

SENATE TAX, BUSINESS AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE BILL 353

57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2025

This document may incorporate amendments proposed by a committee, but not yet adopted, as well as amendments that have been adopted during the current legislative session. The document is a tool to show amendments in context and cannot be used for the purpose of adding amendments to legislation.

AN ACT

RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE EMERGENCY RESPONSE; AMENDING THE SEARCH AND RESCUE ACT; PROVIDING RESPONSE PROTOCOLS FOR FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL AGENCIES WHEN NEW MEXICO SEARCH AND RESCUE IS REQUIRED IN SEARCH AND RESCUE EMERGENCIES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 24-15A-3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,

.230850.4AIC March 14, 2025 (3:11pm)

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Chapter 107, Section 3, as amended) is amended to read:

"24-15A-3. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Search and Rescue Act:

A. "search and rescue" or "SAR" means the employment, coordination and utilization of available resources and personnel in locating, relieving the distress and preserving the lives of and removing survivors from the site of a disaster, emergency or hazard to a place of safety in the case of lost, stranded, entrapped or injured persons;

B. "board" means the state search and rescue review board;

C. "AFRCC" means the air force rescue coordination center, which is the federal agency responsible for coordinating federal SAR activities within the inland region pursuant to the national search and rescue plan;

D. "state SAR control agency" means the department of public safety;

E. "state SAR mission initiator" means the New Mexico state police officer so appointed and SAR trained;

F. "state SAR resource officer" means the official located within the department of public safety responsible for coordinating SAR resources and administering the state SAR plan;

G. "field coordinator" means a person certified by the board with special training and expertise responsible for

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the efficient organization and conduction of a SAR mission;

H. "civil air patrol" means the civil air patrol division of the department of military affairs and an air force auxiliary responsible for coordinating air searches [~~which~~] that are authorized by the AFRCC;

I. "mission" means each separate group effort in the employment, direction and guidance of personnel and facilities in searching for and rendering aid to persons lost or in distress;

J. "chief" means the chief of the New Mexico state police division of the department of public safety; [~~and~~]

K. "director" means the director of the technical and emergency support division of the department of public safety;

L. "SAR emergency" means an incident requiring urgent SAR assistance; and

M. "tribe" or "tribal" includes federally recognized Indian nations, tribes and pueblos."

SECTION 2. A new section of the Search and Rescue Act is enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOL--
STANDARDIZED SEARCH AND RESCUE CRITERIA.--

A. The state SAR resource officer, in consultation with local, state, federal and tribal emergency responders, search and rescue volunteer organizations and the board, shall

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establish standardized criteria for notifying the state SAR control agency of a SAR emergency. The consultation process shall include the distribution of proposed protocols to stakeholders listed in this subsection, followed by a comment period, followed by the final protocol being developed. The consultation process shall be repeated when modifications are considered to the notification protocol.

B. The state SAR resource officer shall provide training to local, state, federal and tribal emergency response entities, public HGEIC→service←HGEIC HGEIC→safety←HGEIC answering points and volunteer SAR organizations in the protocols for reporting a SAR emergency.

C. Unless specified otherwise in a memorandum of agreement between the state SAR control agency and the local jurisdiction where a SAR emergency is located, local and state emergency response entities and public HGEIC→service←HGEIC HGEIC→safety←HGEIC answering points responsible for emergency response shall promptly notify the state SAR control agency by phone or other approved communication technology of a potential need of state SAR personnel and resources.

D. Notification to the state SAR control agency of a SAR emergency shall not prevent the deployment of other agencies' personnel or resources pursuant to a request for aid, including fire departments, law enforcement agencies and emergency medical services."

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SECTION 3. A new section of the Search and Rescue Act is enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS-- NOTIFICATION OF AGENCIES WITH RELEVANT EMERGENCY RESPONSE JURISDICTION.--After being notified of a SAR emergency, the state SAR control agency shall promptly notify the entity that requested assistance and other appropriate authorities having jurisdiction, including affected land management agencies if a SAR emergency has occurred on the agency's or agencies' land, that state SAR personnel and resources have been activated. If the standardized criteria of a SAR emergency is not met to activate resources or if SAR resources are not available, the state SAR control agency shall notify the entity that requested assistance that SAR resources have not been deployed. If the state SAR control agency receives the initial notification of a SAR emergency, the SAR control agency shall promptly notify the affected authorities having jurisdiction of where the local SAR emergency is anticipated to be located and whether resources or personnel have been deployed. In the event that the state SAR control agency is unable to deploy SAR resources for a SAR emergency, the SAR control agency shall facilitate and assist in securing alternate SAR resources to support the affected jurisdiction."

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the provisions of this act is January 1, 2026.

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