

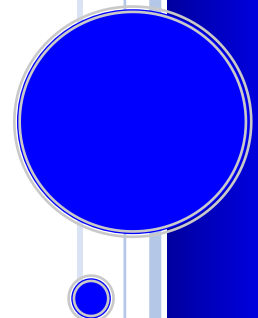


# SEARCH AND RESCUE TAOS, INC., DBA TAOS SEARCH AND RESCUE (TSAR)

## *POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL*

This document puts forth the policies and procedures through which Search and Rescue Taos, a 501c3 nonprofit corporation, operates and performs its mission.

Revision of this document has been approved by the TSAR Board of Directors on 3.1.2023:  
Delinda VanneBrightyn (President), Tamar Stieber (Vice President), Carlie McGinnis (Secretary), Chelsea Crawford (Treasurer), Chris Kodey (Training Officer), Kati Roske (Recruitment Director), Paymaneh Ghaffari (Team Liaison and Event Director), Paul Texeira (Vehicle Director), and Noa Roske (Equipment Director).



# SEARCH AND RESCUE TAOS, INC., dba TAOS SEARCH AND RESCUE (TSAR)

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

### I. MEMBERSHIP

#### A. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. The objectives of TSAR are to train, prepare, and organize volunteers for the prompt and effective search, location, rescue, recovery, care, and transport to a place of safety persons who are lost, entrapped, injured, or in physical danger in areas within the state of New Mexico or beyond, as the need arises, and to aid in educating the public on proper preparation for wilderness outings.
2. All members of TSAR shall be persons who are dedicated to advancing the objectives of the organization.
3. Membership in TSAR is deemed a privilege. Although the organization is composed of volunteers, its members shall be held to high standards of professionalism and service.
4. Individuals who join TSAR shall participate fully in team activities to expand and hone their knowledge, capabilities, and skills. This includes attending trainings and responding to mission call-outs. The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring a high level of professionalism and team cohesiveness by establishing attendance requirements at trainings and missions, determining probationary status criteria, requiring members to notify a board member of absences, and inspiring members to be honorable and responsible. A significant amount of time, energy, and community money is used for training, maintaining equipment, organizing, bookkeeping, management, and adhering to legal requirements to achieve TSAR's goals. Member participation shows that those resources are respected, appreciated, and used in the most productive and appropriate manner. Therefore, team members should arrange their priorities to reflect their sincere commitment to the purpose and operations of the organization.
5. TSAR members and trainees, though volunteers, are to conduct themselves professionally through training and demeanor. They deal with the seriousness of "life-and-limb" issues and are expected to exhibit exemplary behavior to the public, cooperate with other search and rescue groups on training and missions, support the efforts of teammates, and adhere to the Incident Command System (ICS). Disagreements with others, including leaders, should be handled respectfully and discreetly. If a resolution cannot be reached, these issues shall be taken to the next level of command, such as a team leader, a unit leader, or the board. Public displays of anger, frustration, or disrespect for SAR leadership, other volunteers, law enforcement, EMS, fire departments, or any other personnel responding to a

mission or training are not consistent with TSAR policies and may result in discipline or termination.

6. All members shall refrain from using alcohol, drugs, or other substances that cause impairment, whether prescription or recreational, while engaged in official missions or training sessions or while using team vehicles or equipment. Any member that has used alcohol, drugs or any substance that impairs normal abilities shortly prior to a mission or training should not attend. Violation of this policy shall result in termination of membership.
7. Members should expect that call-outs often come at inopportune times and in inclement weather and will often test a member's commitment to the team. Members are expected to respond as often as possible, in fair or foul conditions.
8. Despite rigorous membership requirements, TSAR cannot effectively screen all volunteer members to determine that they have the mental and physical capacity, stamina, dexterity, alertness, and other characteristics necessary for safe participation in all activities. It is the sole responsibility of the individual participant to:
  - a. determine that the individual has the skills and abilities needed to participate safely in the activity; and
  - b. decline to participate if there is any possibility that participating will create a risk to themselves or others.
9. Members understand that there is inherent danger in many TSAR activities and that they participate voluntarily and entirely at their own risk.
10. Members participating in official search and rescue missions with a state mission number are covered by accident and lawsuit liability insurance through the State of New Mexico. Participants in team trainings and "training missions" are covered by additional accident insurance purchased by TSAR. Board members are covered by TSAR's directors and officers insurance. Some outside events and courses might not be covered by the scope of TSAR's insurance. This could include trainings not offered directly by TSAR, fundraising activities, etc.

**Search and Rescue Taos, Inc., is not responsible for any injury, loss or claim of any kind resulting from a member's participation in any outside course or event.**

## **B. APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Any person may apply to Taos Search and Rescue by submitting an application form. The application packet is online on the TSAR website at: [www.sar-taos.org/Join-Us](http://www.sar-taos.org/Join-Us)

1. The application packet includes the following:
  - a. a detailed description of TSAR and its goals;
  - b. instructions on how to apply for membership;
  - c. an Application for Membership;
  - d. a Full Membership Certification Form
  - e. a Full Member Pack Check List; and
  - f. a Board Member Contact Information sheet.

2. Each applicant will be invited to an orientation meeting with the Recruitment Director (via phone or Zoom or in person), which will include discussing:
  - a. the TSAR Policies and Procedures, including reviewing its main points;
  - b. the time requirements for membership, including trainings and missions.; and
  - c. the various TSAR units and assisting the applicant in exploring which units might match his/her interests.
3. Once the applicant has submitted a completed and signed application form, a prospective applicant then becomes an official applicant to TSAR, setting in motion the following:
  - a. The Recruitment Director will review the application, interview the references provided, initiate a background check, interview the applicant, write up a report, and submit it to the Board of Directors for a final vote.
  - b. The Recruitment Director will give the applicant access to the following:
    1. TSAR's online communication forum (TSAR Basecamp);
    2. TSAR's Policies and Procedures Manual (available online); and
    3. New Mexico Search and Rescue Field Certification Study Guide (available online).
4. If the Board of Directors approves the application by a unanimous vote, the applicant becomes a TSAR trainee and the Recruitment Director will assign the new trainee a mentor.

### C. TSAR TRAINEE PROCESS

All TSAR trainees shall complete the following requirements first to become "mission ready", then to become a full member of TSAR:

1. Read the TSAR Policies and Procedures document in full. Questions about the document should be referred to the assigned mentor or the Recruitment Director.
2. Familiarize themselves with the requirements on the TSAR Full Member Certification Form, all of which will be covered in scheduled monthly trainings. Additionally, informal trainings can be set up with the Training Officer, Vehicle Director, or other full members/unit leaders to complete specific sections of the certification form. The Recruitment Director or the assigned mentor can assist the applicant in scheduling these informal trainings with full members .
3. Complete the requirements marked with an asterisk (items 1-5) on the Full Member Certification Form to become mission ready. The trainee or the trainee's mentor will contact the Recruitment Director when this has been completed.
4. Complete the remaining Full Member Certification Form for full membership on the team. Hand the completed form to the TSAR President for a final signature, then turn in the signed form to the Recruitment Director, who will upgrade the trainee's status to "full member."

## D. DEFINITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP CLASSES

Once an application to TSAR has been accepted, there are six classes of membership: trainee, mission-ready trainee, full member, auxiliary member, honorary member, and life member.

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### 1. APPLICANT

An applicant is a person 18 years of age or older who shows active and continuing interest in advancing the mission of the organization, whose application has been submitted to the Recruitment Director, and who is waiting for acceptance of his/her application by the Board of Directors.

- a. Application for membership in TSAR may be submitted at any time.
- b. The completed application shall be submitted to the Recruitment Director. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- c. Once the Recruitment Director receives an application, s/he will: 1) interview references and complete a written report of the complete interview; 2) initiate a background check; and 3) submit all application documents to the Board of Directors for thorough review, discussion, and a vote.
- d. The minimum age requirement may be waived with parental consent and a unanimous vote of the board.

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### 2. TRAINEE MEMBERS

A trainee is a person whose application has been accepted by a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors.

- a. As soon as an applicant becomes a trainee, the Recruitment Director will assign the trainee a mentor who is a full member and who will assist the trainee on becoming a full member.
- b. It is the responsibility of trainees to procure signatures on their Full Member Certification Form to become a mission-ready trainee and then a full member. Any full member may certify and sign the Full Member Certification Form.
- c. Trainees should complete the Full Member Certification Form within one calendar year of becoming a trainee, thus becoming a full member of TSAR.
- d. Under certain circumstances, exceptions may be made to items on the Full Member Certification Form. Trainees may petition the board to waive specific items, e.g., the endurance hike for a Base Unit member. Exceptions may be granted through unanimous vote of the board.
- e. To familiarize themselves with SAR topics, techniques, and terminology, trainees may check out materials from the TSAR library. Trainees should purchase a field guide from the TSAR store.

- f. A trainee may request to be reimbursed for SAR-related course fees incurred while the individual is a trainee after s/he becomes a full member by petitioning the board within 90 days of achieving full membership and within one year of taking the course. Always check with the board to find out what types of courses are eligible for reimbursement.
- g. Trainees shall meet minimum attendance requirements for trainings and missions (See Section E-1).

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### **3. MISSION READY MEMBERS**

A mission-ready trainee is a trainee who has completed all the requirements for mission readiness as defined on the TSAR Full Member Certification Form.

- a. Mission-ready trainees will be called for all missions and deployed in whatever capacity for which they are qualified and feel comfortable.
- b. Mission-ready trainees shall be paired with full members on missions until they gain more experience.

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### **4. FULL MEMBERS**

- a. A full member is a trainee who has completed the TSAR Full Member Certification Form.
- b. Full members shall meet minimum attendance requirements for trainings and missions (See Section E-1).
- c. Full members will be called for all missions and deployed in any capacity for which they are qualified and feel comfortable.
- d. Full members shall remain current in all basic SAR skills, foster positive working relationships with other team members, and mentor new members.
- e. Full members are eligible to hold multiple leadership positions on the team, e.g., unit leader, team officer, board director, etc.
- f. Full members are immediately eligible for full or partial reimbursement of fees, including for courses taken as a trainee, with the amount of reimbursement to be determined by the TSAR board.

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### **5. AUXILIARY MEMBERS**

An auxiliary member is a person who contributes a specific skill or service to the team without fulfilling all the requirements of full membership. Auxiliary members do not receive the benefits of full membership.

- a. A person may become an auxiliary member by petitioning the board, or the board may suggest auxiliary membership to an individual whose knowledge and experience warrants this position.
- b. After discussing the individual's possible contributions, the board shall decide by unanimous vote whether to accept the individual as an auxiliary member.

- c. Requirements for attaining and maintaining auxiliary membership in TSAR will be set on a case-by-case basis through unanimous vote of the board.
- d. Auxiliary members may be called for a mission and deployed in the field for their area of expertise.

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## 6. HONORARY MEMBERS

An honorary member is a person who has made outstanding contributions to the team and to whom the team wishes to show its appreciation. Contributions could include financial support, past service to the board, or other areas of service. The list of honorary members may be publicized in the community during fundraising activities.

- a. Any active member may nominate someone for an honorary position. An active member is a full or life member of TSAR who meets TSAR's attendance requirements,, who regularly contributes to the team, who is not on a leave of absence, and who adheres to TSAR policies and procedures as outlined in this Policies and Procedures Manual
- b. The board shall vote unanimously to select someone for honorary membership.

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## 7. LIFE MEMBERS

A life member is a current or past member who has made long-term (a recommended length of 20 years) or extraordinary contributions to the team, or to the purposes of search and rescue in general, and whom the team wishes to honor for their service. This is someone who has advanced knowledge and skills and who the team desires to remain involved with TSAR in whatever way possible. The list of life members may be publicized in the community during fundraising activities.

- a. Any active member may nominate a current or former member for life membership.
- b. There must be a unanimous vote of the board to elect someone to life membership.
- c. Life members may hold leadership positions in TSAR.
- d. Life members are deemed to be active members.
- e. Life members are eligible for reimbursements for course fees and/or travel expenses if deemed appropriate by the board.
- f. There are no attendance requirements for life members other than to fulfill the obligations of any office they might accept.

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## 8. ACTIVE MEMBERS

An active member is a member who:

- a. is a full or life member of TSAR;
- b. meets TSAR's attendance requirements;

- c. contributes regularly to the team;
- d. is not on a leave of absence; and
- e. adheres to TSAR's policies and procedures as outlined in this Policies and Procedures Manual.

## E. REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

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### 1. ATTENDANCE

It will be each member's responsibility to sign in at every mission or training s/he attends. It will be each member's responsibility to verify and inform the Secretary of attendance inaccuracies in the meeting minutes and on attendance rosters. The team leader of the training or mission should review the sign-in sheet to verify that it is complete.

- a. Trainings - Full members shall attend a minimum of six team field trainings and six general meeting/classroom trainings a year. All full members are encouraged to attend as many additional trainings as possible each year to keep their skills sharp, increase their knowledge and experience, foster team spirit, and help new members.
- b. Missions – Mission-ready and full members shall attend all missions requiring their skill set, unless work, health, and/or family obligations preclude participation. The Team Liaison Director shall contact members who have not responded to a mission for at least 18 months.
- c. Board Meetings – All trainees and full members are encouraged to attend board meetings to further their understanding of the governing structure of the organization. Board directors shall attend, at minimum, 10 standing board meetings a year. Directors shall attend the annual leader's retreat. Absence for special circumstances (illness, family death, etc.) will be taken into consideration.
- d. When directors are absent for a board meeting, they shall choose a proxy for their vote and notify the board in writing of that proxy.

### 2. EQUIPMENT

All volunteers responding to a mission shall have provisions and gear sufficient for a minimum of 24 hours.

- a. Mission-ready trainees and full members shall have clothing, food, and equipment appropriate for hiking a minimum of 10 miles in unfamiliar area, on moderately steep terrain, in extreme elevations, and in extreme temperatures and that is sufficient for two operational periods of 12 hours each.
- b. Base members shall have clothing, food, and equipment appropriate to spend 24 hours in extreme elevations and temperatures in or near base camp (which could be a single vehicle).



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### **3. NEW MEXICO SEARCH AND RESCUE FIELD CERTIFICATION**

Full members shall pass the **State of New Mexico Field Certification Exam** given by New Mexico Search and Rescue within one year of becoming a full member.

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### **4. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SEARCH AND RESCUE (NASAR)**

SAR TECH 2 CERTIFICATION – We encourage and help prepare all full members to pass NASAR's SAR Tech 2 Certification, which follows nationally recognized SAR standards .

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### **5. FUNDRAISING**

All trainees and full members shall actively participate in the annual fundraising drive and other team fundraising events. Nonparticipation will be reviewed by the board and may result in a member losing eligibility for course fee reimbursements. Repeated nonparticipation may be cause for expulsion from the team. Individuals in all classes of membership are encouraged to participate. Participation might include:

- a. assisting with donation request letters;
- b. taking on at least two shifts to solicit funds during our fundraising weekend;
- c. serving on the Fundraising Committee; and
- d. completing other fundraising tasks delegated by the board or the Fundraising Committee.

## **F. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS**

All team applicants, trainees, and full members are strongly urged to acquire additional training in the following areas.

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### **1. MEDICAL**

The following courses are recommended for all SAR personnel. They are, in order of importance:

- a. First Aid, CPR and/or AED.
- b. Advanced First Aid and CPR.
- c. Wilderness Advanced First Aid (WAFA). TSAR recommends that members reach at least this level of certification.
- d. Wilderness First Responder (WFR). TSAR recommends this as the most appropriate level of certification for response in the field.
- e. Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician (WEMT) or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Periodic WAFA and WFR courses will be made available to team members. Reimbursement for the WAFA and WFR courses will be determined at the discretion of the board. Except in special cases, EMT and Wilderness EMT courses are not reimbursed.

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## **2. COMMUNICATIONS**

The entry level amateur (Ham) radio license, called “No-Code Technician,” is very helpful to search and rescue communications as it gives access to mountaintop repeaters that allow longer-distance and wider-area communication. Full members may be reimbursed for the Ham license fee at the discretion of the board.

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## **3. FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) CERTIFICATIONS**

FEMA offers online certifications for emergency services volunteers. Passing FEMA online courses ICS-100 and ICS-200 is already required for field certification. We encourage additional certification in ICS-300, ICS-700, and ICS-800, all of which furthers knowledge of the National Incident Management System.

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## **G. MODIFICATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP STATUS**

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### **1. LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Any trainee or full member may request a leave of absence by submitting a request to the Board of Directors. If the board agrees to the leave of absence for a set time period, there will not be a penalty to membership status or a need to repeat certifications that are still valid when the leave of absence expires. Leave of absence may be requested for trainings or missions or both.

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### **2. PROBATIONARY STATUS**

Members can track their attendance by checking the attendance records, which are held by the Secretary.

- a. Members whose attendance falls below the required minimum may be notified by the board (specifically the Secretary or Team Liaison Director) and put on notice.
- b. If the absences continue, the member may be put on probation and asked to re-examine his/her commitment to the team. Probationary status is at the discretion of the board. If attendance remains below team requirements, the member may lose his/her membership.

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### 3. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- a. The board, by a unanimous vote, may terminate any member or trainee for cause. Cause may include, but is not limited to, poor attendance, inappropriate behavior, substance abuse, or any other violations of the Policies and Procedure Manual or unit guidelines.
- b. A member or trainee facing termination shall be informed in writing at least one week in advance of the board meeting at which the vote on termination will take place and will be invited to appear and speak on his/her own behalf. Any other member of the team may attend and speak on the member's or trainee's behalf.

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### 4. REINSTATEMENT

Upon receipt of a written and signed request, the Board of Directors, by a unanimous vote, may reinstate a terminated member or trainee subject to such conditions as deemed appropriate by the board.

## II. MEETINGS

### A. GENERAL MEETING

1. General meetings of all team members are held from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month, unless otherwise noted in advance. If a general meeting falls on or near a holiday, i.e., in November and December, it might be moved up to the second Wednesday of the month. A general meeting might also be rescheduled if there is a mission in progress.
2. The general meeting will include a classroom training, led by the Training Officer, a unit leader, or another specialist in the classroom subject matter.

### B. BOARD MEETINGS

1. Meetings of the Board of Directors are held regularly on the first Wednesday of the month. At the discretion of the board, the meeting may be rescheduled to a different day.
2. All board meetings are to be conducted in an orderly fashion in general accordance with *Roberts Rules of Order*.
3. Board meetings are open to all members, unless it is announced that a specific meeting is closed. The board may go into executive session during any board meeting to protect the privacy of individuals, including that of a director who needs to recuse him/herself from a vote, or for sensitive business.
4. Persons wishing to bring business before the board shall inform the President in writing one week in advance of a meeting so that it may be added to the agenda.

## C. OTHER MEETINGS

1. Special meetings of the board may be called as outlined in the TSAR bylaws.
2. Unit meetings will be scheduled by the respective unit leader.
3. Committees may set their own meeting schedule.
4. There may be other meetings called occasionally for special purposes, e.g., state certification, the statewide SAR conference, mission debriefings, social events, etc.

## III. TRAINING

### A. MONTHLY TRAININGS

#### 1. TEAM CLASSROOM TRAINING

Team classroom trainings take place directly after general meetings (See Section II-A).

Classroom trainings review basic SAR skills required for missions and/or may be a preview of an upcoming Saturday or Sunday field training.

#### 2. TEAM FIELD TRAINING

This training is usually held on the Saturday or Sunday following the monthly general meeting. These trainings initiate from the TSAR shed to reinforce the "shed launch" process. All members are encouraged to meet at the shed.

The start time and training location will be announced at the general meeting and announced on Basecamp. Trainings may also be announced through the team's mission call-out system to test and train on the system.

One or more of these trainings may be at night and will be devoted to specialized or advanced training.

### B. SPECIALIZED UNIT TRAININGS

Specialized units provide more in-depth training for specific areas of expertise in search and rescue. These units train and operate, first, under the TSAR Policies and Procedures Manual and, second, under official guidelines adopted by the individual unit. All guidelines for specialized units must be approved by the TSAR Board of Directors. Any member may train with an individual unit without becoming a regular member of that

unit to further his/her knowledge and experience and become a more valuable resource to TSAR.

The following specialized units may operate within the main TSAR team as needed or if there is sufficient interest. Specialized units are not limited to those listed in this document and may vary over time.

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## 1. BASE UNIT

Base is the hub of any training or mission. Everything originates in and from Base and operates under the ICS.

The Base Unit requires a dedication to detail and professionalism. The Base Unit sets the tone for everyone else on a training or at a mission. It sets the standard and leads all personnel in the field.

Although there are many base positions in the ICS, the most common base positions that may be filled by our team are:

- Incident Commander – heads the mission under the direction of the Area Commander;
- Logistics Officer – calls in and manages resources;
- Communications – facilitates radio and mobile communications and makes careful, accurate, and detailed records of all communications during a mission or training; and
- Mapping Officer – records all mapping data on the computer mapping software during a mission, including team assignments, clues, team locations, GPS data-sharing (uploads before field deployment and downloads upon return to IB), probability of detection (POD) reports, and any information about the final find of the subject(s).

### BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES

The Base Unit is responsible for all recordkeeping/reporting during a training or mission. This includes, but is not limited to, keeping accurate and detailed records of all the following data:

- team rosters;
- team assignments;
- radio communications;
- location of all personnel at all times;
- welfare of all teams in the field;
- mapping data;
- POD reporting
- checkout/in of all equipment; and
- check-in/out of all search personnel.

The Base Unit Leader is a full member who has at least three years of experience on the team. The leader assists the Training Officer in setting up additional trainings designed solely to improve base skills and assists at team trainings to run Base when required.

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## **2. GROUND UNIT**

Made up of all team members who deploy into the field. No mission can function without ground teams to search or facilitate a rescue.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- ICS
- Communications
- Navigation
- Medical
- Lost person behavior
- Search techniques
- Helicopter safety
- Downed aircraft
- Crime scene protocols
- Litter evacuation
- Survival skills
- Wilderness safety

The Ground Unit Leader is a full member with at least three years of experience on the team. The Ground Unit Leader is usually the Training Officer but may be another individual who assists the Training Officer in setting up additional trainings solely to improve ground skills and assists the Training Officer in the field during trainings when required.

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## **3. MEDICAL UNIT**

One of the most important specialized units, the Medical Unit consists of members who already have medical backgrounds or would like to further their medical backgrounds. This unit trains regularly in special protocols for wilderness medicine as overseen by the team Medical Director. The unit also ensures that the team's medical equipment is in top shape and refurbishes expired materials.

Medical Unit members are encouraged to acquire and upkeep their wilderness certifications and to remain up to date on the current scope of practice.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- Weather-related conditions
- Trauma management
- Patient assessment
- Patient monitoring
- Equipment operation and maintenance
- Scene assessment
- Crime scene protocols
- Remaining updated on scope of practice

The Medical Unit Leader is an individual of solid medical knowledge/experience and in regular contact with the team Medical Director, who is a currently licensed M.D. The leader will set up trainings for the unit and assist the Training Officer on medical training for the entire team.

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#### **4. OHV (OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE) UNIT**

This highly specialized unit requires either that its members own a personal OHV or that they have been trained and are certified to use a TSAR-owned OHV.

##### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- How to operate a variety of OHVs
- Equipment operation and maintenance
- Safety concerns and requirements
- OHV search techniques
- Safe transport of equipment and personnel, including K9s, on an OHV
- Communications
- Recording Data
- Navigation

The OHV Unit Leader is an individual of solid experience in operating various OHV types, has at least three years of search and rescue experience, and understands the importance of safety in operating an OHV. The leader will set up trainings for the unit and assist the Training Officer on OHV interface for the entire team.

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#### **5. TECHNICAL UNIT**

The Technical Unit specializes in the use of ropes and equipment for the rescue of subjects stranded in steep terrain. This includes, but is not limited to, subjects stranded on cliffs or steep slopes (generally more than 40 degrees) or any other scenario in which rope work would provide safety for rescue personnel. The Technical Unit is open to members who are not only interested in this type of work, but who can commit to at least two trainings per month in addition to general team trainings.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- High-angle evacuation
- Scree evacuation
- Hauling and rope systems
- Personal on-rope skills

The Technical Unit Leader shall have extensive experience in high-angle rescue, scree evacuation, rope systems, and other skills required for a technical rescue. The leader will facilitate training for the unit and work with the Training Officer to facilitate any technical training for the entire team.

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## **6. SWIFTWATER UNIT**

This unit specializes in techniques and safety when the team is called to search on or near water. Swiftwater Unit members shall eventually be certified in swiftwater rescue.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- Water safety
- Hydrology
- Shore-based operations
- Water-based operations
- Boat management
- Technical rope systems
- Equipment use and maintenance

The Swiftwater Unit Leader shall have a Swiftwater Rescue Technician Certification and shall work closely with other agencies and swiftwater resources for a coordinated effort. The leader will set up trainings for the unit and assist the Training Officer in any swiftwater trainings for the entire team.

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## **7. WINTER SKILLS UNIT**

The Winter Skills Unit specializes in missions involving snowy or icy terrain. The Winter Skills Unit is open to members interested in working safely in a winter environment and who can commit to extra trainings in addition to general team trainings.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING (includes, but not limited to):**

- Avalanche safety and awareness
- Snow and ice technical skills (i.e., building snow anchors)
- Subject care in winter conditions



The Winter Skills Unit Leader shall have extensive experience in avalanche assessment and safety, as well as safety protocols for traveling in, and extracting a subject during, winter conditions.

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## **8. K9 UNIT**

This highly specialized unit requires a commitment to weekly trainings and may require two or more years before a dog and its handler are certified. Every dog and handler must be an active member of TSAR and the K9 Unit, pass a K9 field certification, and be approved by the board before being deployed as a K9 team on a mission. At the discretion of the K9 Unit Leader, special exceptions can be made for a non-certified K9 team to participate on a training mission when a subject's life is not at stake.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- Scent theory
- Dog training and behavior
- K9 obedience training
- K9 agility training
- K9 search training
- Search strategies
- Navigation
- Communications
- All skills required by the regular ground team
- K9 first aid
- Equipment use and maintenance

The K9 Unit Leader shall have extensive experience in handling a certified search dog in the field during official missions and as well as in dog obedience, agility and behavior. The leader understands canine behavior and temperament and has experience in training dogs for search and rescue. The leader is responsible for facilitating all training of handlers and dogs and for working with the Training Officer for general team training when requested.

Dogs that are not SAR-certified or actively pursuing certification shall not be permitted on trainings or missions or at any public activities, such as the annual fundraiser or parades.

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## **9. DRONE (UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE—UAV) UNIT**

This highly specialized unit requires FAA certification for the Pilot in Command (PIC) role but does not require FAA certification for all members. This unit offers the ability to access dangerous areas without having to be physically on site in those locations and it gives search teams a perspective from above on a situation. Drone Unit members can participate as PICs, visual observers, scribes, FPV goggle users,

communications, and safety officer. Members can use personal UAV equipment for missions and training as long as it is properly registered and appropriate for the situation and understands that personal drone use is voluntary and has inherent risks. TSAR will not replace personal equipment that is lost or damaged.

**SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- FAA Part 107 Certification
- Operating team UAVs
- Fulfilling support roles
- Planning and executing grid searches
- Cliff and river searches
- Night flying
- Communications
- Coordinate systems

The Drone Unit Leader shall have a Part 107 Certification, but it is not necessary if the right person is interested. The leader is responsible for maintaining the team’s UAV equipment, with special considerations for the batteries (cycling, temperatures, and preparedness for missions and trainings). The Drone Unit Leader chooses the PIC, who is ultimately responsible for planning and safely executing a mission as directed by Incident Command. The leader shall have 15 hours of UAV flight experience and two years of search and rescue experience. The leader is responsible for setting up monthly field trainings and the occasional classroom training.

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## **10. BIKE UNIT**

This highly specialized unit requires a commitment to remaining in shape for safely managing and maneuvering a mountain bike in rough terrain and up steep slopes. Unit members must own their own bikes and be ready to train regularly with the unit.

**SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- Bike maintenance
- Bike safety
- Hauling equipment
- Navigation
- Communications
- Health and fitness
- First aid and evacuation for team members
- Special equipment

The Bike Unit Leader shall be a consummate rider with ample experience in leading and teaching others. There are no certifications required for membership on this unit. Members shall remain in good riding form, maintain equipment, and gain the knowledge required to respond appropriately and safely during a mission.

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## **11. MAN-TRACKING UNIT**

Members with experience or interest in man-tracking comprise this specialty unit and may be called in as a special resource when a subject's footprints are suspected or confirmed.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- Identification skills
- Sign skills
- Tracking team operations
- Communications
- Navigation

The Man-Tracking Unit Leader shall have taken one or more courses in man-tracking and have logged field time working a real track on an official mission. Besides setting up trainings for the unit, the leader will assist the Training Officer with man-tracking training exercises for the entire team.

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## **12. MOUNTED UNIT**

This unit is composed of members who ride and either own or have access to a trained and steady trail horse. Horses are useful resources to the unit when they have accomplished one of the following: scent work for search, steadiness on a variety of trail surfaces, and carrying or pulling. Horses shall be solid, reliable, experienced, and not easily spooked.

### **SCOPE OF TRAINING:**

- Trail-riding management
- Off-trail riding
- Equipment transport
- Equine stability
- Equipment use and maintenance
- Equine transport
- Equine first aid

The Mounted Unit Leader shall be an experienced rider with at least three years of ground or mounted SAR experience on missions. The leader is responsible for setting up regular Mounted Unit trainings and participating with the unit in team trainings when applicable and requested by the Training Officer.

## C. OTHER TRAININGS

The team will be informed of other general or specialized training courses that may be sponsored by TSAR, NASAR, New Mexico Search and Rescue Council (NMSARC), or other SAR organizations. These trainings may be held in Taos, out of county, or out of state and may include any of the following:

1. ESCAPE, which is an annual statewide SAR conference sponsored by NMSARC. TSAR reimburses registration fees and offers a per diem for attending this conference for all full members who attend;
2. other state and national SAR conferences; and
3. other in-house TSAR trainings at various times and places.

## E. REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRAINING AND TRAVEL

TSAR encourages further education and certification of its members. Investing in teammates, our most precious resource, is primary to our mission.

Reimbursement for any outside training is at the discretion of the board. Active members may be eligible for full or partial reimbursement of course fees for board-approved outside trainings. The amount of reimbursement is determined by the board for each event on a case-by-case basis and by length of service and commitment to the team.

To receive reimbursement, the member shall complete and submit a reimbursement form (available on Basecamp) to the board, accompanied by a receipt for the course fee and a certificate of completion/certification from the course instructor.

1. Full and life members are eligible for reimbursement, subject to board approval, depending on the particular course/certification.
2. Trainees may be eligible for a retroactive reimbursement once they become full members and demonstrate commitment to the team. This request shall be submitted within one year of completion of the training.
3. Members shall be in good standing to be eligible for reimbursements. They shall be active on the team, not on leave, and in adherence with requirements for attendance, personal equipment, and fundraising participation.
4. Reimbursement for members on probationary status may be deferred until they have been in good standing for one year.

## IV. MISSIONS

### A. MISSION INITIATION

1. Search and rescue in New Mexico is initiated through the New Mexico State Police (NMSP), which is under the auspices of the state's Department of Public Safety.
2. Once NMSP issues a mission number, that mission is official and state-sanctioned. That means responders are covered by state insurance.
3. There are exceptions to the above circumstances, e.g., a “training mission,” which is not assigned a mission number, or through an MOU (memorandum of understanding) agreement with other government agencies that require Tsar's expert resource. In these instances, responders are covered only by team insurance. At least two board members must agree to initiate a training mission.

### B. INITIATING A CALL-OUT

1. The Vice President will coordinate, schedule, and train the Duty Officer or will designate as Duty Officer a full member who agrees to take on this task.
2. The Duty Officer is the first contact for a mission. A field coordinator or resource officer notifies the Duty Officer of a mission. The Duty Officer shall record all available information about the mission on the required TSAR forms.
3. If for any reason there is a question about whether the team should respond to a mission, the Duty Officer shall initiate a discussion with at least two board members, who will decide if the mission is appropriate for response.
4. Once a mission has been deemed acceptable, the Duty Officer shall then initiate call-out protocols to contact team members.
5. Call-outs are executed through the Call Multiplier System and Basecamp. All mission-ready, full, and life members will receive communications with mission information.
6. All mission-ready, full, and life members shall respond as to their availability.

### C. RENDEZVOUS AND SIGN-IN

1. The Duty Officer shall designate a Shed Leader. This is normally the Base Leader. If the Base Unit is not deployed, a full member with the most mission experience shall be designated as Shed Leader. The Base/Shed Leader shall utilize the Base Unit Duty Checklist/Shed Leader Checklist to launch from and return to the shed.
2. Responders shall sign in and out at the mission on two separate sign-in sheets: 1) The TSAR Sign-In Sheet (monitored by Base/Shed Leader); and 2) the ICS Sign-In Sheet at Incident Base. Responders will not be covered by insurance if they do not sign in. Individuals shall sign themselves in and out and shall not sign anyone else in or out.

3. Consult the TSAR Field Guide to review details of what is required as you pack, meet, brief and deploy into the field for a mission.
4. Members shall take direction from the Base/Shed Leader before departure and upon return to the shed.

## D. INCIDENT BASE

1. No team member other than the team leader shall approach Incident Command or enter the Command Area/TSAR van unless expressly invited to do so.
2. Individual respondents shall remain in Incident Base until given a specific search assignment or a stand-down order.

## E. IN THE FIELD

1. TSAR volunteers shall never take undue risks during search and rescue operations. Always relay your concerns to Incident Command.
2. Never depart from your original assignment without first contacting and consulting Incident Command.
3. Teams shall consist of at least two persons during all search and rescue operations. In extraordinary circumstances, a TSAR volunteer may find it necessary to proceed solo. If so, the TSAR volunteer:
  - a. shall get permission from Incident Command;
  - b. shall not take undue risks;
  - c. shall make all efforts to explore other alternatives;
  - d. shall make all efforts to maintain contact (radio, visual, etc.) with other TSAR volunteers during the period of solo operation; and
  - e. shall establish an explicit “plan B” in case something goes wrong during the period of solo operation.
4. If a team member in the field or at Incident Base is approached by a member of the news media or the public, or by anyone requesting information about the mission who is not a SAR member or NMSP officer, the member **SHALL NOT** release any information. Direct the person to Incident Base to speak with the Incident Commander or the designated Public Information Officer (PIO).
5. Sometimes a mission involves the recovery of a body. Members may opt out of recovery operations.

## F. POST-MISSION

On return from your mission assignment in the field, the following tasks shall be completed:

1. Debrief with Incident Command.
2. Check to see if you will be given another assignment. If not, sign out on the mission sheets.
3. If the mission involved any circumstances that are outlined in the Critical Incident Stress Appendix, or were traumatic for any team member, suggest or request a critical incident stress debriefing.
4. Upon returning to the shed, make sure the following tasks are completed along with any other task given to you by the Base/Shed Leader:
  - a. return all equipment to its proper location;
  - b. leave TSAR vehicles orderly and clean;
  - c. plug in GPS units to recharge;
  - d. place radios in their charging ports; and
  - e. sign out on the TSAR mission sheet.
5. At the conclusion of the mission, the Duty Officer will:
  - a. communicate the stand down order to all mission-ready members;
  - b. designate an individual to compile a mission report with input from mission responders; and
  - c. make sure the appropriate mission information is passed on to the team member(s) responsible for posting a description of the mission on the TSAR website blog and on social media.

## V. EQUIPMENT

### A. PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The minimal personal equipment required for TSAR members on a mission is listed in the Full Member Pack Check List. This document is available in Basecamp and on the TSAR website.

### B. TEAM EQUIPMENT

TSAR has a wide range of team equipment that must be maintained for it to retain its usefulness and safety.

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#### 1. GENERAL RULES - USE OF TEAM EQUIPMENT

- a. Members are responsible for the safe use, care, cleaning, and return of team equipment. If the equipment is lost or damaged while a member is using it, the member is responsible for notifying the team leader or the TSAR board.
- b. If a member sees that a piece of equipment is damaged, the member shall report it immediately.

- c. All team equipment shall be signed out on the TSAR sign-in sheet held by the TSAR Logistics person at Incident Base during a training or mission. If the equipment is used outside a training or mission, it shall be signed out on the whiteboard in the shed.

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## 2. RULES - SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT

### a. VEHICLES

- Anyone driving a team vehicle shall have a valid driver's license and a good driving record and be included on the TSAR vehicle insurance policy.
- Drivers of team vehicles shall be observed handling that vehicle at a training session by the Vehicle Director. The Vehicle Director shall deem that the driver is familiar with all functions of the vehicle, knows how to fill out the appropriate vehicle records, and knows what to do in case of a malfunction or emergency before operating the vehicle without supervision.
- The TSAR board may decline to add or may choose to remove anyone from the approved driver's list at its discretion for any reason.
- Vehicles shall be refueled upon returning to town after every training or mission, no matter the time of day or night.
- The interior of the vehicles shall be cleaned and cleared of trash and personal gear following each deployment.
- Any vehicle operational problems or required maintenance or repair shall be reported directly to the Vehicle Director.
- The Vehicle Director shall oversee regular maintenance of all TSAR vehicles.

### b. MEDICAL

Team members shall report to the Medical Unit Leader the use of expendable medical supplies.

### c. ELECTRONICS

- When returning electronic equipment to the shed, make sure all units are securely connected to their charging cords or stations. If a unit has a regular battery that cannot be recharged, remove the battery from the unit to prevent trickling of the battery or battery leakage into the unit.
- Team members shall report problems with any equipment to the Equipment Director.



## VI. SAFETY

To keep ourselves and our teammates from injury, WE MUST ALL BE SAFETY OFFICERS! If you see ANY dangerous situation developing, whether it has to do with terrain, weather, the condition of someone in the field, or the use, non-use, or improper use of equipment or protective gear—whatever it may be—CALL A HALT until the situation can be resolved through discussion with your teammates and team leader.

### A. PRIORITIES

There is a specific order of safety priorities in the field that guide what individual members, and the team as a whole, shall or shall not do. Always be cautious, observant and careful. Members are responsible for the health and safety of the following individuals in this order:

1. Yourself;
2. team members;
3. the public in proximity to you; and
4. the subject.

### B. FIREARMS

TSAR members may carry a firearm on a training provided they have completed an authorized firearm safety course for the firearms they are carrying. This provision is in effect so that individuals in isolated locations on trainings, e.g., hiding for dogs during K9 trainings, can protect themselves should the need arise. If members choose to carry, they must have met team regulations for carrying and shall notify teammates.

## VII. RECORDKEEPING

1. Hard copies of all legal organizational documents are stored in the TSAR safety deposit box at the bank.
2. Applications, meeting minutes, past mission and training sign-in sheets, etc., are stored digitally in a secure location on Basecamp. Documents, that contain sensitive or personal information, such as applications, will be posted solely on the TSAR Board of Directors Basecamp and will be accessible only by the Board of Directors.

3. Hard copies of all mission and training documents (the Policies and Procedures Manual, the TSAR Field Guide, ICS forms, TSAR reporting forms, etc.) are in the TSAR van in their respective mission/training notebooks, which contain two years of documents. Once each year, these documents are moved to a file cabinet in the shed to make room in the van for another year of reports.
4. Digital copies of legal organizational and mission documents reside on the computer in the van.

## VIII. OFFICERS

### A. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TSAR is a board-driven 501(c)(3) organization, which means the Board of Directors manages the legal and financial affairs of the corporation. The board is also responsible for the day-to-day business of the team. TSAR generally maintains the following positions on the board to meet critical operational needs:

1. President;
2. Vice President;
3. Secretary;
4. Treasurer;
5. Training Officer;
6. Recruitment Director;
7. Team Liaison and Events Director;
8. Equipment Director; and
9. Vehicle Director.

#### BOARD ELECTIONS

1. Nominations from full members for upcoming open board positions shall be made via Basecamp in a message thread that includes the full membership or at the October or November general meeting. Elections are held at the December board meeting.
2. Nominations for positions left vacant by officers who resign mid-term shall be announced to the full membership, at which time nominations are open for those positions. An election may be conducted either via Basecamp or at the following board meeting. Those elected shall serve the remainder of the resigning officer's term.
3. Nominations for honorary and life membership may be made at any general meeting by any full or life member and will be voted upon by the Board of Directors at the next board meeting.
- 4.

## B. OPTIONAL POSITIONS

Board members work together to accomplish the responsibilities of the organization. Help from full members who are not on the board may also sometimes be required; officer and committee positions may be appointed as needed at the board's discretion to fulfil the operational needs of the team. Following are examples of possible positions:

1. **Public Information Officer (PIO)** – Has completed the FEMA PIO course. Is the spokesperson for the team with the press and the public. Serves under the Incident Commander during missions. Clears all information for release with the IC.
2. **Fundraising Committee (FC) Leader** – Organizes and coordinates the Fundraising Committee, which directs all fundraising activities. The FC Leader works with the Social Media and Website Officer to coordinate funding drives and with the TSAR President and Treasurer on how fundraising efforts affect the preparation of annual budgets and long-range financial planning.
3. **Duty Officer** – Answers the TSAR duty phone, processes all mission requests, communicates the mission call-out to the team, organizes the response and stand-down, and files a mission report.
4. **Communications Officer** – Is responsible for the function and upkeep of all TSAR communication equipment (field radios, vehicle radios, weather stations, and GPS units): programs radios and GPS units, oversees repair of units and replacement of parts, makes sure units are charged, etc.
5. **IT Officer** – Provides technical assistance and support of all TSAR computers and other IT needs.
6. **Social Media Officer** – Oversees all TSAR social media platforms and the TSAR website blog, posts information on those platforms, and responds to followers.
7. **Website Officer** – Oversees the TSAR website, including optimization, updates, commercial/monetary interface, technical issues, and member platforms. Works with the Social Media Officer to write and post the TSAR website blog.

## IX. FINAL REMARKS

The above policies and procedures are guidelines by which Taos Search and Rescue operates. These policies and procedures may only be altered, or an exception be granted, through a unanimous vote of the TSAR Board of Directors. We recognize over time that there will be need for new policies and that old policies may need to be rewritten. The highest standards possible shall be set by the TSAR board to promote the greatest degree of professionalism among our volunteers and to maintain our utmost commitment to the community in service of saving and preserving human life.

## X. DOCUMENT APPROVAL

### A. CURRENT APPROVAL

This TSAR Policies and Procedures Manual is hereby adopted on the 4th day of May, 2022 by the TSAR Board of Directors:

#### **TSAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Delinda VanneBrightyn, President

Tamar Stieber, Vice President

Carlie McGinnis, Secretary

Chelsea Crawford, Treasurer

Chris Kodey, Training Officer

Kati Roske, Recruitment Director

Paymaneh Ghaffari, Team Liaison and Events Director

LJ Beckman, Vehicle Director

Noa Roske, Equipment Director

### B. HISTORY OF DOCUMENT

TSAR Board of Directors – Creation of Policies and Procedures document, referenced from the original TSAR Guidelines, Final Version: 1 December, 2015:

Delinda VanneBrightyn (President), Jon Wood (Vice-President), Carlie McGinnis (Secretary/Treasurer), Richard McCracken (Training Officer), Brian Williams (Director), Roy Dunlap (Director), Kenton Pass (Director). Contributions also by Perto Hull (TO, 2014).

TSAR Board of Directors – Final Approval, January 2016:

Delinda VanneBrightyn (President), Jon Wood (Vice-President), Carlie McGinnis (Secretary), Jon Wallace (Treasurer), Chris Kodey (Training Officer), Kenton Pass (Recruitment Director), Jim Hoffman (Team Liaison & Event Director), Brady Coleman (Vehicles Director).

TSAR Board of Directors – Revision of Document, December 2018 (no final, as board rotated):

Delinda VanneBrightyn (President), Gary Jones (Vice-President), Carlie McGinnis (Secretary), Jon Wallace (Treasurer), Chris Kodey (Training Officer), Kenton Pass (Recruitment Director), Jim Hoffman (Team Liaison & Event Director), Brady Coleman (Vehicles Director).

TSAR Board of Directors – Revision of Document, Final Approval, May 4, 2022

Delinda VanneBrightyn (President), Tamar Stieber (Vice President), Carlie McGinnis (Secretary), Chelsea Crawford (Treasurer), Chris Kodey (Training Officer), Kati Roske (Recruitment Director), Paymaneh Ghaffari (Team Liaison and Event Director), LJ Beckman (Vehicle Director), and Noa Roske (Equipment Director).