

## Taos Search and Rescue Winter Skills Unit Guidelines

The TSAR Winter Skills Unit is a Unit of Taos Search and Rescue (TSAR), a 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization based in Northern New Mexico. TSAR works under the auspices of the New Mexico State Police to aid sick, injured and lost individuals primarily, but not solely, in wilderness settings. These guidelines are to provide clear and consistent objectives for all members of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit

### ***Mission Statement***

The mission of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit furthers the Mission of Taos Search and Rescue through providing a specialty resource of exceptionally trained, professional and competent searchers to help locate individuals lost in winter environments.

### ***Winter Missions***

1. Any mission during the winter (with sufficient snow and winter weather) that includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Missions in or near avalanche terrain.
  - b. Missions involving use of technical rigging within winter and alpine context.
  - c. Missions involving extreme winter weather.
  - d. Missions involving packaging and extrication of subjects within winter environment.
  - e. Missions involving backcountry travel across snow and/or ice.

### ***Avalanche Terrain***

1. Terrain on, near, or below slopes holding snow that is steep enough to slide. Avalanche Terrain is generally considered snow-covered slopes ranging from 20 to 65 degrees in steepness, but is not limited to this range.

### ***Levels of Membership***

***Note: Any reference to “Winter Missions” is described in section above. This must be taken into consideration before attending any missions with the TSAR Winter Skills Unit.***

#### ***1. Winter Skills Unit Trainee***

- a. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Trainees are prospective members of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit. Trainees shall work to full certification by completing requirements on the Winter Skills Unit Certification Sheet.
- b. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Trainees shall attend 50% of all unit trainings.

- c. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Trainees ***must not*** attend any winter missions without first being certified as a full member on the Winter Skills Unit Certification Sheet.
- 2. Winter Skills Unit Full Member**
- a. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Full Members are Trainees who have completed the Winter Skills Unit Member Certification Sheet.
  - b. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Full Members shall attend 50% of all unit trainings.
  - c. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Full Members can attend winter missions.

### **General Guidelines**

1. Members of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit ***must*** respond to winter missions in groups of two (2) or more, as outlined by TSAR Team Guidelines.
2. Members of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit must participate in unit trainings in groups of at least two (2) or more.
3. Members of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit traveling into Avalanche Terrain (as outlined in section above) ***must*** carry proper avalanche rescue equipment (in addition to a full SAR pack as outlined by TSAR). This includes:
  - a. Avalanche Beacon
  - b. Avalanche Probe
  - c. Avalanche Shovel
4. Members of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit ***must not*** operate outside of their scope of practice and will adhere to the TSAR Winter Skills Unit Certification Sheet as to their level of participation on winter missions.
5. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Members ***must*** adhere to strict standards of professional conduct. Loss of temper or a poor or negative attitude will be cause for immediate review and possible dismissal from the TSAR Winter Skills Unit.
6. The ICS (Incident Command System) will be followed and respected by all members of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit.

***Small exceptions can be made to these guidelines, but only if approved by the Winter Skills Unit Leader. (ex. Avalanche beacon practice in the TSV beacon park can be an exception to the “group of 2 or more” guidelines for trainings as stated above.)***

### **Equipment Maintenance and Care**

1. All TSAR Winter Skills Unit equipment ***must*** be inspected thoroughly after each and every training and/or mission.
2. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Avalanche Beacons ***must*** have a battery life of 60% or more during trainings and/or missions. If an avalanche beacon has less than 60% battery life, the batteries ***must*** be replaced or the beacon ***cannot*** be used on a training and/or mission.

3. TSAR Winter Skills Unit Members ***must*** sign-out equipment on the Winter Skills Unit Equipment Sign-Out Sheet (Appendix B) for trainings and/or missions. Upon returning the equipment, it shall be in the same state as it was signed out in.

***Termination of Membership***

1. Any member of the TSAR Winter Skills Unit may be terminated by the Winter Skills Unit Leader for inappropriate behavior and /or actions. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Drug and/or alcohol use on trainings and/or missions.
  - b. Failure to carry proper equipment on trainings and/or missions.
  - c. Failure to adhere to TSAR Winter Skills Unit General Guidelines
  - d. Responding to winter missions as a sole individual (not in a group of two (2) or more).
  - e. Lack of professionalism and poor conduct during trainings and/or missions.
  - f. Misuse of TSAR Winter Skills Unit equipment.