter any settings for squelch on the aircraft's radio; and
- c) if feasible, continue to monitor the frequency until such time as the signal ceases, and inform the appropriate rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre or air traffic services unit of such.

[\(See IEM 12 5.7.2\)](#)

#### **BCAR 12 5.8 Search and rescue signals**

**BCAR 12 5.8.1** The air-to-surface and surface-to-air visual signals listed in the Appendix to this regulation shall, when used, have the meaning indicated therein. They shall be used only for the purpose indicated and no other signals likely to be confused with them shall be used.

**BCAR 12 5.8.2** Upon observing any of the signals listed in the Appendix to this regulation, aircraft shall take such action as may be required by the interpretation of the signal given in that Appendix.

#### **BCAR 12 5.9 Maintenance of records**

**BCAR 12 5.9.1** The rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre shall keep a record of the operational efficiency of the SAR service provider of its region.

**BCAR 12 5.9.2** The rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre shall prepare appraisals of actual search and rescue operations in the region. These appraisals shall comprise any pertinent remarks on the procedures used and, on the emergency, and survival equipment, and any suggestions for improvement of those procedures and equipment. Those appraisals which are likely to be of interest to other States shall be submitted to ICAO for information and dissemination as appropriate.





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**APPENDIX**

**SEARCH AND RESCUE SIGNALS**

**1 Signals with surface craft**

1.1 The following manoeuvres performed in sequence by an aircraft mean that the aircraft wishes to direct a surface craft towards an aircraft or a surface craft in distress:

- a) circling the surface craft at least once;
- b) crossing the projected course of the surface craft close ahead at low altitude and:
  - 1. rocking the wings; or
  - 2. opening and closing the throttle; or
  - 3. changing the propeller pitch.

[\(See IEM APP 1.1\)](#)

- c) heading in the direction in which the surface craft is to be directed.

Repetition of such manoeuvres has the same meaning.

1.2 The following manoeuvres by an aircraft means that the assistance of the surface craft to which the signal is directed is no longer required:

- a) crossing the wake of the surface craft close astern at a low altitude and:
  - 1. rocking the wings; or
  - 2. opening and closing the throttle; or
  - 3. changing the propeller pitch.

[See IEM APP 1.2](#)

- b) for acknowledging receipt of signals:

- 1. the hoisting of the "code pennant" (vertical red and white stripes) close up (meaning understood);
- 2. the flashing of a succession of "T's" by signal lamp in the Morse code;
- 3. the changing of heading to follow the aircraft.

- c) for indicating inability to comply:

- 1. the hoisting of the international flag "N" (a blue and white checkered square);
- 2. the flashing of a succession of "N's" in the Morse code.

**2 Ground-air visual signal code**



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2.1 Ground-air visual signal code for use by survivors

No.	Message	Code Symbol
1	Require assistance	V
2	Require medical assistance	X
3	No or negative	N
4	Yes or affirmative	Y
5	Proceeding in this direction	↑

2.2 Ground-air visual signal code for use by rescue units

No.	Message	Code Symbol
1	Operation completed	LLL
2	We have found all personnel	<u>LL</u>
3	We have found only some personnel	++
4	We are not able to continue. Returning to base	XX
5	Have divided into two groups. Each proceeding in direction indicated	
6	Information received that aircraft is in this direction	
7	Nothing found. Will continue to search	NN

2.3 Symbols shall be at least 8 feet long and shall be made as conspicuous as possible.  
(See IEM APP 2.3)



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**3 Air-to-ground signals**

3.1 The following signals by aircraft mean that the ground signals have been understood:

- a) during the hours of daylight:
  - by rocking the aircraft's wings;
- b) during the hours of darkness:
  - flashing on and off twice the aircraft's landing lights or, if not so equipped, by switching on and off twice its navigation lights.

3.2 Lack of the above signal indicates that the ground signal is not understood.



# **SECTION 2**

## **IEM**





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**SECTION 2 – INTERPRETATIVE AND EXPLANATORY MATERIAL (IEM)**

**GENERAL & PRESENTATION**

**1. GENERAL**

1.1. If a specific paragraph does not have an IEM, it means that the paragraph does not need one.

**2. PRESENTATION**

2.1 The sequence after the abbreviation IEM indicates the paragraph number of the referring BCAR-12.

2.2 The abbreviations are defined as follows:

Interpretative and Explanatory Material (IEM) shows the ways or alternatives, but not necessarily the only possible way to comply with a specific paragraph of the BCAR-12.







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**SUBPART A**

**DEFINITIONS**

**IEM 12 1.0** For definitions refer to BCAR 05 Definitions and Units of Measurements  
([See BCAR 12 1.1](#))





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**SUBPART B**

**GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**IEM 12 2.1.1.1**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.1.1.1\)](#)

The phrase “regional air navigation agreements” refers to the agreements approved by the Council of ICAO normally on the advice of Regional Air Navigation Meetings.

**IEM 12 2.2.1**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.2.1\)](#)

Search and rescue regions are established to ensure the provision of adequate communication infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing and proper operational coordination to effectively support search and rescue services. Neighbouring States may cooperate to establish search and rescue services within a single SAR region.

The delineation of search and rescue regions is determined on the basis of technical and operational considerations and is not related to the delineation of boundaries between States.

**IEM 12 2.3.1**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.3.1\)](#)

The SAR service provider may establish a rescue coordination centre with an associated search and rescue region that, in accordance with regional air navigation agreement, extends over an area greater than its sovereign airspace.

**IEM 12 2.3.7 Rescue coordination centre**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.3.7\)](#)

Guidance on the use of the OPS Control Directory and the LADR is contained in the Manual on Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) (Doc 10165).

**IEM 12 2.4.1**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.4.1\)](#)

Maritime rescue coordination centres are identified in relevant documents of the International Maritime Organization.

**IEM 12 2.5.1**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.5.1\)](#)

The minimum units and facilities necessary for provision of search and rescue operations within a search and rescue region are determined by regional air navigation agreements and are specified in the appropriate Air Navigation Plan and Facilities and Services Implementation Document publications.

**IEM 12 2.6.4**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.6.4\)](#)

Emergency locator transmitter (ELT) carriage requirements are given in BCAR OPS 1 and BCAR OPS 3 (Annex 6, Parts I, II and III).



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Specifications for ELTs are given in Annex 10, Volume III.

**IEM 12 2.6.5**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.6.5\)](#)

Until 25 November 2026 many vessels can communicate with aircraft on 2182 kHz, 4125 kHz and 121.5 MHz. However, these frequencies, and in particular 121.5 MHz, may not be routinely monitored by vessels.

As of 26 November 2026, many vessels can communicate with aircraft on 2182 kHz, 4125 kHz, 121.5 MHz and 123.1 MHz. However, these frequencies, and in particular 121.5 MHz and 123.1 MHz, may not be routinely monitored by vessels. Rather, vessels monitor Channel 16 (156.8 MHz), the international maritime distress, safety and calling frequency.

**IEM 12 2.6.6**

[\(See BCAR 12 2.6.6\)](#)

The International Code of Signals is published in English, French and Spanish by the International Maritime Organization as documents 994E, 995F and 996S.



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**SUBPART D**

**PREPARATORY MEASURES**

**IEM 12 4.1.3**

[\(See BCAR 12 4.1.3\)](#)

This information may either be kept in the rescue coordination centres or be readily accessible.

**IEM 12 4.1.4**

[\(See BCAR 12 4.1.4\)](#)

Amver is a cooperative international ship reporting system with worldwide coverage that is available for interrogation by all rescue coordination centres. A number of Contracting States also operate regional ship reporting systems.

**IEM 12 4.4 Training and exercises**

[\(See BCAR 12 4.4\)](#)

The need for regular training and exercises may be moderated commensurate with the frequency of real search and rescue responses which demonstrate satisfactory and effective search and rescue performance.

**IEM 12 4.5.1 Accident sites and wreckage**

[\(See BCAR 12 4.5.1\)](#)

Guidance related to effective occupational health practices at aircraft accident sites is contained in the Manual of Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation, Part I – Organization and Planning (Doc 9756) and Circular 315 – Hazards at Aircraft Accident Sites.





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**SUBPART E**

**OPERATING PROCEDURES**

**IEM 12 5.2.3**

[\(See BCAR 12 5.2.3\)](#)

Until 25 November 2026, the frequencies contained in the specifications for ELTs given in Annex 10, Volume III, are 121.5 MHz and 406 MHz.

As of 26 November 2026, the frequencies contained in the specifications for ELTs given in Annex 10, Volume III, are 121.5 MHz and 406.0 to 406.1 MHz. The Cospas-Sarsat 406 MHz channel assignment plan is contained in Cospas-Sarsat Document C/S T.012.

**IEM 12 5.5.2**

[\(See BCAR 12 5.5.2\)](#)

The SAR service provider may require input from other appropriate Belizean authorities in the decision-making process leading to termination of SAR operations.

**IEM 12 5.6.5**

[\(See BCAR 12 5.6.5\)](#)

Until 25 November 2026, air-to-surface and surface-to-air visual signals are published in Volume III of Doc 9731.

As of 26 November 2026, air-to-surface and surface-to-air visual signals are published in the Appendix and in the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, Volume III — Mobile Facilities (Doc 9731)

**IEM 12 5.6.6**

[\(See BCAR 12 5.6.6\)](#)

The deployment of such devices will assist with search area planning accuracy and, therefore, minimize search times.

**IEM 12 5.7.2 Procedures for a pilot in-command intercepting a distress transmission**

[\(See BCAR 12 5.7.2\)](#)

Retaining the existing settings for squelch from the time the transmission is first received until the signal ceases provides rescue coordination centres with the most accurate potential location of the distress beacon.







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**IEM APP 1.1**

[\(See APP 1.1\)](#)

Due to high noise level on board surface craft, the sound signals in 2) and 3) may be less effective than the visual signal in 1) and are regarded as alternative means of attracting attention.

**IEM APP 1.2**

[See APP 1.2](#)

The following replies may be made by surface craft to the signal in Appendix 1.1.

**IEM APP 2.3**

[\(See APP 2.3\)](#)

Symbols may be formed by any means such as: strips of fabric, parachute material, pieces of wood, stones or such like material; marking the surface by tramping or staining with oil.

Attention to the above signals may be attracted by other means such as radio, flares, smoke and reflected light.