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## **On Volunteer Day Investigative Committee of Russia summarizes results of cooperation with volunteers**



International Volunteer Day is celebrated on December 5. The Investigative Committee of Russia understands the importance and necessity of volunteering and highly prioritizes its interaction with volunteer and search-and-rescue groups in its work. Great assistance in the work of Investigative Committee of Russia comes from the Lisa Alert team, the volunteer commonwealth “Search for missing children”, the public organization “Piter-Search”, the Legion public movement, and other concerned citizens. The Investigative Committee of Russia has analyzed the work with volunteers over the year, made conclusions, and set goals for further strengthening of the cooperation.

In May 2018, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, together with representatives of the public and interested government agencies, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Emergency Situations, signed a regulatory act on the interaction algorithm of state bodies, volunteer organizations and volunteers in organizing and implementing search for missing

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persons, including minors. The document was circulated to all regional directorates of the Investigative Committee of Russia and has already proved its efficiency during the last 18 months. Volunteers perform an important function during the search for minors since it is the most vulnerable category of citizens. A great majority of missing children are located during the first hours or within a day from their disappearance, which proves the serious success of search activities. Here are just some examples.

In November 2019, in Krasnodar Territory, law enforcement officers in interaction with volunteers managed to find alive a 9-year-old girl.

The timeliness, consolidation, and coordination of all efforts helped to find a child in Omsk Region. On August 13, his parents came to a forest for berry picking and left a three-year-old son alone in their car. Upon returning, they discovered that the boy was missing. As a result of search activities, the child was found alive on August 15.

Several days after that, a 5-year-old girl disappeared in Nizhny Novgorod Region. She went to a forest after her grandmother and got lost. Within a few days, the girl was found alive in one of the areas specified for the search activities with assistance from volunteers.

On September 4, 2019, in Vologda Region, a mother of the two-year-old girl left her on a playground with two sisters (six and four years old) and went to the neighboring house of her friend. Upon returning, she did not find her youngest daughter. Search activities for the child lasted until September 6, 2019 - the girl was found alive.

On September 5, in Krasnodar Region, a man went to a forest to pick mushrooms and his wife stayed at home with four children, the eldest of whom was 4 years old. She left her two older children to play in the vegetable garden and went inside to take care of the younger children. Approximately 30 minutes after, the woman went outside and could not find her 4-year-old son who had gone to a nearby forest. During the search activities, shoe marks were found approximately 1.5 kilometers from his home and a little later the boy was found alive.

Unfortunately, along with successful cooperation examples, we cannot forget about tragic cases. As a matter of fact, despite all measures taken for the search, it is not always possible to find a child alive. The death of a child left unattended can be caused both by accident or a crime.

Thus, on September 2, 2019, search activities for a 9-year-old boy in Kaluga Region revealed his body in Verkhneye Lake. The boy had disappeared on August 31 after leaving an apartment of acquaintances where he had previously come with his mother and brother.

On June 26, 2019, in one of the settlements of Chishminsky District of the Republic of Bashkortostan, a 7-year-old boy had left his home to herd geese and disappeared. On the same day, his parents had reported his missing to the police. The massive search activities for the child were

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carried out in the area of his disappearance both on land and water. Unfortunately, the boy was not found alive--his body was taken out of a river on June 28, 2019.

On May 12, 2019, in Magadan Region, a mother reported to the police her 4-year-old daughter missing. The child had been walking outside unattended. The results of search activities were tragic--the girl's body was found showing signs of violent death. Investigators established that the child had been killed by a man visitor.

A tragedy in the Republic of Crimea where a 5-year-old girl was killed by her stepfather, had a huge impact. The girl was searched for by law enforcement officers, volunteers, students, neighbors. At present, the Crimea and Sevastopol Republican Investigations Directorate of the Investigative Committee of Russia are investigating into the girl's stepfather under a murder probe. The girl has died but the perpetrator will be brought to justice to the full extent of the law.

The listed cases once again raise questions of preventive measures and avoiding such accidents. The time factor plays an important role in search activities, so investigators of the Committee are tasked to immediately respond to all reports of missing children. The Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia holds regular meetings with representatives of volunteer organizations adopting their suggestions for quality improvement of search activities. The parties have a common position on the fact that the most important thing is the proper training of volunteers and the use of proven equipment in successful searches. At the moment, search for missing people is conducted with forensic equipment of officers of the Investigative Committee; mobile groups of forensic investigators have been formed, able to quickly arrive in the shortest possible time to all subjects of the Russian Federation and provide practical assistance.

For example, Irkutsk Region has accumulated experience in the use of mobile applications for immediate notification of volunteers and coordination of their work. Particularly, the mobile application "Obereg. Search for children" allows notifying a lot of volunteers from different settlements within several minutes. This year, five children were found using this program.

Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Bastrykin instructed to create the thematic section "Alarm! Child missing!" on the Investigative Committee website containing information on missing juveniles. This section undoubtedly increases awareness about the missing children that might facilitate the search. Due to this resource, representatives of volunteer organizations always have open access to relevant information on missing children.

Summarizing the results of the year, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation expresses gratitude to all citizens who, sparing no effort and time, participate in volunteer activities. It is a necessary, socially important and, above all, efficient activity that helps to save lives.

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