



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

SEARCH AND RESCUE REFERENCE MANUAL

2011

Law Enforcement, Security, and
Emergency Services



RM-59

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Chapter 1

PROGRAM DIRECTION AND SCOPE

- 1.1 Introduction
 - 1.2 Overview
 - 1.3 Policy
 - 1.4 Purpose
 - 1.5 Program Funding
 - 1.6 Implementation
-

1.1 Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) *Management Policies 2006*, state that “The saving of human life will take precedence over all other management actions as the Park Service strives to protect human life and provide for injury-free visits” (Section 8.2.5.1, *Visitor Safety*, page 105). The NPS ability to respond to search and rescue incidents is essential to the safety of all who enter NPS areas, and is implemented in this policy.

NPS manages a wide variety of areas across the United States and its territories, with diverse physical environments and a diverse visiting public, where varying levels of search and rescue (SAR) services may be required. This document provides guidance for NPS SAR providers in an effort to (the extent appropriate) standardize services and documentation.

1.2 Overview

NPS has a long history of providing SAR services to park visitors beginning with the establishment of the first national park more than 135 years ago. Park rangers have a reputation for search and rescue expertise.

With the advent of new communication technologies, a more sophisticated recreational user and technically advanced recreational activates, the role for the NPS SAR provider has become more complicated, adding a significant workload to the field ranger. In order to provide park managers with direction and guidance in establishing and managing SAR programs, parks have established local park SAR plans that have reflected the needs for the specific park unit.

1.3 Policy

The public use of areas of the National Park System is outlined by law and the Service has been authorized to provide emergency assistance to persons who use these areas. In addition, Department of the Interior (DOI) and agency policy

direct NPS to provide policy, procedures, standards, and oversight for the NPS SAR Program.

NPS will ensure that adequate SAR services are available to visitors and employees who become lost, stranded, or injured within park units. Qualified SAR services in local communities may be utilized if they can provide a timely response to SAR incidents that occur within an NPS area. When such services are not available, NPS will make a reasonable effort to provide a level of search and rescue service commensurate with park needs.

Each park manager will complete a SAR Needs Assessment and develop and implement a program to meet the identified needs, in accordance with this reference manual (RM).

NPS will promote good neighbor relations with state and county emergency management authorities by coordinating SAR procedures and resources for the benefit of all such agencies and the public.

The NPS National SAR Advisory Group will provide national oversight and direction for the Servicewide SAR Program. The Deputy Chief, Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Services (LESES), Emergency Services coordinates the Servicewide SAR Program.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this SAR reference manual is to provide the framework for an effective Servicewide SAR Program. In this reference manual, search refers to finding lost persons and transporting them to safety. This broad category covers activities ranging from searching buildings in an urban park to rescuing climbers from the summit of a 20,000-foot mountain in Alaska, in a wide variety of environmental settings. Rescue refers to accessing, stabilizing, extricating, and transporting stranded or injured persons and the recovery of deceased using available resources ranging from hand-carried litters to hoist-capable helicopters.

This reference manual will:

1. Provide program guidance.
2. Define levels of service.
3. Outline Needs Assessment and SAR plans.
4. Establish Servicewide certification criteria.
5. Establish administrative procedures.
6. Establish operational procedures.

1.5 Program Funding

The funding of a park SAR Program is borne by individual park accounts and may be enhanced by donations. Program costs include training, supplies and equipment, vehicles, and registration fees for obtaining and maintaining SAR certifications. Section 317 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1993 (P.L. 102-381), authorizes funds that "...may (emphasis added) be used to reimburse employees for the cost of...certification fees pursuant to their employment."

1.6 Implementation

It is the responsibility of each superintendent to ensure that adequate SAR services are available to employees and visitors. In order to provide that service, established levels of SAR training are recommended and may be required of employees.

Program accountability lies with the individual park superintendent. Chapter 3, *Management and Supervision*, details the hierarchy of SAR Program management throughout the Service and on the park level.

Chapter 2

AUTHORITY AND JURISDICTION

- 2.1 Authority
 - 2.2 Jurisdiction
-

2.1 Authority

Traditionally, NPS has provided visitor protection services, including varying levels of SAR. The authority for providing these services began with the Organic Act of August 25, 1916 (16 USC 1-4), which states that the fundamental purpose of the NPS is "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Providing for the enjoyment of NPS managed areas requires providing a safe environment in which visitors have access to emergency services.

The authority continues in 16 USC 12, which states that "The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to aid and assist visitors within the national parks or national monuments in emergencies...." Emergencies may include search, rescue, and medical incidents.

The authority for SAR assistance to neighboring communities and outside agencies is specifically provided for in 16 USC 1b (1), which allows the "Rendering of emergency rescue, fire fighting, and cooperative assistance to nearby law enforcement and fire prevention agencies and for related purposes outside of the National Park System."

The authority for Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) assistance is codified in 16 USC 18 g-i.

The authority for work place protection for NPS employees is specifically provided for through the Occupational and Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA), 29 USC 651 et. seq. This states that it is "the responsibility of the head of each Federal agency to establish and maintain an effective and comprehensive occupational safety and health program ...and provide safe and healthful places and conditions of employment...."

Director's Order (DO) #50C is to supplement section 8.2.5.1 of *Management Policies 2006* and provides detailed guidance for establishing and implementing a continuously improving and measurable risk management process that reduces the frequency and severity of visitor injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in national parks, while preserving natural and cultural resources and providing visitors with the experience they seek from their national parks.

2.2 Jurisdiction

Although this document has been developed based upon the authorities mentioned above, it will require the close cooperation and support of the various states and local governments within which the units of the National Park System are located.

The state may not impose its regulatory power upon NPS without specific congressional consent. However, park areas may adopt all or part of the SAR policies and guidelines established by their state emergency management office or bureau, as long as they do not conflict with the agency policy and procedures provided in DO #59 and outlined in this reference manual.

Superintendents may assist other agencies with emergencies that occur outside parks, but written agreements with such agencies should be in place in accordance with the requirements of DO #20, *Agreements*. NPS employees who are directed by their supervisors to provide SAR assistance to such agencies outside of their jurisdiction will be considered to be acting within the scope of Federal employment.

Chapter 3

MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

- 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Overview
 - 3.3 Organizational Levels and Responsibilities
-

3.1 Introduction

Various levels of NPS have program management responsibility for SAR, providing for standardization of services, documentation, and program administration throughout the Service.

3.2 Overview

The day-to-day management and funding of a park SAR Program resides at the park level. It is the responsibility of each superintendent to ensure that the park SAR Program is in compliance with policy. Superintendents will appoint park SAR Coordinators who will implement their programs in compliance with law, policy, and regulation. The national and regional offices will provide guidance and assistance to the parks.

3.3 Organizational Levels and Responsibilities

Refer to DO #59 for the role of the Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection.

3.3.1 Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services is located in the Washington office (WASO) Division of Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Services and serves as the National SAR Program Manager, responsible for the overall national leadership of the Servicewide SAR Program. The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services will provide both short- and long-term strategic planning and programming for the NPS SAR Program.

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services represents the Visitor and Resource Protection Directorate on strategic planning, development, review and revision of national policies including protocols, Servicewide training, data collection, standards of care, and quality assurance and improvement.

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services manages the SAR program and maintains liaison with other SAR organizations, including the National

Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR), the National Search and Rescue Committee, the Mountain Rescue Association, and others. The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services manages issues of mutual concern with states and territories through partnerships with NASAR.

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services provides subject matter expertise, assistance, and guidance to the regions and parks on policy and legal matters regarding SAR. The position also assists regions and parks in the development of relationships with search and rescue organizations. The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services maintains liaison with the Division of Risk Management and the Office of Public Health on issues of mutual interest, including infectious diseases and injury prevention planning.

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services is responsible for Servicewide SAR data collection and analysis for use in identifying trends, quality improvement, and injury prevention planning. The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services maintains inventories on personal resources and SAR capitalized equipment including rescue vehicles, aircraft, and vessels. The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services plans, develops, and manages training with the Albright Training Center, Mather Training Center, and regional offices.

3.3.2 Regional SAR Coordinator

Each region will assign a person to assist the National SAR Program Manager with SAR issues affecting parks in their region, the coordination and collection of SAR data, regional training, and coordination of recommendations made for revisions to national SAR policy. The regional SAR Coordinator will maintain a resource list of SAR providers and SAR equipment available within the region. Regional Emergency Services Coordinators may be assigned as regional SAR Coordinators or the duty may be assigned to another position.

3.3.3 Chief Ranger

As the region's Senior Law Enforcement Official, this commissioned supervisory park ranger ensures that SAR operational activities are uniformly implemented in compliance with directives, policies, and law.

3.3.4 Park SAR Coordinator

The day-to-day management of SAR programs in the individual units of the NPS resides at the park level, and it is the responsibility of superintendents to ensure their programs are in compliance with DO/RM-59. Park superintendents will appoint a park SAR Coordinator to implement the program.

Duties of the park SAR Coordinator include the following:

- Liaison with the regional SAR Coordinator.
- Evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the SAR Program and apprise park management.
- Ensure that park SAR plans are consistent with and in compliance with DO/RM-59 and DO/RM-55, *Incident Management Program*.
- Coordinate park SAR training and serve as the SAR training officer.
- Coordinate the purchase of specialized equipment and SAR supplies.
- Maintain necessary records such as personnel resources, and supply and equipment inventories.
- Recommend issuance of Search and Rescue Qualifications certification cards to employees that have meet the national standard and ensure that appropriate credentials are maintained.
- Prepare and submit data relevant to park SAR activities, including the number of SAR providers and training levels to the National SAR Program Manager and regional SAR Coordinator at the end of each calendar year.
- Provide for, as necessary, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) follow-up for all employees and supervisors who may be involved in emergency response and/or support. The specific details regarding CISM are to be published in RM-57, *Occupational Medical Standards and Health and Fitness Guidelines*.
- Conduct SAR Needs Assessment for the park every 5 years.

3.3.5 National SAR Leadership Group

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services may convene a National SAR Leadership Group to advise and work on issues important to the Servicewide SAR Program. This advisory group will represent a cross-section of the Servicewide SAR Program enlisted from regional SAR Coordinators, park SAR Coordinators, and technical experts.

The group size will be limited to nine. (See Chapter 8, *SAR Program Oversight*, section 3.8, for further details.)

Chapter 4

PARK NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Introduction
 - 4.2 Overview
 - 4.3 Guidelines
-

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides guidelines to aid in the organization of a park Needs Assessment.

The SAR Needs Assessment is the process used to assist managers in the development and ongoing evaluation of the park SAR Program. The need for a SAR Program will be based on an evaluation of many factors to determine if, and at what level, a SAR Program is appropriate. Per DO #59, a SAR Needs Assessment will be completed at least once every 5 years.

4.2 Overview

The purpose of the Needs Assessment is to identify current and projected needs, rather than to justify current operating conditions. The Needs Assessment process is a tool to be used to assess the current condition of the SAR Program within a park and then to determine if those services being provided are consistent with contemporary standards. Continued improvements in SAR services are the major reason each park should re-evaluate its SAR Program regularly, with attention to technological advances and current research.

A Needs Assessment identifies and evaluates (1) available internal and external resources, (2) the park's SAR workload, (3) requirements for training and certification, (4) rescue capabilities and response times, (5) location and capability of the local area resources, (5) fiscal resources, (6) SAR communications, (7) special considerations (e.g., mutual aid, out-of-park response, geographic location), (8) operational risk, (9) Preventive Search and Rescue (PSAR), (10) research and development, (11) emerging technology, and (12) GIS.

4.3 Guidelines

This section provides a suggested outline for the completion of a Needs Assessment. Consider using the park's SAR data from no less than the previous 5 years to obtain an accurate representation of the park SAR Program.

4.3.1 Park Information

- Visitation (total and by season, if appropriate).
- Resources, features, and facilities that produce SAR incidents.
- Visitor activities that produce SAR incidents.
- SAR staffing levels (by season, if appropriate).

4.3.2 Incident Information (incidents occurring within the park only)

- Average number of each kind of SAR incidents (lost and or rescued) per year.
- Average number of each type of SAR incident per year.
- Number of extended SAR operations (beyond the second operational period).
- Normally successful SAR methods.
- Lessons learned from SAR incidents, especially unusual ones.

4.3.3 SAR Resources

An inventory of park and local community SAR resources can be compiled using the following:

- Locations, numbers, certification levels, and availability of SAR providers (NPS and non-NPS).
- Average response times to NPS SAR incidents by SAR providers from inside and/or outside the park.
- Period of time that resources need to be available for response (hours and days of operation).
- Inventory and location of supplies and equipment.

4.3.4 Mutual Aid

- Total number of out-of-park SAR incident responses by NPS SAR providers and the average time spent.
- Total number of in-park SAR incidents with a response by outside agencies and their average time spent.
- Identify existing agreements, including the requirements of each.

4.3.5 Area SAR Agencies or Volunteer Groups

- Identify the local and regional SAR resources or groups, volunteer or other type of service, their distance from the park, capabilities, and contact information.

4.3.6 Training Program

- Identify the current SAR training program and the availability of internal and external training available to park SAR personnel.

4.3.7 Fiscal Considerations

- Current SAR Program costs (training, supplies, and equipment, and operations to the park).
- Non-programmed costs over \$500 billed to the Major SAR Account.
- Park's annual SAR funding level.

4.3.8 Other Considerations

- Status of the park's current SAR Plan and its relationship with other park plans such as Safety Plan, EMS Plan, All-Hazard Incident Management Program, Exposure Control Plan, Aviation Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, Fire Management Plan, CISM Plan, Mass Casualty Incident Plan, etc.
- Each park's unique set of circumstances, such as hazardous structures, a highway passing through the unit, remote locations such as mountainous regions, hazardous features (such as cliffs, whitewater, etc.), large expanses of water, large wilderness areas, remoteness, etc.

4.3.9 Situational Analysis

- Analyze the situations that produce SAR incidents. Identify the causes of the incidents and list appropriate (for a park area) potential mitigating actions.
- Evaluate current response to SAR events and identify short-falls and deficiencies. Determine if the percentage is acceptable or, if not, what actions need to be taken to improve it.
- Determine what risk management and decision-making processes facilitate the implementation of a continuously improving and measurable process to identify hazards and manage risk appropriate with the NPS mission.

4.3.10 Conclusions

The situation analysis will provide park management (SAR Coordinator, chief ranger, and superintendent) with information needed to make the following decisions:

- Mitigating actions (signs, railings, posters, permits, education, etc.) needed to prevent SAR incidents. Such as PSAR.
- Appropriate level of SAR service.
- Appropriate agencies and organizations to provide SAR service.
- A basic plan for the unusual SAR incident.
- The needed funding level.
- Risk management and decision-making strategies.

These decisions will then be used to develop the park's SAR Plan. This plan may be an independent document or a part of an existing plan, such as the park's Emergency Operations Plan.

Chapter 5

PARK SEARCH AND RESCUE PLAN

- 5.1 Introduction
 - 5.2 Overview
 - 5.3 Guidelines
-

5.1 Introduction

After a park Needs Assessment (see Chapter 4, *Park Needs Assessment*) has been completed, every park unit with a SAR Program will prepare a park SAR Plan approved by the superintendent. For parks that provide SAR service at Level 4, the plan will be reviewed by the regional chief ranger. The park SAR Plan is intended to be the guiding document for the park's specific SAR Program. Per DO #59, the park SAR Plan will be reviewed at least once every 5 years, in conjunction with the needs assessment, and revised as necessary.

5.2 Overview

The park SAR Plan is an operational document intended to address the day-to-day activities of the park SAR Program. Parks that rely on non-NPS SAR providers may have a very brief plan, while parks that have a complex staff-provided program may have an extensive plan.

5.3 Guidelines

The park SAR Plan is a comprehensive document that provides the reader with information about the program and how it is to be implemented. It is intended to reflect local park policies and procedures consistent with DO/RM-59.

Some elements to consider when drafting a park SAR Plan include the following:

- Introduction
 1. Describe the park unit.
 - a. Size and characteristics
 - b. Visitation levels
 - c. General overview of SAR services
- Summary of NPS authority and policy
- Purpose and goals of the park SAR Program
- Program management roles
 1. Superintendent

2. Chief Ranger
 3. District Ranger
 4. Park SAR Coordinator
 5. SAR Providers
- Level of SAR provided at the park
 1. Description.
 2. Who coordinates park training.
 - Overview of Needs Assessment
 1. What was determined by the Needs Assessment.
 2. What is the workload.
 3. Special concerns (e.g., remote wilderness settings).
 - Search and Rescue Resources
 1. Describe the resources provided by outside agencies for immediate response to park SAR events.
 2. Describe the resources that the park needs to provide.
 3. Describe mutual aid resources available to augment park or local response SAR resources.
 4. Describe the ordering process for unusual SAR incidents.
 - Training and Continuing Education
 1. Based on the level of service being provided, address the training and continuing education requirements.
 - Continuous Quality Improvement
 1. Describe the review process for the SAR incidents in terms of who conducts the sessions, how often, and who is required to attend (feedback to providers).
 2. Describe the review and approval process for the SAR Mission Reports and Case Incident Reports.
 3. Describe procedures for addressing substandard performance.
 4. Documentation.
 - a. Describe process for routing, reviewing, approving Mission Reports.
 - b. Address Freedom of Information Act.

- Communications
 1. Describe how the park's dispatch system is designed to work for SAR incidents, including the role and responsibility for each link in the system.
- Critical Incident Stress Management
 1. Describe the park's mechanism for providing assistance to employees involved in critical incidents.
- Supplies and Equipment
 1. Responsible person(s) for purchasing and maintaining.
 2. Procedures for replacing equipment.
 3. Supply inventory list(s) for SAR and Incident Command System (ICS) kits.
 4. SAR equipment and ICS kit locations.
 5. Procedures for cleaning reusable supplies and equipment.
- General Agreements
 1. Describe or include the General Agreements that are in place for the park concerning SAR.
- Appendices
 1. Include samples of all forms or other documents utilized in the park SAR Program

Chapter 6

LEVELS OF SERVICE, TRAINING, AND CERTIFYING ORGANIZATIONS

- 6.1 Introduction
 - 6.2 Levels of Service
 - 6.3 National Park Service
 - 6.4 SAR Course Criteria and Descriptions
-

6.1 Introduction

NPS will provide employees the opportunity to obtain the level of SAR training required of them to perform their duties. To help ensure a comprehensive approach in providing high quality service, a SAR Awareness course is recommended for NPS employees that may potentially engage in SAR operations. Some parks, depending on their level of public contact and public safety responsibilities, may need to provide additional SAR training. In rural and wilderness areas, or where the existence of local SAR responders is limited or delayed, advanced levels of SAR service may be necessary in order to ensure that the SAR services are contemporary with today's standards.

The NPS recognizes that it is appropriate for parks to provide different levels of SAR services. The appropriate level of service, determined by careful analysis of a park's individual Needs Assessment, is dependent upon many factors as described in Chapter 4, *Park Needs Assessment*.

The NPS recognizes four levels of service ranging from Level One, the least complex to Level Four, the most complex.

6.2 Levels of Service

6.2.1 Level One: Minimal SAR Service

Description. Park areas with a minimal risk of SAR incident occurrence, such as a small historic site in an urban setting.

Service. Personnel are available to initiate actions in the event of a disappearance, especially of a child.

Recommended Courses. Courses for this level may include any publicly accessible SAR awareness level material.

- ICS-100: Introduction to ICS

6.2.2 Level Two: Occasional SAR Service

Description. Park does not routinely experience SAR incidents, but isolated incidents have occurred in the past.

Service. These parks rely on the local or state authorities to provide SAR services. Park employees need to be able to take the report, provide initial investigation, assessment, and limited immediate response.

Recommended Courses. Courses for this level include:

- SAR Awareness
- Basic SAR
- Introduction to Search and Rescue
- Fundamentals of Search and Rescue
- ICS-100: Introduction to ICS
- ICS-200: Basic ICS
- Other local awareness courses

6.2.3 Level Three: Active SAR Service

Description. Park regularly experiences SAR incidents and responds to such incidents on a routine basis. These can be any combination of search, non-technical rescue, technical rescue, surf rescue, swiftwater rescue, cave rescue, etc.

Service. SAR services are immediately available, whether they are provided by NPS personnel, outside organizations and agencies, or a combination of both.

Recommended Courses. Courses for this level include:

- SAR Awareness
- Basic SAR
- Introduction to Search and Rescue
- Fundamentals of Search and Rescue
- Inland Search/Rescue Course
- Other Federal and State agency search management courses
- Swiftwater Rescue Technician
- High Angle Technical Rescue
- Operational Leadership
- Search Management Training
- ICS-100: Introduction to ICS
- ICS-200: Basic ICS

- Other ICS training
- Other specialized courses approved by the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services

6.2.4 Level Four: Legacy SAR Service

Description. In addition to the park regularly experiencing and responding to SAR incidents, the uniqueness of SAR operations in the area compels the staff to develop new or distinctive techniques. The area has become known for being a national leader in SAR. Examples include the following, but may not be fully inclusive:

- Denali (high altitude mountaineering)
- Mount Rainier (high altitude mountaineering)
- Yosemite (big wall)
- Sequoia/Kings Canyon (technical/helicopter short-haul)
- Grand Teton (technical/helicopter short-haul)
- Grand Canyon (numerous)
- Everglades (marine)
- Gateway/Sandy Hook (surf rescue)
- Zion (technical canyon rescue)

Service. SAR services are immediately available, whether they are provided by NPS personnel, outside organizations and agencies, or a combination of both. Such services require unique training and experience.

Training. In addition to the courses listed in Level Three, Level Four areas develop their own training or train with other organizations to prepare their personnel for their responsibilities including leadership skills.

Recommended Courses. Courses for this level include:

- SAR Awareness
- Basic SAR
- Introduction to Search and Rescue
- Fundamentals of Search and Rescue
- Inland Search/Rescue Course
- Other State and Federal agency search management courses
- Swiftwater Rescue Technician
- High Angle Technical Rescue
- Operational Leadership
- Search Management Training

- ICS-100: Introduction to ICS
- ICS-200: Basic ICS
- ICS-300, Intermediate Incident Command
- Other ICS and NIMS Training

6.3 National Park Service

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services, may authorize parks, regions, or individual employees to certify SAR positions within the established position and qualifications system. NPS has developed a multilayer program for incident management and SAR field skills. This system is based upon the validation of core competencies that are behaviorally based through training, experience, and/or formal education.

6.4 SAR Course Criteria and Descriptions

The NPS *All-Hazards Course Description Guide* establishes the minimum course requirements for ICS, SAR, and EMS training. This guide defines the course description, syllabus, minimum hours, goals, objectives, didactic components, tactile components, and experimental learning elements for each recommended SAR training course. Course may be taught by NPS personnel with sufficient skills in adult learning methods OR may be acquired through commercial sources that meet the equivalency. No accreditation will be facilitated by NPS; however the course sponsor must ensure that the minimums are met.

Chapter 7

CERTIFICATION AND AUTHORIZATION

- 7.1 Introduction
 - 7.2 Overview
 - 7.3 Guidelines
-

7.1 Introduction

A large percentage of NPS SAR providers are trained by NPS and there is a degree of mobility within NPS that results in SAR providers transferring between parks. The purpose of this chapter is to provide policy and guidelines for certification and authorization procedures within the NPS.

7.2 Overview

NPS hires a substantial number of seasonal and permanent employees that regularly travel and transfer between parks. NPS must have a structured system in place to evaluate and authorize employees to perform SAR services on park lands. NPS may defray all costs associated with required SAR training and certification pursuant to authority contained in 5 USC 4109.

7.3 Guidelines

7.3.1 Certification

It is the policy of the NPS that providers at parks, with Level Three and Level Four SAR Service, will be certified by the NPS. A park SAR Coordinator may certify a person who possesses a state qualification to be a SAR provider when it is based on an NPS standard.

Certification is the approval by park management for qualified SAR providers to perform SAR. The first step begins with the park SAR Coordinator evaluating and verifying the prospective provider's qualifications and medical/fitness level. Once qualifications are verified, the SAR Coordinator may issue a All-Hazards Qualification Certification Card for specific levels of service based on the needs of the park program, the position description of the provider, and when appropriate, the recommendation of the chief park ranger. The Qualification Certification Card is covered in further detail later in this chapter.

7.3.2 Recognized Positions

The following SAR positions are found in the DOI/NPS All-Hazards Position Qualifications Guide:

Basic Search and Rescue Technician	BSRT
Search Team Leader	SRTL
Search Technician I	SRT1
Search Technician II	SRT2
Swiftwater Rescue Team Leader	SWFL
Swiftwater Rescue Technician I	SWF1
Swiftwater Rescue Technical II	SWF2
Technical Rescue Team Leader	TRTL
Technical Rescue Team Member I	TRM1
Technical Rescue Team Member II	TRM2
Technical Mountain Rescue Leader	TMRL
Technical Mountain Rescue Technician I	TMRT
Ice Rescue Team Leader	IRTL
Ice Rescue Technician	IRT
High Altitude Search and Rescue Specialist	HARS
Small Craft Operator	SCOP
Mounted Search Technician	MSTC

Other positions may be developed as needed without amendment to this document.

7.3.3 Details to Other Parks

An NPS All-Hazard Incident Qualification Card for all positions is valid anywhere in the National Park System. Providers operating outside their home units must be oriented to local procedures upon arrival at a different park and meet the requesting unit's standard.

7.3.4 Out-of-Park Details

Periodically, NPS providers respond to areas outside their jurisdiction. In these circumstances, SAR providers may function only up to their level of qualification or lower as directed by the requesting authority.

7.3.5 Incident Management

All SAR incidents will be managed under the ICS.

7.3.6 All-Hazard Incident Qualification Certification Card

The NPS All-Hazard Incident Qualification Certification Card is evidence of NPS certification and authorization to perform SAR at a specified level. Qualifications cards are issued for all approved positions.

The Qualification Certification Card is issued at the park level once the park SAR Coordinator has verified the applicant's qualifications and suitability as an SAR provider and the park's need for that provider in its SAR system.

Park SAR Coordinators are authorized to approve the Qualification Certification Card for all SAR positions identified in their respective park SAR Plan. ICS positions must have concurrence as defined in RM-55.

7.3.7 Suspension or Revocation

The park superintendent may suspend a SAR provider's Qualification Certification Card based on the recommendation of the park SAR Coordinator and the chief park ranger. Suspensions are administrative provisions for failure to comply with the certification/re-certification criteria or deviations in standards of service that may be harmful to the outcome of the SAR mission.

The park superintendent may revoke the provider's Qualification Certification Card based on the recommendation of a Board of Review or other formal process that evaluates the incident by fair practices. Revocation will result from negligence, misconduct, incompetence, and other non-administrative failures of compliance with this reference manual.

The park SAR Coordinator will notify the regional SAR Coordinator and the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services of all revocations and any suspensions of greater than 30 days.

Chapter 8

SAR PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

- 8.1 Introduction
 - 8.2 Overview
 - 8.3 Guidelines
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8.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to establish guidelines for SAR Program oversight for employees of the NPS that are providing search and rescue services.

8.2 Overview

It is Servicewide policy that the NPS Search and Rescue Field Manual will be implemented for parks with Levels Three and Four SAR service. This will ensure consistency throughout the Service and reduce liability concerns.

8.3 Guidelines

8.3.1 National SAR Leadership Group

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services will convene the National SAR Leadership Group (SARLG) to advise and work on issues important to the Servicewide SAR Program. The purpose of the committee will be to exchange views, information, and advice relating to the management and implementation of the NPS SAR Program and to make recommendations to change or review policies set forth in DO/RM-59.

The SARLG shall be comprised of the following membership:

- Committee Chair (1)
- Technical Expert (TE) designated by each region (7)
- U.S. Park Police (USPP) (1)
- Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services
- Member at Large (1)
- Emergency Services Leadership Board (ESLB) Liaison (non-voting)

TEs will be designated by the regional director to represent their respective geographic area. The USPP representative will be designated by the Chief of the USPP.

The SARLG chair will be a TE. The chair responsibilities will rotate between the TEs, with the chair term of office no more than 18 months. The SARLG vice chair will be the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services.

Appointments will consist of a 3-year commitment.

The SARLG will meet as needed to resolve issues and conduct business, with at least one meeting held annually. The SARLG is an internal body administered in a manner that does not entail chartering under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

8.3.2 Continuing Education

As part of continuing quality improvement, ongoing continuing education programs should include individual and group feedback, as well as information and data obtained from Mission Reports and Case Incident Records.

Through coordination with the park SAR Coordinator, parks are encouraged to provide continuing education sessions focused on topics driven by Continuing Quality Improvement data.

8.3.3 Quality Assurance/Continuing Quality Improvement

The SAR provider's ability to render appropriate search and rescue services is a direct reflection on the NPS. Ongoing quality improvement can be maintained in several ways:

- Mission Reports will be reviewed by the SAR provider's supervisor and the park SAR Coordinator.
- After Action Reviews should be conducted on a regularly scheduled basis in order to improve SAR operations.
- Any member of the SAR Program may initiate reports indicating a need to review any component of the SAR Program for improvement. Concerns also may arise from outside the NPS. The park SAR Coordinator will review those issues and provide recommendations to the superintendent.
- Continuing education must be provided for and completed by SAR providers within a specified timeframe in order to maintain current certifications.
- Periodic inspection and maintenance of all SAR equipment is to be performed as necessary to ensure proper function. Regular inventories of all rescue equipment and supplies are necessary to ensure that they are current and in adequate supply.
- All SAR providers must maintain the knowledge and skill proficiency required for their level of certification.

8.3.4 Statistical Review

A file of all Mission Reports will be maintained in the park case incident files for each incident. In keeping with the Privacy Act, SAR data will be provided in the form of an annual report for use by park management, as well as to the regional and national office for statistical purposes (Chapter 10, *Documentation*).

8.3.5 Deficient Performance

Refer to Chapter 19, *Performance and Conduct*.

Chapter 9

MEDICAL AND FITNESS STANDARDS

- 9.1 Introduction
 - 9.2 Overview
 - 9.3 Guidelines
-

9.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to establish guidelines for medical and fitness standards for employees of the NPS that are providing SAR services.

9.2 Overview

Medical and fitness standards have not been established or validated for SAR positions. However, the duties of such positions require good fitness. Therefore, regardless of the lack of standards, park management shall evaluate SAR providers and shall not assign personnel to duties that they are not capable of performing. Until standards are established, park management and the park SAR Coordinator will follow these guidelines for medical and fitness standards for employees, Volunteers in Parks (VIP), and Administratively Determined (AD) individuals.

As directed by the National Response Framework (NRF), the receiving agency or hiring jurisdiction is responsible for ensuring that non-agency personnel meet an established medical and fitness standard appropriate for the mission.

9.3 Guidelines

9.3.1 Categories

SAR positions fall into one of the three physical fitness categories:

1. Arduous. Duties involve fieldwork requiring physical performance calling for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.
2. Moderate. Duties involve fieldwork requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular

ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, squatting, twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

3. Light. Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of work, as well as some bending and stooping or light lifting. Individuals almost always can govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.

9.3.2 Interim Acceptable Measures

The following measures of medical and fitness standards are acceptable until program medical and fitness standards can be developed:

Federal Interagency Wildland Fire. Both the medical standards and fitness standards (pack test) are acceptable and applicable for the designated level.

NPS Law Enforcement. Both the medical standards and fitness standards (PEB) are acceptable for all levels of SAR.

NPS Dive Program. Both the medical standards and fitness standards are acceptable and applicable for all levels of SAR.

NPS Open Water Lifeguard. Any local park medical and fitness standards for an Open Water Lifeguard are acceptable and applicable for all levels of SAR.

9.3.3 Future Standards

The Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services, with the assistance of the National SAR Advisory Group, shall follow OPM requirements to research and develop medical and fitness standards for all NPS established SAR positions. Such standards shall be published in and implemented by future versions of this reference manual.

Chapter 10

DOCUMENTATION

- 10.1 Introduction
 - 10.2 Guidelines
-

10.1 Introduction

An important component of the SAR Program is complete documentation with accurate data. It is the practice of NPS to prepare the proper reports whenever a SAR incident is completed. These reports contain information that the park SAR Coordinator can use to evaluate performance, design preventive SAR plans, develop statistical models, assist with investigations, seek emergency funding, and document agency activity.

10.2 Guidelines

10.2.1 Reports Required upon Completion of a SAR Incident

The following reports should be prepared upon the completion of a SAR incident, regardless of complexity:

Search and Rescue Report (commonly referred to as the “Mission Report”). Complete this report to the extent possible and file with the Case Incident Report. General (non-Privacy Act) information such as subject behavior or statistical data may be gathered from this report at a later time.

Case Incident Report. Complete this report detailing the circumstances of the SAR and actions taken by responders. Attach other relevant documents, such as Supplementary Case Incident Reports, diagrams, photographs, or ICS forms. This report should be filed at the park level.

Search and Rescue Emergency Funding Report. If the SAR incident cost more than \$500 in unprogrammed costs and the park is requesting emergency funding, this report must be completed at the park level and submitted to the regional SAR Coordinator, along with copies of the official report (SAR Mission Report, Case Incident Report), and cost accounting documents (see Chapter 11, *Business Practices*).

Aircraft Use Documents. If the SAR incident involved the use of government owned or chartered aircraft, complete all aircraft use documents and submit them through normal channels, with copies filed with the Case Incident Report.

Note that complex SAR incidents may have enough documentation to create an entire incident file package. See RM-55, *Incident Management Program*, Chapter 4, *Program Management*, for information about incident record management.

All SAR reports should be treated with confidentiality as critical and sensitive information can be contained in them. Information made available under the Freedom of Information Act should contain only a summary of the SAR incident. Further information regarding patient confidentiality is presented in Chapter 17, *Legal Aspects of Search and Rescue Services*.

10.2.2 Training and Re-certification Reports

Either through the park SAR Coordinator or other designated means, each park is responsible for ensuring that SAR training provided by the park or otherwise obtained by employees is documented. Those documents are the administrative record for each SAR provider's re-certification, program audits, statistical information, and other related purposes.

10.2.3 Annual Reports

At the end of each calendar year, each park SAR Coordinator is responsible for reporting the annual SAR data to the regional offices. The data in those reports will be compiled by the regions, validated, finalized, and submitted to the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services by February 1 of the following year.

10.2.4 Records Retention

Managers are required by policy to maintain records in all cases where emergency service is provided by SAR personnel. This information may serve to protect the rights of the subject as well as the rights of the SAR provider if legal questions arise. Mission Reports should remain on file as follows:

- Major visitor accidents resulting in death or tort claim *Permanent
- Minor visitor accidents *2 years
- Accidents resulting in government property damage *6 years after case is closed
- Employee accidents (file alphabetically by name) *6 years after case is closed

(* NPS Records Disposition Schedule, approved 1986.)

Chapter 11

BUSINESS PRACTICES

- 11.1 Introduction
 - 11.2 Overview
 - 11.3 Guidelines
 - 11.4 Attachment 1 – Search and Rescue Funding Report and Instructions
-

11.1 Introduction

It is the practice of NPS to follow established business practices in the management of the SAR Program and of specific incidents.

11.2 Overview

Non-emergency program management activities will be conducted using normal NPS business practices related to procurement, human resources, training, property management, fleet management, and visitor services.

Emergency activities involving the management of specific SAR incidents will be conducted using the NPS, and where applicable, interagency all-hazard incident business management practices as described in RM-55, *Incident Management Program*, Chapter 9, *Incident Business Management*.

11.3 Guidelines

11.3.1 Cost Containment

All emergency incident cost containment principles, whether found in RM-55, *Incident Management Program*, Chapter 9, *Incident Business Management*, or in additional memorandums or guidelines, will be followed during the management of SAR incidents.

11. 3.2 Program Management Funding

It is expected that each park, region, and the Washington Office will fund its own activities needed to meet non-emergency SAR Program responsibilities. Funding shortfalls should be addressed by the OFS budget formulation process, and other funding sources such as PMIS.

11.3.3 National Search and Rescue Account

SAR incidents that result in \$500 or more of unprogrammed costs may be funded from the National SAR Account. The Incident Commander, park SAR Coordinator, or other staff may initiate a request for National SAR Account funding by submitting the SAR Funding Report along with the required documentation (see Attachment 1, following page).

11.4 Attachment 1 – Search and Rescue Funding Report and Instructions

FORM 10-347
(6/82)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SEARCH & RESCUE FUNDING REPORT		DATE OF REPORT
REGION	PARK	ACCOUNT NUMBER
NATURE OF INCIDENT	BEGINNING DATE	ENDING DATE
COSTS:		
Park employee's overtime (Except Seasonals)	\$ _____	
Seasonal employees:		
Regular	_____	
Overtime	_____	
Temporary duty employees		
Regular	_____	
Overtime	_____	
Personnel Compensation		\$ _____
Travel and Transportation of persons		_____
Transportation of things		_____
*Rent, communications, and utilities		_____
*Other services		_____
*Supplies and materials		_____
*Equipment		_____
SUBTOTAL		\$ _____
CLEAN-UP AND REPAIR COSTS:		
Park employee's overtime (Except Seasonals)	\$ _____	
Seasonal employees:		
Regular	_____	
Overtime	_____	
Temporary duty employees		
Regular	_____	
Overtime	_____	
Personnel Compensation		\$ _____
Travel and Transportation of persons		_____
Transportation of things		_____
*Rent, communications, and utilities		_____
*Other services		_____
*Supplies and materials		_____
*Equipment		_____
SUBTOTAL		_____
TOTAL COSTS		_____
<i>*Explain and itemize on additional page</i>		
Brief narrative of incident		
SIGNATURE OF SUPERINTENDENT		DECISION AND SIGNATURE OF REGIONAL DIRECTOR
		<input type="checkbox"/> Approved
		<input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE NATIONAL SAR ACCOUNT

FUNDING AUTHORITY

Public Law 97-100, established in the FY 1982 Appropriations Act, provided that; *"any funds available to the National Park Service may be used, with the approval of the Secretary, to maintain law and order in emergency and other unforeseen law enforcement situations and conduct emergency search and rescue operations in the National Park System."*

DEFINITIONS

- Incident: The active period of the search, rescue, or recovery in which the mission is being carried out.
- Search: An operation to locate missing persons who may be in distress.
- Rescue: To render aid or remove a person from a situation of perceived danger.
- Recovery: An operation to retrieve human remains.
- Salvage: An operation to retrieve personal property and transport it to a place of safety and security.
- Multi-Casualty Incident (MCI): Any incident in which the number of injured persons fully engages the capabilities of the jurisdictional resources

PREPAREDNESS FUNDING

All purchases for incident prevention and preparedness are funded from park base operating funds. These include SAR supplies and equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), information and education, and employee training.

INCIDENT FUNDING

SAR incidents that result in less than \$500 of unprogrammed costs are funded from base park accounts and are termed "minor SAR incidents." SAR incidents that result in \$500 or more of unprogrammed costs may be funded from a National SAR Account and are termed "major SAR incidents." These monies are allocated from other NPS accounts, generally new construction or land acquisitions.

SAR incidents costing more than \$100,000 will require authorization and coordination of expenses with WASO. Initial contact and dialogue should be established prior to reaching the threshold. When the SAR exceeds \$60,000, a daily SAR Incident Action Plan (IAP) will be submitted to the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services via email. This IAP will serve as the basis for situational awareness for senior leadership.

The Incident Commander, park SAR Coordinator, or other designated staff initiates the request for National SAR Account funding by notifying the regional SAR Coordinator of the incident and submitting the Search and Rescue Funding Report (form 10-347) along

with the minimum requested documentation, which may include part or all of the following:

- NPS Search and Rescue Report.
- Case Incident Report (Form 10-343 or CIRS/IMARS equivalent) with summary narrative.
- Incident Cost Summary Report or a listing of personnel assigned to the incident and their costs. AFS-3 Document Summary would be acceptable.
- Aircraft Use Report (Form OAS-23) if applicable.
- Requisitions and receipts or a list of all purchases, costs, and appropriate justifications.

The park superintendent and the regional SAR Coordinator will review and verify every National SAR Account funding request to ensure that it is in compliance with the criteria listed in this memorandum. On a quarterly basis, these requests will be submitted to the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services, who will review these requests and forward them WASO Finance Office for reprogramming/funding.

Costs created by search operations, rescue operations, recovery operations, post-incident clean-up, rehabilitation, after-action review, CISM debriefing, incident investigation, documentation, and other expenses directly associated with the complete resolution of the SAR incident and a return to preparedness can be charged to a National SAR Account.

Specific expenses authorized for National SAR funding include:

- Overtime and premium pay costs for permanent and seasonal personnel assigned to incident or post-incident activities.
- Unprogrammed regular salary costs for part-time seasonal or intermittent employees assigned to the incident or post-incident activities.
- Overtime costs for home unit staff required to backfill for personnel assigned to the incident (period of emergency activity only).
- Work rest guidelines should be followed to ensure that for every two hours of work or travel, one hour of time off should be provided within a 24-hour period. Any time that exceeds the guidelines (in excess of 16 hours of work or travel within a 24 hour period) must be documented, along with appropriate mitigation actions taken.
- Hiring of emergency personnel until the additional workload created by the SAR incident has been reduced to a level that can be managed with regular permanent and seasonal staff.
- Costs for fixed and rotary wing aircraft.
- Services, supplies, and equipment purchased during the incident that are needed to safely carry out the mission but are not part of the current SAR cache inventory.
- Costs for replacing or repairing equipment that was lost, damaged, destroyed, or rendered unavailable for service on the SAR. Examples: replacement climbing

- ropes, replacement carabiners and rescue hardware, replacement tents, sleeping bags, camping gear, replacement radios, and batteries.
- Travel and transportation costs including General Services Administration (GSA) mileage.
 - Communication costs such as cell and satellite phone bills, computer rental fees, and SAR management computer software.
 - Meals to personnel at their official duty station at during emergency operations which pose a threat to life and property.
 - Travel and costs associated with incident review and CISM.
 - Payments to cooperators assisting with the SAR under terms and conditions of an approved written agreement.
 - Mutual aid SAR responses outside park boundaries (over \$500).
 - Rental of equipment such as computers, trailers, and equipment that is mission specific.

Expenses specifically not authorized for national SAR funding.

- GSA vehicle monthly rental fees.
- Base 8 salaries for permanent and seasonal employees that are on project funds.
- Other costs when the mission shifts emphasis from a SAR to a law enforcement incident, or other discipline.
- Tort claims associated with the SAR mission.
- New construction, such as additions to the SAR cache or Emergency Operating Center, road improvement materials, building materials, construction tools.
- Stocking the SAR cache with new gear that was not used on the SAR mission.
- The purchase of previously owned cameras, television sets, VCRs, computers, and peripherals. Other government or non-government items must be approved by the Incident Commander.
- Investigative supplies such as fingerprint kits, drug kits, law enforcement defensive gear.
- Travel to award ceremonies.

Inappropriate charges will be immediately re-directed back to the park.

It is permissible to utilize National SAR funding to pay for out-of-park emergency SAR responses when “officially” requested by outside or cooperating agencies.

Questions regarding this guidance should be directed to the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services, 202-513-7093.

Chapter 12

SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

- 12.1 General
 - 12.2 Supplies
 - 12.3 Equipment
 - 12.4 Equipment Maintenance
 - 12.5 Military Supply
-

12.1 General

Each park will specify and acquire its own basic supplies and equipment from base funding. Some of these costs may be defrayed by donations or cost recovery actions.

Supplies and equipment purchased during a SAR incident that are needed to safely carry out the mission and the costs for replacing or repairing equipment that was lost, damaged, destroyed, or rendered unavailable for service on a SAR incident, may be charged to the National SAR Account. See Chapter 11, *Business Practices*, for details.

SAR personnel are expected to perform their duties in a variety of weather conditions and terrain/flora situations. The clothing they wear should enhance their safety and comfort, permitting them to remain in the elements for extended periods of time. When working SAR personnel should wear high visibility clothing to the extent possible. The use of ANSI standard garments is considered best practice and may be purchased as personal protective equipment by the agency.

12.2 Supplies

SAR supplies can be procured locally, using established business procedures. Supplies that may be critical to the timely resolution of a SAR incident, the safety of a SAR provider, or the well-being of the public will be of sufficient quality to assure success. Supplies are those items that are consumed during an event or incident.

12.3 Equipment

SAR equipment can be procured locally, using established business procedures. Equipment that may be critical to the timely resolution of a SAR incident, the safety of a SAR provider, or the well-being of the public will be of sufficient quality to assure success and will meet established standards (ASTM or NFPA).

Equipment may or may not be capitalized, but requires inventory management practices.

Parks acquiring similar equipment may want to agree on specifications and make a mass purchase to lower costs.

Legacy SAR Service parks may design or test new SAR equipment under carefully controlled conditions using research and development procedures that have been established by that park and have been reviewed and approved by the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services, the National SAR Advisory Group, or an approved SAR Advisor.

12.4 Equipment Maintenance

Parks will establish equipment maintenance procedures to care for equipment in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations, standards found in certified training, and other established standards (e.g., ASTM and NFPA).

These procedures should include the following, as a minimum:

- Cleaning and decontamination.
- Inspection for damage or inappropriate wear.
- Rehabilitation or replacement.
- Inventory and history of use.
- Orderly and logical storage.

12.5 Military Supply

Some SAR supplies and equipment may be available through military surplus or military supply channels. Significant savings may be accomplished by using these sources. However, the park SAR Coordinator must ensure that the supplies and equipment are of good quality and are appropriate to the park's SAR Plan and activities. For example, do not get a jungle penetrator just because it is available.

12.6 Meals

Agencies may provide meals to personnel at their official duty station at government expense during emergency operations which pose a threat to life and property, if **both** of the following conditions are met:

- A. Emergency personnel are in the field engaged in emergency operations (e.g., search and rescue personnel), **and**;
- B. The operational period prevents personnel from taking meals at home or in the normal office/work station environment.

Chapter 13

RESCUE AND EMERGENCY VEHICLES

- 13.1 Introduction
 - 13.2 Policy
 - 13.3 Guidelines
-

13.1 Introduction

If local rescue and fire services do not exist, or are not available to serve the park in a timely manner, the park may select to provide that service.

An emergency response to an SAR incident, performed in a SAR vehicle, helicopter, or other emergency vehicle, should be based on a reasonable belief that immediate assistance is required to safeguard a person's life. A rescue vehicle operator is responsible for the safety and efficient transport of the crew and the safety of the public. While the operation of an emergency vehicle often occurs during times of crisis, the operator needs to remain aware that they are legally accountable for their actions.

13.2 Policy

Vehicles used for responding to SAR incident may include:

- Law enforcement vehicles (policies, specifications, and procedures are outlined in DO/RM-9, *Law Enforcement*).
- Emergency medical service or ambulances (policies, specifications, and procedures are outlined in RM-51, *Emergency Medical Services*).
- Fire vehicles (policies, specifications and procedures are outlined in RM-18, *Wildland and Prescribed Fire Management*, and RM-58, *Structural Fire Management*).
- SAR vehicles.
- ATVs, UTVs, snow machines, and boats/vessels.

All NPS employees who operate a government vehicle need to be commensurate with state laws.

After proper orientation and instruction, and with supervisory approval, an NPS employee or volunteer who has a valid state driver's license for the class of vehicle being operated may operate an SAR vehicle in a non-emergency mode (no emergency lights or siren). The driver of a SAR vehicle being operated in a non-

emergency mode will obey all traffic regulations and travel without activation of emergency lights and siren.

To operate a SAR or rescue vehicle in the emergency mode, an NPS employee or volunteer must have received documented orientation and instruction in the operation of that vehicle for that purpose, and will have completed the NHTSA Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) for Ambulances (available at www.nhtsa.dot.gov), or an emergency vehicle operations course at FLETC, an EVOC course at an approved seasonal law enforcement training school, or equivalent course.

To operate a motorized boat/vessel, an NPS employee or volunteer must have received documented orientation and instruction in the operation of that boat/vessel for that purpose, and will have completed the Motorboat Operators Certification Course (MOCC).

All emergency vehicle responses will be carried out in accordance with applicable state laws. While the operator of the emergency vehicle remains responsible for operating the vehicle with due regard for the safety of persons and property, during emergency operation (i.e., with lights and siren), the operator may:

- Operate the vehicle in excess of the posted speed limit in a reasonable and prudent manner given the prevailing conditions of the roadway, weather, and traffic conditions;
- Obstruct traffic to the extent that it is necessary to carry out the operation and such activities do not unnecessarily endanger human life or property;
- Proceed through an intersection past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;
- Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified direction; and
- Shall operate the vehicle in such a manner so as not to further compromise or aggravate the condition of the patient(s) on board.

Requirements contained in this Reference Manual and RM-60 will apply whenever NPS management has operational control of aircraft. Operational control exists when a DOI entity exercises authority over crewmember approval and qualifications, determination of aircraft airworthiness, maintenance requirements, and dispatching. All NPS aviation activities will follow the requirements in this Reference Manual and RM-60. These activities and programs include Search and Rescue.

In its use of aircraft, the Service will:

- Use, to the maximum extent possible, the quietest aircraft available for its aviation operations.
- Limit official use of flights over parks to those needed to support or carry out emergency operations or essential management activities in cases where there are no practical alternatives or when alternative methods would be unreasonable.
- Give full consideration to safety; wilderness management implications; impacts on resources, values, or visitors; impacts on other administrative activities; and overall cost-effectiveness.
- Plan, schedule, and consolidate flights to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on park resources and values and visitor enjoyment.”

13.3 Guidelines

Although the specific circumstances of each SAR incident must dictate the actions taken, typically vehicles are operated at SAR incidents in the following manner:

- Responses to missing person reports (searches) are made in a non-emergency mode.
- Responses to reports of rescues needed are made either in (1) non-emergency mode (subject stranded but no immediate threat to life), or (2) emergency mode (subject stranded or injured with an immediate threat to life).

Parks may specify and develop their own SAR vehicles so long as the vehicle is safe and does not exceed the manufacturer’s recommendations for design, size, weight, balance, or modification. Parks also may purchase or lease vehicles commercially designed for SAR.

On a periodic basis, SAR vehicles will be inventoried to ensure they are properly supplied. A periodic check will be conducted on SAR vehicles to confirm that all equipment is in working order. Each vehicle operator will ensure that all mechanical, safety, and special equipment are operational at all times. Any deficiencies will be immediately corrected or reported through channels for repair or replacement.

Chapter 14

NATIONAL RESPONSE FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL SAR PLAN

- 14.1 Introduction
 - 14.2 National Response Framework
 - 14.3 National SAR Plan
-

14.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the authorities and guidance and an understanding of the Federal government's National SAR Program.

14.2 National Response Framework (NRF)

As required by Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, the NRF establishes a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. The NRF is an all-hazards plan built on the template of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NRF can be partially or fully implemented in the context of a threat, anticipation of a significant event, or in response to an incident requiring a coordinated Federal response. Selective implementation through the activation of one or more of the NRF elements allows maximum flexibility to meet the unique requirements of any situation and enables effective interaction among various Federal, State, local, tribal, private-sector, and other non-governmental entities.

Emergency Support Functions (ESF) are the primary means through which the Federal government provides assistance to State, local, and tribal governments or to Federal departments and agencies conducting missions of primary Federal responsibility. ESFs may be activated by the Secretary of Homeland Security or ESF coordinators. The ESF structure provides a modular structure to identify the precise components that can best address the requirements of the incident.

State, tribal, territorial, and local authorities are responsible for SAR within their respective jurisdictions and should designate a SAR Coordinator to provide integration and coordination of all SAR services.

During incidents or potential incidents requiring a unified response, Federal SAR responsibilities reside within primary agencies that provide timely and specialized SAR capabilities. Support agencies provide specific capabilities or resources that support ESF #9.

Federal SAR response operational environments are classified as:

- Structural Collapse (Urban) Search and Rescue (FEMA Urban Search and Rescue)
- Maritime/Coastal/Waterborne Search and Rescue (U.S. Coast Guard)
- Land Search and Rescue (NPS, Department of Defense)

Land SAR under ESF #9 is defined as operations that require aviation and ground forces to meet mission objectives other than maritime/coastal/waterborne and structural collapse SAR operations.

SAR services include the performance of distress monitoring, communications, location of distressed personnel, coordination, and execution of rescue operations including extrication or evacuation along with the provisioning of medical assistance and civilian services through the use of public and private resources to assist persons and property in potential or actual distress.

Activation of ESF #9 and resource orders for response to SAR incidents will be made by FEMA or other ordering agencies through the interagency coordination system.

14.3 National SAR Plan

Federal agencies with SAR responsibilities or assets have signed the National SAR Plan for coordinating civil SAR services to meet domestic needs and international commitments. DOI, represented by NPS, is a signatory agency.

The plan's objectives include the following:

- Provide a national plan for coordinating SAR services to meet domestic needs and international commitments, and to document related basic national policies.
- Support lifesaving provisions of the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue of IMO, the Convention on International Civil Aviation of ICAO, certain international agreements to which the United States is party, and similar international instruments.
- Provide an overall plan for coordination of SAR operations, effective use of all available resources, mutual assistance, and efforts to improve such cooperation and services.
- Integrate available resources which can be used for SAR into a cooperative network for greater protection of life and property and to ensure greater efficiency and economy.

- Help the United States satisfy its humanitarian, national, and international SAR-related obligations.
- Provide national guidance for development of SAR-related systems.
- Describe its participants and their roles in a pro-lifesaving context.
- Recognize lead Federal agencies, respectively, for the types of operations covered by this plan, and describe geographic regions of SAR responsibility, as appropriate.
- Account for saving property, but on a secondary basis to saving lives.
- Account for all operations up to and including providing initial assistance (food, clothing, medical, etc.) to survivors and delivering them to a place of safety.
- Have, as a primary concept, cooperation for overall and continual development, coordination, and improvement of SAR services.

The National SAR Plan, along with its companion National SAR Supplement, provide a National SAR System for the country, outlining the overall coordination roles (U.S. Coast Guard, water SAR; U.S. Air Force, land SAR), describing the elements of the system and providing national procedures. Both documents can be found at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-o/g-opr/manuals/manuals.htm>.

Chapter 15

ASSISTANCE TO OTHER AGENCIES OUTSIDE PARK BOUNDARIES

- 15.1 Introduction
 - 15.2 Policy
 - 15.3 Guidelines
-

15.1 Introduction

NPS is often called upon to provide emergency assistance outside the National Park System. Emergency assistance may include SAR being provided by NPS SAR providers. The following policy and guidelines are provided to help park managers understand how this assistance may be provided. These procedures do not apply to ESF #9 response or response to SAR incidents ordered under the National Response Framework (Chapter 14, *National Response Framework and National SAR Plan*).

15.2 Policy

The authority for providing SAR assistance to neighboring communities and outside agencies is specifically provided for in 16 USC 1b (1), which allows the "Rendering of emergency rescue, fire fighting, and cooperative assistance to nearby law enforcement and fire prevention agencies and for related purposes outside of the National Park System."

NPS may provide emergency assistance to other agencies outside of the park boundaries, so long as:

- The incident is an emergency;
- NPS personnel or resources have been formally requested through agency procedures;
- NPS personnel and resources have the proper certifications and authorizations needed to provide care; and
- The ability to provide appropriate SAR services within NPS areas is maintained.

NPS SAR providers who provide emergency assistance under the auspices of this law remain Federal employees and are considered to be acting within the scope of their employment.

15.3 Guidelines

NPS providers assisting other agencies outside of the park remain Federal employees acting within the scope of their employment. Accordingly, NPS SAR providers must always act within their scope of certification, even if that differs from other providers on the scene.

In order to provide external assistance, the NPS areas will establish written agreements with the agencies of jurisdiction. These agreements will specify that the NPS unit must maintain the ability to provide appropriate SAR services within the park, remain under the direction of NPS supervisors, follow the NPS SAR Field Manual, and include required certification, authorizations, and limitations specific to the agency with whom the agreement is made. National SAR accounts may be used accordingly.

Chapter 16

INSTRUMENTS OF AGREEMENT

- 16.1 Introduction
 - 16.2 Overview
 - 16.3 Procedures
-

16.1 Introduction

It is often necessary for parks to enter into agreements with other Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as non-government organizations, in order to provide adequate SAR response, mutual aid, training, and other SAR program activities. The appropriate type of instrument of agreement may differ in each case. This chapter outlines procedures for developing agreements and provides examples.

16.2 Overview

NPS is authorized by law to enter into agreements with other agencies, organizations, and individuals to establish formal relationships that allow NPS to more efficiently and economically accomplish its mission (DO #20, *Agreements*, Section 1.2, page 1). According to DO #20, “NPS park and program managers should actively seek opportunities to efficiently and economically accomplish the NPS mission by entering into advantageous relationships with Federal and non-Federal entities.”

These relationships are formalized through the use of several different Instruments of Agreement that are outlined in this chapter. Specific policies and procedures regarding agreements not covered in this chapter can be found in DO #20 and the NPS Agreements Handbook.

16.3 Procedures

16.3.1 Instruments of Agreement

The Instruments of Agreement currently authorized under DO #20 and the NPS Agreements Handbook are the Interagency Agreement, the Cooperative Agreement, and the General Agreement, which include the agreements previously referred to as the Memorandum of Understanding and Memorandum of Agreement.

16.3.2 Interagency Agreements

According to DO #20, “the NPS will use Interagency Agreements only to document arrangements that entail the transfer of funds, goods, property, or services between the NPS and another Federal agency. When the purpose of the agreement is merely to document mutually-agreed-to policies, procedures, objectives, and/or relationships, with no funds, goods, property, or services exchanged, a General Agreement will be the instrument of choice” (Section 3.4, page 2).

Interagency Agreements, which involve the receipt of funds from another Federal agency, do not require the signature of the NPS Contracting Officer (unless the other Federal agency requires it). Interagency Agreements which obligate NPS funds, however, must be reviewed and signed by a Level IIB Contracting Officer, and any obligation of NPS funds over \$250,000 must be reviewed by the Manager, Contracting and Procurement Program Office, WASO.

16.3.3 Cooperative Agreements

New statutory authorities (16 USC 1g, 16 USC 5933, and 16 USC 1a-2j) allow the NPS to make greater use of Cooperative Agreements than was possible in the past. In general, a Cooperative Agreement is used to “transfer money, property, services, or anything else of value from the NPS to a partner,” where the principal purpose of that assistance is “to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation” between “the NPS and a State, local government, tribal government, or other non-Federal entity,” or “to carry out the public purpose of any National Park Service program,” or “to develop adequate, coordinated, cooperative research and training programs,” and “the NPS anticipates substantial involvement” in carrying out the proposed activity.

If an agreement does not meet the above definition, it will be a General Agreement rather than a Cooperative Agreement. In cases where the park does not anticipate participating to a great extent in the process, a contract may be a more appropriate instrument.

16.3.4 Cooperative Management Agreements

Cooperative Management Agreements are used for the acquisition or provision of supplies and services between the NPS and a State or local government agency when the purpose of that acquisition is cooperative management of an NPS, State, or local resource. Policy guidelines are being developed for Cooperative Management Agreements and will be found in the NPS Agreements Handbook when available.

16.3.5 General Agreements (previously Memoranda of Understanding and Memoranda of Agreement)

According to DO #20, a General Agreement is “a generic instrument used to document a wide range of mutually-agreed-to-policies, procedures, objectives, understandings and/or relationships with Federal and non-Federal entities” (Section 7.1, page 4). The term may be applied to any agreement that does not fit one of the definitions of Instruments of Agreement above. DO #20 provides a list of examples of General Agreements in Section 7.1 a-g, page 4.

A General Agreement cannot obligate the NPS to provide financial assistance or transfer NPS goods or services to any other entity (including Federal). However, a General Agreement may establish a working outline or framework of a program under which a future Cooperative Agreement or Interagency Agreement will be developed. General Agreements do not have to be reviewed or signed by a Contracting Officer (DO #20, Section 7.4, page 4). However, if the park or program manager developing the General Agreement has questions regarding legal implications of the agreement, they are “encouraged to consult with the office of the Solicitor” (Section 7.5, page 4). Solicitor’s Office review is also required for any fundraising agreement (Section 7.5, page 4).

Description. The term General Agreement covers the two agreements previously referred to as the Memorandum of Understanding and the Memorandum of Agreement. According to the NPS Agreements Handbook, *Memoranda of Understanding* was to document a “handshake” agreement by parties to use cooperative management policies or procedures, to provide mutual assistance, or to exchange results for promotion of common endeavors. A Memorandum of Understanding “must not commit current or future NPS funding, future non-competitive contracts, or circumvent any of the procurement laws and regulations.” (NPS Agreements Handbook).

A Memorandum of Agreement allowed a non-Federal entity to reimburse the NPS for supplies, property, or services. A Memorandum of Agreement could provide a framework that will allow the park to subsequently enter into a more expansive agreement, such as a Cooperative Agreement, but it could not, in and of itself, be used to expend NPS funds.

A General Agreement may be used in any situation in which either a Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement would previously have been the correct instrument of agreement.

Elements of a General Agreement. The NPS Agreements Handbook provides a list of essential elements that must be included in every General Agreement:

- General Agreement Number

- Background and Objectives
- Legislative Authority
- Statement of Work
- Term of Agreement
- Key Officials
- Prior Approval (if required)
- Reports and/or other deliverables
- Property Utilization (if any)
- Modification and Termination Clause
- Standard Clauses (see Section 7.4, RM-20)
- Signature and Dates of both parties

A General Agreement that involves receipt of funds must also include Award and Payment Information, including an Agreement Information Sheet (found in Attachment 7.5, NPS Agreements Handbook), which must be provided to the Accounting Operations Center.

Other Considerations. The NPS Agreements Handbook details signature requirements, reporting requirements, post-award administration, and agreements involving fundraising in Chapter 7. These sections should be carefully reviewed during the development of the General Agreement.

NPS Agreements Handbook, Chapter 7 also includes a number of examples of General Agreements and a sample Agreement Information Sheet.

16.3.6 Volunteers and Volunteer Agreements in SAR

Non-NPS SAR personnel who are providing services pursuant to a contract or instrument of agreement, or who are compensated in any other manner for their assistance may not be appointed as VIPs.

Non-NPS SAR personnel may be signed up as volunteers under the VIP program, especially for non-emergency activities, such as equipment preparedness or training. Public Law 91-357 established that VIPs shall be considered employees for the purposes of the Federal Employee's Compensation Act relating to compensation of Federal employees for work injuries, and for claim provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act. The program also authorizes the NPS to provide payment to the VIPs for incidental expenses.

Chapter 17

LEGAL ASPECTS OF SEARCH AND RESCUE

- 17.1 Introduction
 - 17.2 Overview
 - 17.3 Definitions and Descriptions
 - 17.4 Policies and Procedures
-

17.1 Introduction

Laws, regulations, policies, and procedures regarding SAR, as well as training and certification levels, have been established to protect SAR providers and the public. These legal and procedural considerations affect how a park provides SAR services. NPS SAR providers have a responsibility to act in a manner that both ensures appropriate services and minimizes liability.

17.2 Overview

Monies may be awarded as a result of claims for damage or loss of property or for personal injury or death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of an employee, or by violation of the Constitution or Federal statutes by an employee. Depending on the circumstances of the case, such damages may be awarded against the United States or against the employee.

This chapter defines terms and outlines procedures for assuring proper documentation and reporting, complying with OSHA and other Federal regulations, and assuring the rights of the public.

17.3 Definitions and Descriptions

17.3.1 Malpractice

Malpractice cases are civil wrongs (suits or torts) alleging negligent action on the part of a professional, such as a SAR provider. Four specific elements must be proved:

- A duty to act
- Breach of that duty
- Compensable damages
- Proximate cause (the act or omission caused the damages)

17.3.2 Duty to Act and Operational Discretion

Duty to Act. A duty to act is an obligation on behalf of the SAR provider to take affirmative action on behalf of a subject needing SAR services. The duty exists if the provider is functioning as an SAR provider as part of their job with a designated agency and is on-duty in the location in which the designated agency is responsible for SAR response. Duty to act may also be created by mutual aid agreements, formal or otherwise. The actions of acknowledging a call and agreeing to respond may be sufficient to create a duty to act (Cohn, 1998).

Discretionary Authority. Although a SAR provider may have a duty to act, NPS gives its SAR personnel wide discretion as to what that action should be. With a wide scope of potential SAR situations and an extensive variety of appropriate actions from which to choose, agency management realizes that the SAR provider must make decisions based upon the totality of the circumstances and with regard to the greatest benefit for the subject, the agency, and the public. For example, an initial report of an overdue hiker, with no other complicating factors, may only warrant an evaluation of the case using the search urgency chart. No other action may be needed until more time passes or other information is received that boosts the urgency. In so deciding, the SAR provider may keep resources available for more urgent responses and prevent the waste of funds. However, in another case, a report of a missing child in bad weather or near a hazardous feature may require an immediate, robust response.

The 1991 Tenth Circuit Court Of Appeals decision regarding Hugh B. Johnson v. United States (Buck Mountain Case), which alleged the National Park Service (Grand Teton National Park) was negligent in undertaking a rescue is an important court decision that SAR personnel should be aware of. The court made reference to the authority granted by 16 USC 12. "Aid to Visitors in Emergencies. The Secretary Of The Interior is authorized to aid and assist visitors within the National Parks in emergencies(1926)."

The court's rendering stated that, "No statute imposes a duty to neither rescue, nor are there regulations or formal Park Service policies which prescribe a specific course of conduct for search and rescue efforts. Instead, the decision if, when or how is left to the discretion of the SAR team. Therefore the rangers must act without reliance upon fixed or readily ascertainable standards when making a search and rescue decision in the field."

17.3.3 Abandonment

In SAR, abandonment means terminating SAR services that a provider had a duty to provide without reaching a successful outcome or without a thorough evaluation of the situation and a formal decision to terminate based upon reasonable factors.

Not all searches are successful, as much of the success is based upon probabilities rather than certainties. Thus a large search may be scaled back to a limited, continuing operation even if the missing subject has not been found. Such actions are not considered abandonment so long as the SAR provider(s) have considered the factors involved in the case and have concluded that (1) it is likely that the subject has not survived, (2) it is likely that the subject is not in the search area, or (3) there are other valid reasons that can be reasonably articulated.

Reasonable, safe attempts should be made to rescue persons needing such assistance so as to avoid the possibility of abandonment. However, rescuers are not required to make all possible attempts to rescue people, especially if such actions endanger the rescuer or others.

17.3.4 Breach of Duty to Act and Standard of Care

A breach of duty to act is a “departure or derivation from good and accepted practice” (Cohn, 1998). The law asks what a “reasonably prudent person” would do in the same situation. The “good and accepted practice” is also referred to as the Standard of Care. Standard of Care differs depending on the circumstances and there are often several alternatives in a specific situation. The standard is defined through law, regulation, policy, training materials, operating procedures, specific written standards, local protocols, and generally accepted best practices.

17.3.5 Negligence

Simple negligence is “a failure to adhere to reasonable standards of care” (Cohn, 1998). It may also be an act or failure to act as another reasonable provider of the same level would have acted. Generally, the government covers the liability of a Federal employee who is found to have committed simple negligence within the scope of their employment. Gross negligence generally includes an element of intent, such as when the provider intentionally goes beyond their scope of practice and causes harm to the subject. Generally, the government does not cover the liability of employees found to have been grossly negligent.

17.3.6 Consent and Refusal

There are three essential elements that must be considered regarding consent:

- Legal capacity: Is the subject legally capable of consenting? The subject must be of legal age to consent.
- Mental capacity: Can the subject understand their circumstances and the consequences of not being assisted?
- Information: Has the subject been provided with sufficient information to make a reasonable decision?

There are two categories of consent:

- Informed consent: voluntary expressed and based on the three factors above.
- Implied consent: not expressed, but implied from the circumstances of the subject, because the subject is incompetent, or because the subject is a minor with no guardian available.

Subjects of searches are generally considered to have given implied consent for SAR services provided, since they are not present to express consent.

Persons in need of rescue who are unable to provide consent because of location or condition are considered to have given implied consent for their rescue.

Persons needing rescue in areas where they should not be, where their presence creates a threat to life for themselves or others (such as a suicidal subject), or where their continued presence will interfere with the functions of the agency may be extricated and evacuated without their consent.

Other persons in need of rescue should be asked for their consent. If they refuse, consider the circumstances (determine if the above paragraph applies) and:

- Document the situation thoroughly, and have witnesses document it as well, if possible.
- Ask the subject again and enlist family and friends to help convince him/her to accept treatment.
- Distress beacons, personal locator beacons, emergency locator beacons, and other electronic devices for communicating an emergent situation in a one-way mode of transmission will be construed as implied consent.

17.4 Policies and Procedures

17.4.1 Liability

The possibility always exists that a lawsuit may be filed against an NPS SAR provider for negligent or wrongful acts or omissions. However, the Federal Torts Claims Act, 28 USC 2672 et seq., provides that no lawsuit for common law torts may lie against a Federal employee for damages to property or personal injury or death which results from the employee's negligent or wrongful conduct and which is within the scope of the employee's employment.

It is the policy of DOI, at the discretion of the Secretary, to settle or compromise lawsuits against employees by the payment of available funds, provided that the

alleged conduct which gave rise to the personal damage claim was within the employee's scope of employment, and that it is in the interest of the Department to indemnify the employee. This policy is codified in 43 CFR 22.6.

17.4.2 Bloodborne Pathogens

SAR providers may encounter bloodborne pathogens in the course of their duties. NPS is required by OSHA regulations to have the following:

- An Exposure Control Plan identifying employees who may have occupational exposure and the tasks performed by those employees that may create the exposure.
- The plan must detail methods of compliance, including mandating universal precautions, engineering, and workplace controls, and appropriate personal protective equipment.
- The employer must make the Hepatitis B vaccine available to all employees with occupational exposure risks within 10 days of their assignment to the job duties which place them at risk. A declination form must be signed by each employee who refuses the vaccination. The series must be offered at no cost to the employee.
- The employer must detail a post-exposure evaluation and follow-up procedure for exposed employees.
- The employer must use easily identifiable labels on containers used to transport or store biohazard.
- The employer must provide training at the time the employee is hired and annually thereafter. All employees must attend the training.
- Medical records must be kept confidential and kept on file for the term of employment plus 30 years.

Each park providing SAR services should develop its own Bloodborne Pathogens and Infectious Disease Control Plan, which may be included in the Park Safety Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, SAR Plan, or EMS Plan.

17.4.3 Subject Confidentiality

Personal and medical information about a SAR subject will not be shared with any third party without the consent of the subject unless there is a legitimate medical or legal need to do so. Confidentiality applies to written reports, any other written notes, and oral statements made by the patient (Cohn, 1998).

A subject may authorize the release of reports or other records by providing the NPS with a written request. This information may be forwarded to an attorney,

physician, or other party if specifically requested by the patient in writing. Otherwise, it should be forwarded to the patient.

Statistical research will be compliant with HIPPA regulations.

17.4.4 Equipment

Unexpected failures of rescue equipment can occur and have the potential for legal consequences. It is the responsibility of the provider to reduce potential liability by assuring that equipment is well maintained and in working order. Following are suggested steps:

- Analyze the intended use of a piece of equipment, the abilities of the end users, and the advantages and disadvantages of a variety of types or models before purchase or lease. Consider the track-record of the company providing the equipment and the equipment itself.
- Obtain all documentation regarding the equipment and use it for training and familiarization purposes. Keep it in a location where it is accessible to personnel using the equipment.
- Train personnel in all aspects of the equipment, including its use, storage location, and maintenance requirements. Train on the actual model that will be used to eliminate operator error.
- Maintain maintenance records, inspections records, and records of service, parts replacements, breakdowns and problems, and how the problems were solved. Maintain equipment according to manufacturers' specifications. This includes vehicles. Develop a course of preventive maintenance for all equipment.
- Use up-to-date and modern equipment that meets the current industry standard.

Make sure all operators of any equipment have the necessary licenses or certifications for that equipment and that they remain current.

17.4.5 Instructors

Instructor or training facility liability falls into several categories. Claims may be filed against instructors or facilities if students are subjected to discrimination, sexual harassment, or other actions illegal under Federal anti-discrimination law.

Claims for injuries suffered during classes may be made if the injury can be shown to be the result of negligence on the part of the instructor in some way (Cohn, 1998).

Subjects who are injured by SAR providers may attempt to claim that the injury was the result of improper training of the provider by an instructor; however, these cases are very difficult to prove. Instructors can limit their own liability and the liability of the NPS by following official curricula and documenting each student's participation and proficiency in the class (Cohn, 1998).

17.4.6 Responding to Incidents While Off-Duty

In many cases, SAR responders may use park areas while off-duty and may therefore respond to in-park incidents while technically off-duty. In general, once an off-duty SAR provider has responded to an in-park emergency, he/she will be considered on-duty, with a duty to act within park protocols and policies, given the fact that usual equipment may not be available.

SAR providers also may encounter incidents outside park boundaries while off-duty. In these cases, the SAR provider should identify him/herself to citizens and providers on-scene, and should repeat that identification whenever a new provider arrives. This identification should include level of certification, and the scene should be released to an on-duty responder with a higher level of certification when that responder arrives. The SAR provider will follow the directions of the on-scene control and stay on-scene if requested until released, and not interfere if the offer of help has not been accepted.

The SAR provider should document everything he/she did and observed at the scene. Although not required, the SAR provider may want to make an official report to their supervisor or park, depending on the circumstances and location of the incident.

Chapter 18

PRINCIPLES AND CODE OF ETHICS

- 18.1 Principles
 - 18.2 Goals
 - 18.3 SAR Code of Ethics
-

18.1 Principles

18.1.1 Objectivity

All action taken by SAR providers should be directed toward accomplishing the mission of the NPS. SAR is one method to achieve this goal, but is not a goal unto itself.

18.1.2 Adaptability

NPS SAR activities offer as many unique assignments as there are areas within the system. It is essential that the SAR provider develop the confidence and flexibility necessary to adjust to the different conditions and procedures that exist throughout the country. Rangers should be able to cultivate the support and cooperation of the public in the Service's operations, as citizen approval is essential to an effective program.

18.1.3 Integrity

Public respect is essential to any SAR Program. To establish this respect, the provider must always render care in good faith and within the scope of certification.

18.1.4 Versatility

NPS employees are more than SAR providers; they are protectors of park resources and the public welfare. They must possess the ability to perform other visitor services and be adept in all facets of visitor use management and resource protection required by their current assignment.

18.1.5 Compatibility

The role of the SAR provider is just one of several directed at the same mission. The provider must have the capacity to understand the purpose and function of these other activities, and must be able to work in concert with others in pursuit of the common goal.

18.2 Goals

The goals of the NPS SAR Program are as follows:

- To preserve and protect human life, alleviate suffering, and to do no further harm.
- To ensure that quality and availability SAR services are equally available.
- To provide SAR service based on human need, with respect for human dignity, unrestricted by considerations of nationality, race, creed, color, religion, sex, disability, or status.

18.3 SAR Code of Ethics

“I will faithfully abide by all laws, rules, regulations and policies governing the performance of my duties and I will commit no act that violates these laws or regulations, or the spirit or intent of such laws and regulations while on or off duty.

“In my personal and official activities, I will never knowingly violate any local, state, or Federal law or regulation, recognizing that I hold a unique position of public trust that carries an inherent personal commitment. I understand that this code places special demands on me to preserve the confidence of the public, my peers, my supervisors, and society in general.

“I will commit no act in the conduct of official business or in my personal life that subjects the Department of the Interior or the National Park Service to public censure or adverse criticism.

“While a SAR provider, I will neither accept outside employment nor make any display, representative of the Department of the Interior or the National Park Service, that will in any way conflict with the interests or jeopardize the activities or mission of the Department of the Interior or the National Park Service, or give the appearance of conflict.

“As a SAR provider, I will maintain professional competence and demonstrate concern for the competence of other members of the SAR team.

“I will always place the safety and welfare of a subject, and my safety above all else during search and rescue incidents.

“As a representative of the Department of the Interior and National Park Service, I will render search and rescue services impartially and in good faith, and document the results thereof fully, objectively, and accurately.

“As an SAR provider, I will work harmoniously with, and sustain confidence in, other members of the search and rescue team.

“In all cases, I will refuse to participate in unethical procedures, and assume the responsibility to expose incompetence or unethical conduct of others to the appropriate authority in a proper and professional manner.

“In the course of rendering search and rescue services and throughout the incident, I will be judicious at all times and I will release information pertaining to my official duties, orally or in writing, only in accordance with the law and established policy.

“I will respect and hold in confidence all information of a confidential nature obtained in the course of my duties unless required by law to release such information.

“In connection with my official duties, I will accept no gift, gratuity, entertainment, or loan except as provided by Departmental regulations.”

Chapter 19

PERFORMANCE AND CONDUCT

- 19.1 Policy
 - 19.2 Board of Inquiry Process
 - 19.3 After Action Review Process
-

19.1 Policy

19.1.1 Board of Inquiry

When allegations that a SAR provider's performance does not comply with Servicewide policies or established standards of care, or when allegations of behavior call into question a provider's suitability to perform SAR, supervisors must take prompt action. Such actions should include a thorough investigation of the circumstances and, if warranted, remedial measures. These measures may include training, counseling, suspension of authority to perform SAR, or disciplinary or adverse action as appropriate. Such action may also include the recommendation to convene a Board of Inquiry.

Boards of Inquiry are convened for the purpose of making a focused inquiry into allegations of misconduct on the part of one or more individuals or other work-related behavior that impairs operational efficiency or causes the loss of public confidence in the NPS. The use of such boards should be carefully coordinated with agency human resource personnel.

Findings and recommendations of Boards of Inquiry should be applied, where appropriate, to bring about needed changes or modifications to the NPS SAR Program, and where appropriate, should be incorporated into incident summaries and training bulletins disseminated to the field to facilitate learning through the documented experiences of others.

The requirements to conduct such a board, under certain specific circumstances, do not relieve supervisors or managers of their responsibilities to provide ongoing review and evaluation of NPS SAR Programs and the individual actions of SAR providers.

Copies of all Boards of Inquiry will be provided to the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services.

19.1.2 After Action Review

Significant SAR incidents require a thorough and objective review. These actions or incidents should be the subject of an After Action Review.

An After Action Review differs from a Board of Inquiry in that it is not a fault-finding exercise and is not focused on the actions or conduct of individuals. It is a fact-finding body that objectively reviews significant SAR actions or incidents. It serves the same function (and may otherwise be known) as an “incident critique,” “incident review,” or “board of review.” The primary purpose of the review is to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses, to take corrective program action where appropriate, and to build upon successes. Additional information can be found in RM-55, *Incident Management Program*, Chapter 7, *Incident and Event Management*.

Boards of Inquiry and After Action Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the procedures specified in this chapter.

19.2 Board of Inquiry Process

19.2.1 Convening a Board of Inquiry

Authority to Establish. A Board of Inquiry may be convened only upon the request or approval of one of the following:

- Director
- Regional Director
- Chief, Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Services
- Superintendent

Membership. A Board of Inquiry will consist of at least three but not more than seven voting members. The immediate supervisor of the employee whose actions are being reviewed will not be included as a member of the board. Board members will be chosen as follows:

- The employee whose actions are being scrutinized may select one other NPS employee as a member of the board. (This employee may be anyone within a 500-mile radius who was not involved in the incident. If the employee whose actions are being reviewed declines to select a board member, the convening official will appoint an SAR provider who is of the same grade and whose duties are similar to those of the employee whose actions are being reviewed.)
- One member will be a park manager selected by the convening official.
- One member will be a qualified human resource specialist.

- All other voting board members will be SAR personnel from within or outside of the NPS.
- Where training may be an issue or factor, one member will be a recognized training specialist selected by the park superintendent.

19.2.2 Functions and Procedures of a Board of Inquiry

Functions of Board. At a minimum, the functions of a Board of Inquiry include the following:

- Finding the facts and circumstances of the incident, situation, or conduct being reviewed and those that may have contributed to it.
- Identifying legal and policy requirements that apply to the facts of the incident, situation, or conduct, and determining compliance with those requirements by all individuals involved.
- Conducting an objective critique of the incident, situation, or conduct, including a review of applicable operational procedures.
- Making written findings to the convening official for the purpose of recommending corrective action, including disciplinary action. The board's recommendations may address, as appropriate, the areas of policy, procedures, equipment, training, counseling, the continuation of the suspension of a Qualification Certification Card, or the revocation of a Qualification Certification Card.
- Funding is the responsibility of the convening authority.

Preliminary Arrangements. The convening official is responsible for coordinating and making all necessary arrangements for the board. This includes making all board assignments, consistent with policy.

Scheduling. The convening official is responsible for scheduling the board as soon as practical, considering the circumstances of the incident, situation, or conduct, but no later than 60 days from the date a determination is made that a Board of Inquiry is required.

Consultation. In a case where there is a reasonable likelihood of criminal prosecution or tort claim action as a result of the incident, the regional Office of the Solicitor and the U.S. Attorney's Office will be consulted before the board is convened. The directions of the Solicitor or U.S. Attorney may, as necessary, affect compliance with other sections of this chapter (especially with respect to timelines).

Chairperson. When convening a Board of Inquiry, the convening official will appoint a chairperson to lead its deliberations.

Record Keeping. The chairperson is responsible for ensuring that a record is maintained of all information gathering proceedings of the board, including all testimony presented and all written material reviewed by the board. Oral testimony will be tape recorded for the board's later use in its deliberations and for the record. Internal discussions and deliberations of the board that occur after all relevant information has been presented “may” be off the record. The record must reflect the issues, findings, rationale for findings, and recommendations of the board.

Notification to Employee. The chairperson will inform the employee, whose actions are being reviewed, in writing, of the specific allegations being made against him/her, including citation of relevant sections of DO/RM-59, specific incidents, or patterns of behavior. This notification will occur as soon as possible, but no fewer than 2 weeks before the board holds its first meeting.

Employee Rights. The employee whose actions are being reviewed has the following rights:

- The employee may remain present during all meetings of the board, but will be excluded from the board's decision-making deliberations.
- The employee may be accompanied by an attorney, provided at the employee's expense, during all meetings of the board. The attorney's role, however, is limited to that of an observer and an advisor to their client. The attorney may not question witnesses, may address the board only with the consent of the chairperson, and will not be present during the board's deliberations.
- The employee may request the testimony before the board of any NPS employee, including their supervisor or subordinate, who has knowledge of facts related to the case being reviewed. If the employee is covered by a bargaining unit, a representative of that organization may be present, at the employee's request, during the meetings of the board. The representative's role, however, is limited to that of an observer and an advisor to the employee. The representative may not question witnesses, may address the board only with the consent of the chairperson, and will not be present during the board's deliberations.

Witnesses. Subject only to other legal precedence, the board is authorized to require the appearance and testimony of any NPS employee who has knowledge of facts related to the case being reviewed. The board is also authorized to bring in subject matter experts to assist in its review.

Past Record. When considering the revocation of a Qualification Certification Card, the board may consider the employee's past record of performance and

professional conduct, including previous performance appraisals, awards, and disciplinary actions received.

Exigent Circumstances. Deviation from policies, directives, and other restrictions articulated in DO/RM-59 may be warranted in certain emergency situations. Boards evaluating such actions may exercise reasonable discretion in finding that non-compliant actions on the part of an SAR provider were, nevertheless, reasonable under existing emergency conditions. Where such a finding is rendered, the involved employee may, at the board's recommendation, be held free from fault and/or disciplinary action.

Disclosure. Internal deliberations of a board are confidential, consistent with the Privacy Act and other administrative procedures designed to protect all employees. To the extent allowed by personnel regulations and policies, the board's open record and final report, however, are public documents and should be prepared accordingly. Additionally, the Deputy Chief, LESES, Emergency Services may edit and utilize selected materials from the board to develop case summaries for distribution in training applications.

19.3 After Action Review Process

19.3.1 Convening an After Action Review

Authorization to Convene. An After Action Review may be convened by one of the following or their designees:

- Incident Commander
- Chief Park Ranger
- Superintendent
- Regional Director
- Chief, Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Services
- Park SAR Coordinator

19.3.2 Functions and Proceedings of an After Action Review

Functions of an After Action Review. At a minimum, the functions of an After Action Review include the following:

- Obtaining the facts the facts and circumstances of the incident, situation, or actions being reviewed and those elements that may have contributed to it.
- Identifying legal and policy requirements that apply to the facts of the incident, situation, or action evaluating compliance with those requirements by all individuals involved.

- Conducting an objective critique of the incident, situation, or conduct, including a review of applicable operational procedures.
- A review of best practices, lessons learned, and deficiencies to be avoided on future incidents.
- Findings from the After Action Review including lessons learned, best practices, and operational deficiencies should be documented and circulated to park SAR personnel. Significant operations or findings shall be submitted to the park superintendent as appropriate.
- Where an After Action Review is initially convened but findings reveal that significant problems were evident or that disciplinary actions may be warranted, the board may proceed but will include within its report a recommendation that a Board of Inquiry subsequently be convened. This report will state the reason(s) for the Board of Inquiry.

Chapter 20

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

- 20.1 Introduction
 - 20.2 Overview
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20.1 Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act, 5 USC 552, and DOI regulations, 43 CFR 2.13, are based upon a long standing recognition of the public's right to obtain information about government operations and activities. This right is balanced by limitations contained in the Freedom of Information Act, provisions of the Privacy Act (5 USC 301, 552, and 552(a), other laws and 43 CFR Part 2, Subpart D.

While there is no distinction made between the general public and representatives of the news media concerning the criteria to withhold or release information, a distinction is applicable with respect to the gathering of information in the field by the news media and others. Concerns for the safety of field personnel, media representatives, and others must guide public information strategies in field situations.

The purposes of this chapter are to:

- Ensure regulatory and policy compliance with respect to information release.
- Establish appropriate guidelines concerning relations with representatives of the media.
- Promote education of SAR related subjects.
- Ensure that methods of obtaining follow-up subject information are established as part of a Continuing Quality Improvement program.

20.2 Overview

NPS shall provide information to the public and the news media, consistent with applicable laws, Departmental policy, and NPS guidelines.

Relationships with media representatives shall be based on the right of the public to obtain access to information, the effective discharge of SAR responsibilities, and the safety of all persons involved in SAR incidents.

20.3 Guidelines

20.3.1 Public Information Officer

The park superintendent shall designate one or more staff members to be responsible for responding to SAR information requests. These staff members shall familiarize themselves with the regulations codified in 43 CFR Part 2 and should establish close cooperation and liaison with representatives of the news media in order to foster sound working relationships and to communicate NPS policies effectively, in advance of actual incidents.

20.3.2 Document Search

A request for information must be in writing and specific to the point of being sufficient to identify the particular record(s) sought. If a request requires an inordinate amount of time and effort to make a response, the park superintendent may elect to charge for the services as provided for in 43 CFR Part 2.

20.3.3 Disclosure Guidelines

Persons requesting information are entitled to view the document and/or receive a copy in which the information is contained. If there is information in the document that is to be withheld, it should be covered over on the original or deleted from the copy. The requestor must be informed that a deletion has been made.

The Search and Rescue Report (Mission Report) and Case Incident Report, whether a dedicated form or a 10-343/344, are subject to confidentiality requirements.

20.3.4 Media Relations

At the scene of an accident, legitimate representatives of the news media shall be allowed access to areas normally and legally restricted from the general public as long as access does not interfere with SAR operations and, in criminal cases, the preservation of evidence.

If the safety of media representatives would be jeopardized, they should be informed and restricted from the scene. If the safety of NPS personnel would be jeopardized by media presence in a hazardous area or situation, justification exists to restrict media representatives from the scene.

20.3.5 Park SAR Quality Assurance and Follow-up Information

Personal information such as the subject's name, address, etc., should be deleted from records when the incident is reviewed for quality improvement and educational training.

20.3.6 Education

Parks may use a variety of ways to educate park users by utilizing historical data from past incidents. Slide programs using some details and photos from careless situations or other activities may be considered. Information or photos about incidents should be used in a manner that appropriately considers privacy rights. Climbing, boating, hiking, or other such recreation programs should emphasize proper skills and preventive actions whenever necessary.

Public education responsibilities of SAR are addressed in Chapter 21, *Preventive Search and Rescue Program*, of this reference manual.

Parks are encouraged to participate in community education activities. This could include providing community SAR education training, participating in community safety fairs, soliciting appropriate volunteers in SAR, and fostering close working relationships with local volunteer SAR organizations.

Chapter 21

PREVENTIVE SEARCH AND RESCUE PROGRAM

- 21.1 Introduction
 - 21.2 Overview
 - 21.3 Potential Preventive SAR Actions
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21.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give parks guidance on how to implement actions that will prevent or reduce the number of SAR incidents experienced each year and increase visitor safety and awareness. When creating a Preventive Search and Rescue Program, parks need to recognize on what problem(s) need focus, who is the target audience, they plan to implement the program, and the source of funding. Parks can include these actions in their SAR Plan, their Annual Performance Plan, site-specific development plans, or other appropriate plans.

21.2 Overview

There are four important steps to complete when creating a Preventive Search and Rescue Program. These steps include identifying a recurring problem that needs to be addressed to increase visitor safety, identifying a solution(s) to the problem, implementing the solution(s), and reviewing the problem and the actions taken to prevent it. The review is critical to be able to document a decrease in SAR incidents or to identify any necessary changes which need to be made to the solution/actions.

21.3 Potential Preventive SAR Actions

21.3.1 Formal Programs

Preventive SAR Programs can include formal interpretive programs devoted to preventing SAR and included in the park's interpretive schedule. Parks should focus their SAR prevention programs and all other media to their target audience. These can also include on site, interactive programs done by either protection or interpretive personnel wherein the problem or hazard is mentioned and safe methods used to mitigate the problem is presented. Parks can also consider use of park personnel to patrol problem areas in search of hazards. If ones are found use this as a "teachable moment" with the visitors.

21.3.2 Audio/Visual Programs

Parks may use existing materials, or they may produce their own programs, using video, PowerPoint, traveler's information stations, or audio stations. Consider creating a/v podcasts that would be accessible via the internet for people to listen to or watch prior to arrival in the park. Developing materials targeting each park's specific problem is recommended. Parks should be cautioned to not be vague or general when creating any style of media. Know your problem/hazard and give suggestions on how to mitigate them.

21.3.3 Written Materials

Written media can be designed to portray hazards and the proper methods needed to mitigate them, how to create safe conditions, information on previous incidents, and possible outcomes when visitors follow or do not follow the information provided. Parks can include such information in newspapers, site bulletins, brochures, pamphlets, booklets and on their park's website or they can develop materials dedicated specifically to SAR prevention. Use of photographs to help emphasize the messaging has been shown to be effective. When creating any kind of messaging, make sure to be tactful and professional without sounding negative. Leave the reader/listener with a positive yet realistic message.

21.3.4 Exhibits, Signs, and Photographs

These media can be designed to show proper methods and safe conditions, hazards, previous incidents, and likely outcomes in a variety of ways. Only the designer's imagination provides limits. Of course, one needs to keep these materials in good taste.

21.3.5 Permit Systems

Permit systems can range in complexity from a simple sign-up system to one where participants are required to show proof of proficiency, (such as a Hang Glider Association certification), or one where visitors are required to attend safety classes focused on the hazard(s) found at their park that they are trying to mitigate through the preventive SAR program.

Chapter 22

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

- 22.1 Introduction
 - 22.2 Recognizing Stress
 - 22.3 Use of Critical Incident Stress Management
-

22.1 Introduction

Deaths, serious injuries, and plane crashes associated with SARs can seriously affect personnel who respond to these emergencies and encounter highly stressful events. Sometimes an event may be so traumatic or overwhelming that people may experience significant stress reactions. These events are known as critical incidents. Critical incident stress is the body's normal reaction to a very abnormal event.

Emergency services personnel are frequent sufferers. They can undergo these normal, although uncomfortable stress reactions to extraordinary events and are often confused by the changes they notice in themselves and others.

22.2 Recognizing Stress

Critical incidents may produce a wide range of stress symptoms which may appear immediately at the scene, a few hours later, or within days of the incident. Stress symptoms usually occur in four different categories: Cognitive (thinking), Physical (body), Emotional (feelings), and Behavioral (actions). The more symptoms experienced, the more powerful the stress reaction. The longer the symptoms persist, the more potential there is for lasting harm. The following is only a sample of stress symptoms that can show up after a critical incident:

- Cognitive: Poor concentration, poor attention span, slowed problem solving, memory problems, difficulty making decisions, and difficulties with calculations.
- Emotional: Guilt, depression, loss of emotional control, grief, anxiety, fear, feeling lost, and feeling overwhelmed.
- Physical: Muscle tremors, gastro-intestinal distress, headaches, chest pain, difficulty breathing, and elevated blood pressure.
- Behavioral: Excessive silence, unusual behaviors, withdrawal from contact, sleep disturbances, changes in eating habits, and changes in work habits.

22.3 Use of Critical Incident Stress Management

Park managers should provide for an incident defusing within 36 hours following any incident involving circumstances that might have adverse emotional or psychological impacts on the SAR providers for the purpose of discussing and defusing these effects. A more formal Critical Incident Stress Debriefing session will be arranged as necessary. Any SAR member may request a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing session. Details of the Critical Incident Stress Management program may be found in RM-57, *Occupational Medical Standards, Health and Fitness* and/or within local park policy.

Chapter 23

RISK MANAGEMENT

- 23.1 Introduction
 - 23.2 Risk Management
 - 23.3 Operational Risk Management
 - 23.4 Situational Awareness
 - 23.5 Personal Protective Equipment
 - 23.6 Aviation Activities
 - 23.7 Work-Rest Guidelines
 - 23.8 Risk Mitigation Strategies
-

23.1 Introduction

Failures in properly identifying and managing operational risk have tragically resulted in fatal accidents during NPS SAR operations. A successful SAR operation is dependent on teamwork, effective leadership, sound risk management, situational awareness, which includes the ability to anticipate, detect, and act upon problems encountered.

23.2 Risk Management

SAR operations are inherently hazardous for the involved emergency personnel. In order to reduce the chance of injury, effective risk management strategies will be employed on all NPS SAR incidents.

The possibility of loss or injury during a hazardous operation is referred to as risk. An evaluation of risk involves reviewing the probability of an event occurring multiplied by the consequence of the event. Risk management involves risk assessment or identification of involved hazards, followed by avoidance or reduction techniques to mitigate the possible effects.

A search, rescue, or recovery operation may be delayed, suspended or terminated if, in the opinion of incident management personnel, the risks to personnel are unacceptably high or if other considerations warrant. The safety of responders comes before the life of a victim. This philosophy will guide all SAR operations.

The Incident Commander is responsible for the health and safety of all involved responders. No one should be asked to perform in an unsafe manner beyond their personal capability.

Current “industry accepted safety practices” will be followed on all SAR incidents. A designated Incident Safety Officer should be designated on all

significant responses (Type 4 or more complex) to increase monitoring of operational safety.

NPS SAR personnel involved in mutual-aid incidents managed by other agencies will adhere to all applicable NPS safety practices.

The authority for workplace protection for NPS employees is specifically provided for through the Occupational and Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA), 29 USC 651 et. seq. This states that it is "the responsibility of the head of each Federal agency to establish and maintain an effective and comprehensive occupational safety and health program ...and provide safe and healthful places and conditions of employment...."

23.3 Operational Risk Management

Operational risk management (ORM) aka "operational leadership" is a continuous, systematic process of identifying and controlling risks in all activities according to a set of pre-conceived factors by applying appropriate management policies and procedures. As an operation progresses and evolves, personnel should continuously employ the following operational risk management principles.

Key ORM Principles

1. **Accept No Unnecessary Risk:** SAR operations entail risk. Unnecessary risk conveys no commensurate benefit to safety of a mission. The most logical courses of action for accomplishing a mission are those meeting all mission requirements while exposing personnel and resources to the lowest possible risk. If all hazards that could have been detected have not been detected, then unnecessary risks are being accepted.
2. **Accept Necessary Risk When Benefits Outweigh Costs:** Compare all identified benefits to all identified costs. The process of weighing risks against opportunities and benefits helps to maximize unit capability. Even high-risk endeavors may be undertaken when decision-makers clearly acknowledge the sum of the benefits exceeds the sum of the costs. Balancing costs and benefits may be a subjective process open to interpretation. Ultimately, the appropriate decision authority may have to determine the balance.
3. **Make Risk Decisions at the Appropriate Level: Depending on the situation, anyone can make a risk decision. However, the appropriate level to make those decisions is that which most effectively allocates the resources to reduce the risk, eliminate the hazard, and implement controls.**

Incident personnel at all levels must ensure subordinates are aware of their own limitations and when to refer a decision to a higher level.

- 4. Integrate ORM into Operations and Planning at All Levels:** While ORM is critically important in an operation's planning stages; risk can change dramatically during an actual mission. Incident personnel should remain flexible and integrate ORM in executing tasks as much as in planning for them.

Operational Risk Management (ORM) includes the following seven steps:

1. Identify mission tasks
2. Identify hazards
3. Assess risks
4. Identify options
5. Evaluate risk versus gain (benefits outweigh potential costs)
6. Execute decision
7. Monitor situation

23.4 Situational Awareness

Incident management personnel will encourage good "situational awareness" by all involved emergency personnel. Situational awareness involves being aware of what is happening around you, as well as communicating and utilizing accurate available information in effective decision-making. Poor situational awareness has been identified as one of the primary factors in accidents attributed to human error. Emergency incidents are very dynamic and the flow of information-sharing is a key factor to successful and safe operations.

Incident personnel will be encouraged to provide feedback during mission briefings and speak up with critical information during operational responses.

23.5 Personal Protective Equipment

Appropriate SAR and personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided to employees directly involved with SAR operations as required in 29 CFR 1903.14.

It is recognized that the use of personally owned PPE (personal protective equipment) may be permitted. Per 29 CFR Part 1910.132(b)-Employee-owned equipment - where employees provide their own protective equipment, the employer shall be responsible to assure its adequacy, including proper maintenance and sanitation of such equipment.

Employees are required to wear all appropriate PPE for the environment and hazards that they are reasonably expected to encounter (e.g. night operations,

aviation activities, swiftwater, technical rescue, cave, snow and ice, high alpine, extreme heat, litter handling and search operations).

A full ensemble of PPE is necessary to manage risk and prevent injury. Deficiencies in PPE will be addressed and corrected by supervisors.

A typical litter carryout involves risk to rescuers. Personnel involved in any litter carryout on rugged terrain or trails will, as a minimum, wear helmets, gloves, appropriate footwear and eye protection.

High visibility clothing will be employed on all SAR incidents where practical.

23.6 Aircraft Operations

Within the limits of safety, weather, and performance capability, both fixed-wing and rotary wing aircraft can be valuable resources in SAR operations. It is vital that these be applied appropriately. Discipline is required of rescuers to not let the urgency of the situation overwhelm their judgment.

All aircraft activities under NPS “operational control” will be conducted in accordance with applicable FAA Regulations, the Departmental Manual, DOI-Aviation Management Policy & Guidelines, DO/RM-60 and the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG)

Operational control exists when a DOI entity exercises authority over crewmember approval and qualifications, determination of aircraft airworthiness, maintenance requirements, and dispatching.

23.7 Work-Rest Guidelines

As established by the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (PMS 902), Incident supervisors will plan for and ensure that all subordinate personnel are provided a minimum 2:1 work to rest ratio (for every two (2) hours of work or travel, provide one (1) hour of sleep and/or rest). Work shifts that exceed 16 hours and/or consecutive days that do not meet the 2:1 work/rest ratio should be the exception, and no work shift should exceed 24 hours. However in situations where this does occur (for example, initial attack phase), incident management personnel will resume a 2:1 work/rest ratio as quickly as possible. The Incident Commander must justify all work shifts that exceed 16 hours and provide written approval of those that do not meet 2:1 work to rest ratio. The maximum assignment length is 14 days.

During incident operations driving, no driver will drive more than ten (10) hours (behind the wheel) within any duty-day. Multiple drivers in a single vehicle may

drive up to eight (8) hours each and not travel for more than 16 hours total. A driver shall drive only if they have had at least eight (8) consecutive hours off duty before beginning a shift. An exception to the minimum off-duty hour requirement is allowed when essential to accomplish immediate and critical mission objectives and with the formal approval of the Incident Commander. All demobilization (non-emergency) travel from an incident will cease by 2200 hours.

23.8 Risk Mitigation Strategies

Once risks associated with an incident have been thoroughly assessed, mitigation efforts and control measures are put in place to reduce the threat to personnel.

Risk mitigation techniques are included in the STAAR Model:

- **SPREAD** the risk over time, distance or numbers of personnel to reduce the effect of a single event.
- **TRANSFER** the risk away from critical system components or to those most reliable to decrease probability of a bad outcome.
- **AVOID** threats by establishing barriers and other controls to eliminate probability of a bad outcome.
- **ACCEPT** the level of threat and its probability with every aspect of the system poised for success.
- **REDUCE** the effect or exposure through safety devices (PPE, alarms, etc.) or limit the number of resources exposed.

A safety discipline for risk management on SAR incidents includes:

1. Assign a dedicated safety officer.
2. Conduct thorough briefings.
3. Perform formal safety analysis and planning for operational assignments.

The job of risk management on an incident cannot become over-shadowed by the objective of the SAR operation. Accountability for operational safety ultimately rests with the Incident Commander. SAR personnel are urged to slow down and be proactive about safety from the beginning of an incident.



Search and Rescue Reference Manual (RM-59)

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