

## Newspaper Article 9: The Float Plan

Search and Rescue (SAR) is a term used by the Coast Guard, and others, to name the exercise when a boat is overdue and presumed in jeopardy.

Of the two words, the Search part of a SAR is the most difficult. If you can't be found, rescue won't happen. Rescue can be relatively easy, well maybe not in Alaska. Certainly on our lake it is not a difficult task.

So, how do we take the Search out of Search and Rescue. It's easy! We prepare a Float Plan prior to departure. The plan need not be overly complicated but should cover the following points:

- Description of the boat, type, length, color, with its registration number and name – like “the Lindy Loop”.
- A description of your car, it's license number and what marina or launch ramp it is parked.
- Number of people on board.
- Where are you leaving from.
- When are you leaving.
- Where are you going.
- Your route there.
- When you expect to return and where.
- Do you have a marine radio.
- Your cell phone number.
- Who is your contact on shore and phone number.
- What to do if you don't return as scheduled.

Leave the float plan with a good friend, that is someone you can trust to take action once you are 'overdue'. The Coast Guard or other agencies will not take your plan. They do the rescue part.

Your friend will then call the appropriate party to come to your rescue. The appropriate party could be a friend with a boat, the Corps of engineers, or the DNRs. The float plan tells the rescuer just where to look.

You can print up a short float plan with the above information either pre-entered or completed just prior to the trip.

If this still seems just too much, just tell someone where you are leaving from and when you will be returning and what to do if you are 'overdue'.

Just lately I did find a new service on the web that lets you file your plan on line. You enter into their database much of the above information. When you activate your plan, you tell the site when you are leaving and when you will return. If you do not return (that is, cancel your plan) they automatically contact whomever you told them to, so that the rescue phase can start. The service is free.

I signed up for it and it works. The site is: [www.usfloatplan.com](http://www.usfloatplan.com)

No matter how you file your float plan, there is one huge responsibility on your part. You **MUST** cancel your float plan at the completion of your cruise. If you don't, rescue operations will start and can waste a good deal of time and money, while you are safe and sound having dinner at your favorite tavern.