

1 AN ACT

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

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

9 SECTION 1. Section 24-15A-3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
10 Chapter 107, Section 3, as amended) is amended to read:

11 "24-15A-3. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Search and
12 Rescue Act:

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

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

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

25 D. "state SAR control agency" means the department

1 of public safety;

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

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

8 G. "field coordinator" means a person certified by
9 the board with special training and expertise responsible for
10 the efficient organization and conduction of a SAR mission;

11 H. "civil air patrol" means the civil air patrol
12 division of the department of military affairs and an
13 air force auxiliary responsible for coordinating air searches
14 that are authorized by the AFRCC;

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

19 J. "chief" means the chief of the New Mexico state
20 police division of the department of public safety;

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

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

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

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

5 "SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOL--STANDARDIZED SEARCH
6 AND RESCUE CRITERIA.--

7 A. The state SAR resource officer, in consultation
8 with local, state, federal and tribal emergency responders,
9 search and rescue volunteer organizations and the board,
10 shall establish standardized criteria for notifying the state
11 SAR control agency of a SAR emergency. The consultation
12 process shall include the distribution of proposed protocols
13 to stakeholders listed in this subsection, followed by a
14 comment period, followed by the final protocol being
15 developed. The consultation process shall be repeated when
16 modifications are considered to the notification protocol.

17 B. The state SAR resource officer shall provide
18 training to local, state, federal and tribal emergency
19 response entities, public safety answering points and
20 volunteer SAR organizations in the protocols for reporting a
21 SAR emergency.

22 C. Unless specified otherwise in a memorandum of
23 agreement between the state SAR control agency and the local
24 jurisdiction where a SAR emergency is located, local and
25 state emergency response entities and public safety answering

1 points responsible for emergency response shall promptly
2 notify the state SAR control agency by phone or other
3 approved communication technology of a potential need of
4 state SAR personnel and resources.

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

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

12 "SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS--NOTIFICATION OF
13 AGENCIES WITH RELEVANT EMERGENCY RESPONSE JURISDICTION.--

14 After being notified of a SAR emergency, the state SAR
15 control agency shall promptly notify the entity that
16 requested assistance and other appropriate authorities having
17 jurisdiction, including affected land management agencies if
18 a SAR emergency has occurred on the agency's or agencies'
19 land, that state SAR personnel and resources have been
20 activated. If the standardized criteria of a SAR emergency
21 is not met to activate resources or if SAR resources are not
22 available, the state SAR control agency shall notify the
23 entity that requested assistance that SAR resources have not
24 been deployed. If the state SAR control agency receives the
25 initial notification of a SAR emergency, the SAR control

1 agency shall promptly notify the affected authorities having
2 jurisdiction of where the local SAR emergency is anticipated
3 to be located and whether resources or personnel have been
4 deployed. In the event that the state SAR control agency is
5 unable to deploy SAR resources for a SAR emergency, the SAR
6 control agency shall facilitate and assist in securing
7 alternate SAR resources to support the affected
8 jurisdiction."

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

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